The purpose of this study was to understand the career development of African American male high school principals. Three pertinent research questions were addressed in this study: 1). What are the personal background factors that influence the career development of African American male high school principals? 2). What institutional and professional factors help shape the career development of African American male high school principals? 3). What is the role of learning in the career development of African American male high school principals? A basic qualitative research design was used. Twelve African American high school principals were interviewed. The constant comparative method of data analysis was employed to uncover themes from the transcripts.

The findings of the study were: personal background factors, institutional and professional factors, and the role of learning. Personal background factors included a support network which was inclusive of family and friends; having the goal to become a principal; and the personal confidence of the participants to do the job of high school principal. Three institutional and professional factors were important: guidance from mentors; encouragement from colleagues; and the perception that African American males as principals are good disciplinarians.
The role of learning in influencing the career development of these African American male high school principals included both formal and informal learning. The formal learning encompassed the participant’s educational preparation in an institution that offered degree programs. The overall degree programs as well as individual classes within the program were influential to these African American male high school principals. The informal learning included on-the-job experiences, self directed learning through reading, and participation in workshops and seminars.

The findings of this study indicate three conclusions about the career development of African American male high school principals. First, some factors are similar to prominent factors in the career development literature. Second, a few factors are unique to the career development of African American male principals and they are that the perception that they have strong disciplinary skills, that they hold memberships in traditionally Black Greek Letter Organizations such as fraternities, and that they are mentored by other African Americans. Third, formal and informal learning help to shape the career development of African American principals.

INDEX WORDS: Career development, African American men’s career development, principal’s/administrators career development, adult learning, and adult learning in African Americans
CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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DEDICATION

I am thankful to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for enabling me to withstand the perils of this troublesome world and coming out of the wilderness victorious. Therefore, I respectfully dedicate my accomplishment to my late mother, Ethel Annette Johnson Humphrey.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am thankful to the 12 gentlemen who participated in this study. I am grateful and wish them much continued success as strong African American male educators.

I am thankful to my major professor Bradley Courtenay for all of his guidance support and listening ears. I learned so much from you from patience to adult education to motorcycles to real estate to shopping at Brooks Brothers and the list goes on.

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Lastly, I would like to thank SATAN for all of his road blocks, the naysayers, and the obstacles. You worked hard to get in my way but I am so glad that I overcame you and became a stronger and a more confident and determined person.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As an aspiring principal, I have made the assumption that by virtue of my race and
gender, my experiences and learning might be different from other colleagues who were
currently being hired to be principals. I observed some of my White colleagues as well as my
female colleagues and noted that even though we had similar credentials, they were placed in
leadership positions more quickly than Blacks and men in general. I spoke with educators
including fellow teachers and other aspiring principals about my assumptions and they were
pretty much in accord with what I thought. These fellow educators included men and women as
well as blacks, whites, and Hispanics. Some of the comments were basically that women are
placed as principals in elementary and middle schools while men are placed in high schools
because of society’s perceived sense of sternness and machismo regarding male and female
positionality or traditional societal roles. In addition, it was noted that seemingly Black women
were quickly placed in assistant principal jobs and left there. However, it seems that some
thought that Black men are only named to these positions if they have been coaching or their
friends look out for them.

These personal observations were confirmed by Shakeshaft (1999) who reported that
minorities are underrepresented in school administration including high school principals and
have been for most of history. Furthermore, minorities have occupied the classroom for years but
few minorities have occupied the principal’s office as compared with white males. According to
Ortiz and Marshall (1988), minority men and women continue to occupy the lowest positions in the administrative hierarchy while White males hold the higher and more powerful positions such as being building principals and Central Office staff.

Moreover, the personal observations were also prevalent and further substantiated within the state of Georgia. According to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (2006) the fiscal year 2002 had a total of 355 high school principals. Of this total number, 264 or 74.4% were white while just 87 or 24.5% were African American. In looking at gender, the percentage of white male high school principals was 218 or 61.4% compared to 61 or 17.1% of all high school principals being African American males. Five years later, the results are similar. Accordingly, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (2006) reported that for the fiscal year 2006 there were a total of 379 high school principals. This is just under seven percent growth of the total number of principals in a five year period but there has been no increase in the number of African American male high school principals during this same period. Presently, of the 379 high school principals 282 or 74.4% are white which is the same percentage as in 2002. African Americans represent 83 or 21.8% of the total which is a decrease in representation by about three percentage points. Again looking at gender, 220 or 58% of all high school principals are white males while 61 or 16% are African American males. Therefore, we are able to discern that for African American male high school principals, the percentages decreased over a five year period.

This under representation of African American principals is supported by disparaging numbers provided by M. Vignati, Operations Analyst, with the Georgia Department of Education. Specifically, in the fall of 2007 40% of all public school secondary (high) school students are African American (M. Vignati, personal communication, November 20, 2007).
Therefore, we can surmise that the number of secondary students is not comparable to the number of African American administrators on the secondary level. Scholars such as Aldair (1984) and Williams (1992) contend that students from ethnic minority backgrounds need the support of teachers from their own cultures who have can understand them and who can serve as role models. This transfers into the realm of administration as well because the low number of African American teachers severely limits the pool of potential African American administrators. By having African American administrators in the schools, they serve as role models for African American students by exposing them to professionally successful individuals. The presence of these administrators also helps to provide a more positive school climate by disputing age old myths such as incompetency and racial inferiority (Thompson, 1992).

Mathews and Crow state, “compared with research on women, there is much less historical information available about minorities entering school leadership positions” (2003, p. 22). They further asserted that with some ethnic groups, the fluctuation of numbers in school administration is almost similar to those of women. For instance, they went on to point out that African Americans held more school leadership positions in the first half of the twentieth century than they did in the second half. One explanation given for this decrease in leadership positions for African Americans was the elimination of segregated schools during the 1950s and 1960s that resulted in fewer African Americans in the leadership hierarchy. Almost all segregated schools where Black students were the majority had African American administrators (Mathews & Crow, 2003). They further reported that when schools were integrated, few African Americans were appointed to leadership positions.

Furthermore, studies such as Allen (1992), Nicholson (1999), and Prescott-Hutchins (2002) focused on minorities in school administration on all three levels and raised the issue of
sponsorship. Sponsorship is a major mechanism for recruiting and selecting school administrators. Veteran administrators sponsor potential candidates by encouraging them to enroll in university preparation programs. Likewise, aspiring administrators are able to view the veteran African American administrators on their jobs and see that true opportunities do exist. However, Shakeshaft (1989) reported that people of color have historically been less likely than White males to be sponsored by other administrators to enter school leadership. Similarly, Ortiz (1982) noted that problems created by a lack of sponsorship were compounded by certain blockages to socialization. Moreover, minorities who aspire to school leadership have not had a mentor in a position to sponsor them and therefore found it difficult to gain entry.

Despite the lack of sponsorship for African Americans, some have eventually become high school principals. By examining their experiences our understanding of how African Americans become principals will be enhanced. The high school principalship is perceivably very prestigious based on my experiences. It comes with the status of being at the top plateau in the field of education while other colleagues of mine have mentioned that the high school principalship is often a stepping stone to a much more coveted central office position. Shen and Crawford (2003) defined secondary principals as, “a group of life-long learners who set good examples in areas such as gender equity and diversity” (p. 3). They went on to note that most of these principals have a masters degree or higher. As a group, these individuals were active in participating in professional development activities and they continuously enhanced their knowledge base through formal education and professional development (Shen & Crawford, 2003). The high school principalship is also given credence due to its perception of being difficult. The high school principalship is one of the most complex and challenging assignments
in the public education system (Murphy & Louis, 1994; Roe & Drake, 1980). Therefore, those who are successful often get noticed for their work and go on to receive accolades accordingly.

The high school principalship is different from that of middle school and elementary principalships due to many factors. Although the perception of a higher (societal) status is often apparent, the higher status often comes with some setbacks. The high school principalship comes with a lot of responsibility and undoubtedly those who master these tasks are given even more respect for their prowess. Recognizing some of the issues plaguing the high school principalship, Yerkes and Guaglianone (1998) interviewed and quoted Paul Houston, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, as saying, “the high school principal needs an array of talents to be successful: intelligence, strong academic background, public relations skills, the ability to engage with people, presence, respect, management skills and an understanding of civil as well as school law” (p. 2). Based on changing trends the role of the secondary school principal has continued to evolve. For example, Tirozzi (2001) states

At the dawn of this millennium, the challenges for secondary schools and principals in the United States include changing demographics, schools and curricula that are inappropriately designed for today’s adolescents, principals trained to be managers rather than instructional leaders, and a dramatic shortage of qualified candidates willing to take on the principalship. (pp. 434-435)

Regardless of the perception of the high school principalship, albeit positive or negative, there are some who desire to be high school principals. Pounder and Merrill (2001) completed a study on the job desirability of the high school principalship. They studied 170 middle school principals and high school assistant principals in a western state to ascertain why they desired to ascend to the high school principalship. It is important to note that these positions are not pre-
requisites but are often the preceding step in the career path. Using job choice theory as the conceptual framework the study concluded that participants were attracted to the high school principalship due to a desire to achieve and influence or improve education. The second, most prevalent job attribute was the position’s salary and benefits.

Although some educators may have a preference as to which level of education they work within it is assumed that the underlying pinnacle to success is the chosen career of education itself. Subsequently, one body of literature that holds promise to complement the historical background of African American Principals and their career progression is career development theories. There are many theories that relate to career development. The following were selected to be reviewed because of their prominence in literature searches for career development theories. Four such theories are Trait and Factor Theory, Roe’s Theory, Super’s Theory, and Holland’s Theory. The Trait and Factor Theory matches individual traits with occupations according to Brown (1990). Roe’s Theory provides two substantial contributions to the career development literature: how personality development affects occupational choice, and a psychologically based classification system of occupations (Roe, 1956; Roe & Lunneborg, 1990). In 1956, Roe suggested that occupations could be organized on a scale based on the intensity and temperament of the interpersonal relationships involved in them and hierarchically on the basis of the degree of responsibility, capacity, and skill involved in each occupation (Roe, 1956). In a follow up research study, Roe and Lunneborg (1990) reported that the previous classification system failed to address minority issues.

A third career development theory was developed by Donald Super. Super (1990) claimed that self-concept determines occupational choices and that self-concept and the manner in which it is carried out fluctuate as a function of stage of development. Super (1990) used the
research of Salomone and Slaney (1978) and Kidd (1984) to show support for the role of the self-concept in the occupational choices of the economically disadvantaged.

The fourth theory was developed by Holland (1985) who proposed that personalities and work environments could be characterized by their likeness to six types [personalities]: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. Additionally, Holland (1985) posited that a range of “isms” (i.e., ageism, classism, racism, sexism) confine the range of career options available to people and that if persons are prevented from being able to seek the expression of the most prevailing feature of their personality then they will have to go after the next most dominant feature. (p. 15)

However, some of these personalities are targeted toward specific populations. For example, Miller, Springer, and Wells (1988) conducted a study which found that most of their African American participants listed Holland’s Social type as their highest or next highest personality type. The Holland social type is one that favors individuals who are more extroverted and sociable than their counterparts. Other scholars conducted similar studies which yielded similar findings (Arbona, 1989; Gottfredson 1978). This particular part of the typology is based on Holland’s assertion that people function and have greater job satisfaction in work environments that are compatible with their personalities.

Only recently have researchers begun to evaluate in depth the nature and perspective of career development and minorities (Fouad & Dancer, 1992; Swanson, 1992), although there is no single theory of career development that exclusively addresses the issues important to ethnic groups in the United States (Osipow & Littlejohn, 1995). This is supported by Hackett and Byars (1996) who also reported that only a nominal amount of research had been conducted on the
career development of African Americans. However, there has been a recent reappearance of research on the career development of minorities (Barrett, 2000; Palmer, 2001; Thomas, 2004; Wilson, 2004) which is noted below.

Brown (1995) also reported that theories of career choice had been previously criticized for their lack of relevance to the career behavior of ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans (Brooks, 1990; Carter & Cook, 1992; Cheatham, 1990). Therefore, the criticisms centered on three main points (Brooks, 1990). First, they were based on erroneous assumptions due to the aforementioned lack of relevance. Brown (1995) gave the following three erroneous assumptions related to theories of career choice, “there is dignity in work and work is essential to the lives of all individuals; there exists a free open labor market; and that most career choices flow essentially from the character of one’s personality.” (p. 9). One example, of how these assumptions are irrelevant for ethnic minorities is the fact that all work does not hold dignity. For example, Brown (1995) highlights that “occupational prestige data reveals that some jobs are more prized than others” (p. 9). Moreover, Brown (1995) observes that “the assumption of a free and open labor market discounts or ignores the fact of various forms of unjust discrimination, including colorism and ethnic bias” (p. 9).

Second, the theoretical concepts are not applicable to the various ethnic groups. Specifically, Brown (1995) highlights:

Most theories of career development were developed from research on primarily white, middle class males: for example one may wish to consider Super’s (1953) Middletown Study or Roe’s (1951a, 1951b) studies of eminent scientists. This observation has led some (e.g., Carter & Cook, 1992; Cheatham, 1990; Smith, 1975, 1983; Warnath, 1975) to
conclude that existing theoretical concepts lack applicability to ethnic minorities. (pp. 9-10)

Similar to what Brown (1995) highlighted, Alfred’s (2001) study of the career development of African American women in higher education found few models that were representative of minorities as it relates to their career development.

The third criticism was that the determinants of career behavior were not addressed in these theories. In 1995, Brown discussed the fact that colorism and racial cultural identity were constructs that were conspicuously absent from these theories. Although the greatest preponderance of the research did not focus on or adequately address the career development of African Africans, there have been a few recent studies that have primarily focused on the career development of African Americans in the workplace outside of the realm of education (Barrett, 2000; Palmer, 2001; Thomas, 2004; Wilson, 2004).

Barrett (2000) conducted a qualitative study using 10 black human resource developers to be able to describe their career experiences. He concluded that the careers of black human resource developers do indeed evolve; the work environment and careers are impacted by race; and for black human resource developers who want to grow professionally, bicultural competence is beneficial to them. These findings are somewhat consistent with career development theories. Specifically, the evolution findings were reported by Barrett (2000) to be similar to a study conducted by McCall, Lombardo, and Morrison (1988). Likewise, Barrett (2000, 2004) found that race had a significant impact on black human resource developers. The findings were two-fold. “First, the influence of race on the work environment and second, in the influence of race on careers as it related to the glass ceiling, limited access to key mentors, and the affirmative action and diversity ghetto” (p. 196).
Similarly, Palmer (2001) conducted a qualitative study using 10 African Americans employed in the areas of training and organizational development. He concluded that the career development of the participants was impacted by a number of organizational and attitudinal variables. These included the lack of succession planning, the lack of mentoring, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices and behaviors. These are similar to some barriers previously noted about African Americans and their paths to become principals (Mathews & Crow, 2003). These barriers, especially the lack of mentoring in the career progression of aspiring African American principals, are well documented in the literature. In short, race affects career development as it relates to African Americans in the realm outside of education.

There is a very small amount of parallel research completed on African Americans career development while working within education. Researchers, including adult educators, have explored career development theories in many areas including careers/professions in higher education. This has led to a considerably high number of studies conducting research for whites and a much lesser amount for African Americans. It is well documented that more attention to career development theory in regard to minorities is warranted (Alfred, 2001; Allen 1992; Barrett, 2000; Brown, 1995; Brown, 1997; & Palmer, 2001). Expressly, Palmer (2001) stated:

Career development theories need to be developed that focus on specific groups such as African Americans… there is still no theory or model that addresses the numerous barriers that continue to thwart career development. Commonly dubbed the “glass ceiling phenomenon,” many career defined barriers are bundled under this umbrella and needs [sic] to be unraveled and researched individually including the good old Boy Network, discrimination, and structural variables. (p. 259)
There have been some studies of career development in the K-12 public school sector albeit they are few in number. One such study that did focus on African Americans was conducted by Nicholson (1999) who examined the life histories of six African American Female Principals. The participants in this study were elementary and middle school principals. Based on the results, she recommended “further research of the black female school administrator be conducted to determine specific methods for increasing the number of black female administrators” (pp. 114-115).

Likewise, Prescott-Hutchins (2002) conducted a qualitative study whose purpose was to investigate the lived experiences of 14 African American women principals in Georgia who were principals of elementary, middle, and high schools. Furthermore, the study was designed to elicit the effects of race, gender, class, and culture as it related to their roles as a principal. She recommended further study of African American women compared to African American male principal’s challenges and successes.

Also, Rance (1992) completed a study using 12 high school assistant principals to examine their career aspirations. Of particular interest to this study was her finding about perceived obstacles to or support for career aspirations of the participants. For instance, she noted administrative preparation, academic and work experience, institutional racism and sexism, tokenism, socialization process, and mentors/sponsors. Rance (1992) reported that even though administrative preparation is often claimed to be an obstacle, her respondents felt differently. All 12 assistant principals noted that administrative preparation was not an obstacle and as a matter of fact they perceived themselves to be better educated and more experienced than their white counterparts (Rance, 1992). Similarly, most participants felt that institutional racism and sexism played a large part in their not receiving a principalship. Finally, also of
particular note, all participants said that having a black role model was critical for their career progression but only four assistant principals from one District stated they had one black role model in their District who went from being an assistant principal to a principal.

Whether it is under the realm of business/industry or under the scope of education, one factor the studies thus far have not examined, or at least have not reported, is the role of learning, more specifically, adult learning in career development. This is unusual because learning is such a crucial ingredient in adult development. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) state, “the context of adult life and the societal context shape what an adult needs and wants to learn and, to a somewhat lesser extent, when and where learning takes place” (p. 1). Traditionally, adults have assumed many roles in society in which learning has and continues to take place. Scholars have asserted that a number of research traditions in such areas as career development and marriage and family roles have been highlighted as a result of this.

Similarly, Kidd (1973) and Knox (1977) both evaluated how learning activities and changes in social roles were correlative. As reported by Merriam and Caffarella (1999), after attending a conference and hearing a presentation by Malcolm Knowles, Kidd (1973) outlined a taxonomy that considers not only roles but also the competencies linked to those roles. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) reported:

The implied assumption underlying this taxonomy is that learning programs could be built to address these competencies for adults going through role changes or wishing to become more competent in their current roles (for example, family member, worker, and citizen). p. 121
Likewise, Magnusson (1995) developed a model predicated on four assumptions. The second assumption stated, “the individual functions and develops in a continuously ongoing, reciprocal process of interaction with his or her environment” (p. 25).

As mentioned before, the career development theories examined have not formally mentioned learning as a component whether large or small; however, one aspect of Peter’s (1989) model suggested that there is such a correlation which is what this study will add to the void in the literature. In 1989, Peter developed a model as a part of a framework for extension education programming. The underpinning of this model is the changing nature of the life structure. Therefore, as we discuss learning, adult development, and career development, it is important to note that learning can occur in multiple ways. Additionally, adult educators need to be cognizant of how adults learn and how they gain their professional knowledge. One such area of adult learning that has not been properly documented in the literature is the learning process of African American high school principals. Thus adult learning theories need to be reviewed in a parallel manner to those of career development theories. One such adult learning theory that is relevant to studying African American principals is informal and incidental learning.

Coffield (2000) stated:

Informal learning should no longer be regarded as an inferior form of learning whose main purpose is to act as the precursor to formal learning; It needs to be seen as fundamental, necessary and valuable in its own right, at times directly relevant to employment and at other times not relevant at all. (p. 8)

Coffield (2000) questioned the necessity of informal learning. Coffield was not alone. In recent years, adult educators have shown an increasing interest in informal learning. Bentley (1998) examined learning beyond the classroom; Dale and Bell (1999) researched informal and
incidental learning in the workplace; and McGiveney (1999) evaluated informal learning in the community. Informal and incidental learning has inserted itself into adult education because of its focus on the learner and the lessons learned from life experience (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). This may prove helpful in explaining how learning contributes to career development through informal learning experiences.

Problem Statement

Minorities are underrepresented in school administration including high school principal positions and have been for decades (Shakeshaft, 1999). Specifically, minority men and women continue to occupy the lowest positions in the administrative hierarchy while White males seemingly still hold the highest and most perceived prestigious positions (Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Mathews & Crow, 2003). In spite of the small numbers of African American principals, especially on the high school level, there have been several success stories. In order to learn from these African Americans who have become principals we need to learn from those who have successfully made it.

One such avenue that we can examine is the career development of these individuals. The majority of the current literature examined African American career development in the workforce and many scholars have found that when considering career development theories, very few have transferability to African Americans (Barrett, 2000; Palmer, 2001; Thomas, 2004; Wilson, 2004). Although those studies were not conducted in the public school K-12 sector, there have been a few key studies about African American principals and their career paths in educational settings.

Although the career development of African Americans has been slightly addressed in some studies, learning has not been considered a factor in that research. Nonetheless, learning is
an important aspect of adult development. Adults are often placed in learning situations by mere nature of life (Kidd, 1973; Knox, 1977; Magnusson, 1995; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Peters, 1989). Some of this learning occurs on the job; hence, incidental and informal learning takes place. Finally, it is important to note that career development as well as adult development involves learning and learning occurs in multiple ways.

The basic problem that gave rise to this study is the fact that there are very few African American high school principals especially males compared to the number of African American students in the state that this study took place and there are presumably many prevalent reasons why. Although there have been some who have experienced success, it is not sufficiently documented what led to their success. Thus, there is a need to expand the focus of career development to this population of African American principals by investigating the factors that have influenced their success. Furthermore, research of this nature was needed so that adult educators could broaden their understanding of the factors that influenced the careers of adults in the public school setting. One such factor that holds potential for influencing career development is research that considers learning in career development. This research expands the adult educator’s knowledge of the role of learning in career development.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the career development of African American male high school principals. Three pertinent research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the personal background factors that influence the career development of African American male high school principals?

2. What institutional and professional factors help shape the career development of African American male high school principals?
3. What is the role of learning in the career development of African American male high school principals?

Significance of the Study

Although the empirical studies on the career paths of African American high principals has been sparse, there are African American high principals who have been very successful and we need to utilize them as a learning base to expand knowledge and contribute to our understanding of this particular group. Furthermore, because this study sought to examine factors that influenced the career progression of African American high school principals as well as the background factors, the results of this study are beneficial to African Americans who aspire to become principals. This elevated level of awareness of the experiences of these principals in the public schools lead to a better understanding of factors that contributed to their entry into the principalship. This increases or even enhances the probability of producing more African American high school principals. This study also helps to decrease the void in the literature that specifically addresses the career development needs of African Americans, especially high school principals.

Similarly, the awareness provides the practitioners, those who are working as principals and assistant principals, with insight into similarities, which bonds them with their colleagues thereby creating a networking system. Likewise, this empirical data supports existing information needed by program planners, teacher educators, and institutional administrators to help prepare educational leaders who are diverse enough to lead schools for years to come. Likewise, the results of this study benefits staff developers who are seeking to inform both practicing African American principals as well as aspiring African American principals. Furthermore, the benefits of this study help educators identify the importance of learning in
career development, especially for African American high school principals. The findings of this study explain the role of learning in career development theories. Also, sharing the stories/themes from these principals’ experiences provides insight into future directions for professional development opportunities for aspiring principals.

Finally, research focusing on the career development of African American high school principals may have a potential for social change. This social change is due to those persons who make hiring recommendations and decisions for principals now have a better understanding of African Americans, their career aspirations, and their career development path. Similarly, the social change aspect is prevalent within the race as groups such as the National Alliance of Black Educators (NABSE) continue to serve as an advocacy group for minority students and encourage African Americans to become ambassadors for those same minority students.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used in this study. Blacks and African Americans was used interchangeably throughout this study as were the terms principal and administrator.

Principal—The educator who has executive authority for a school. Moreover, the highest-ranking educator in the building to whom everyone else reports.

African-American or Black—According to the US Census Bureau (2000), Blacks or African Americans are persons having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as “Black, African American, or Negro,” or provide written entries such as African American, Afro American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian.

Career Development—“the lifelong behavioral processes and the influences upon them which lead to ones’ work values, choice of occupation(s), creation of a career pattern, decision-
making style, role integration, self and career identity, educational literacy and related phenomena” (Herr & Cramer, 1984, p. 436).

*High Schools*— High schools may include grades 7 through 12 but typically encompasses only grades 9 through 12. This denotation is usually reserved only for public schools.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the career development of African American male high school principals. The research questions for this qualitative study were:

1. What are the personal background factors that influence the career development of African American male high school principals?

2. What institutional and professional factors help shape the career development of African American male high school principals?

3. What is the role of learning in the career development of African American male high school principals?

The literature reviewed in this chapter covered the career development of African Americans, African American principals, and theories regarding how adults learn. The literature review was divided into two areas. The first area was career development. Career development theories and select career development constructs were presented and then critiqued. Next, a section was devoted to the career development of African Americans in business and industry. Finally, a section was used to discuss career development and African American principals. The second area discussed adult development through select adult learning theories and critiques of them.

A very detailed search was conducted to find literature pertinent to this study. Sources included but were not limited to UMI/Dissertation Abstracts International, ERIC, Journal of Career Development, Career Development Quarterly, and the Galileo Electronic Card Catalog of
the University of Georgia Library System. A few of the major index words searched for were Blacks, African Americans, Principals, Administrators, Educators, Career behavior, Career theories, high school, Adult learning, and Adult development. Furthermore, many of these index words were used together to conduct more advanced searches.

Career Development Theories, Constructs, and Critiques

There are many theories that relate to career development as well as many constructs that attempt to define career development. Although some of these theories are targeted toward specific populations, most are referring to a generic population of society, seemingly White males. Previous research has been conducted on the career development of humankind but not specifically on African Americans and their career development as K-12 educators; thus, the desire of this particular research study was to seek knowledge about career development and race. The literature review in this section was set up to give an overview of several career development theories followed immediately by a brief critique of each one and its usefulness or perceived usefulness to African Americans.

Although very sparse, what little research there is in the area of the career behavior of African Americans seems to have stopped immediately after the 1970’s for some unexplained reason (London & Greller, 1991). However, there was resurgence during the 1990s. Wilson and Brown (1992) used Gallup survey results to report that African Americans conveyed a need for career development assistance at a rate almost three times that of Whites. Similarly, Brown (1995) reported that at the time of his research, according to census data, the career development of the country’s almost 30 million African Americans was presently in need of attention and interventions. He went on to say, “The facilitation of the career development of African
Americans may perhaps be instrumental to their economic, social, and psychological emancipation” (Brown, 1995, p. 8).

In his analysis of the literature, Brown (1995) reported that others had also found that career choice theories had been regularly criticized for their lack of relevance to the career behavior of ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans (Brooks, 1990; Carter & Cook, 1992; Cheatham, 1990). According to Brooks (1990) these criticisms centered on three main points. First, they were based on erroneous assumptions. Second, the theoretical concepts were not applicable to the various ethnic groups. Third, important determinants of career behavior were not addressed in these theories. In short, most of the theories of career development were developed from research on primarily White males with majority of them being middle class and had little to no applicability to ethnic minorities.

The career self-efficacy construct offers a positive outlook upon our understanding of the career development of African Americans although it is not a theory per se (Betz & Hackett, 1986). Initially taken from the work of Bandura (1977, 1986), career self-efficacy expectations are beliefs about an individual’s ability to execute an occupationally relevant behavior with great success and have these expectations determine the individual’s actions, effort, and diligence in regard to their vocational behavior. Following Bandura, in 1987 Lent and Hackett reiterated that the construct of self efficacy might be useful in explaining the behavior of ethnic minorities. A survey of the literature revealed that two studies, Post-Kammer and Smith (1986) and Post, Stewart, and Smith (1991), tested the assertion of efficacy and its relation to the career behavior of minorities. Post-Kammer and Smith (1986) found confidence levels to be associated to mathematics courses only for women who articulated lower consideration of math/science career choices relative to men. However, Post, Stewart, and Smith (1991) concluded that confidence
and self-efficacy were more determining factors in the career considerations of African American men relative to women, for whom their interests played the most prevailing role. Brown (1995) suggested that more research is needed in this area and proposed that if self efficacy is paramount in the career behavior of African Americans, then a more appropriate question would be whether and to what extent the self-efficacy expectations of African Americans are modifiable through career intervention.

Similarly, Cheatham (1990) reported on career development and Africentrism. He concluded, “Africentrism is the contention that African Americans have retained culturally relevant values, and beliefs inherent to their origins in America—is advanced and argued as legitimate in the derivation of a model that suggests appropriate career interventions with African Americans” (pp. 335 – 336). Cheatham (1990) argued that this model is one that allows the helper to use information specific to a particular culture to differentiate between an African American client’s psychosocial dynamics and behaviors and those behaviors that are products of ideologies imposed by the dominant “majority culture.” This concept is used to negate and explain many of the literature publications that discuss how African Americans differ from Whites on a number of career and career-related variables and suggested that their psychological processes may be different. Following a critique of Cheatham, Brown (1995) suggested that Cheatham’s model is fascinating and testable. However, there was no actual test of Cheatham’s model found in the empirical literature reviewed.

In addition to the career development constructs, there are several influential theories or models of career choice and development. Based on the appeal to this particular study and the repetition of being cited in other research studies, four theories were reviewed. Furthermore,
these studies addressed career patterns and behaviors. The theories reviewed were the Trait and Factor Theory, Roe’s Theory, Super’s Theory, and Holland’s Theory.

The Trait and Factor Theory is attributed to the early works of Parsons (1909). The Trait and Factor Approach is also referred to as the matching approach. This approach is grounded in psychology and is supported by actuarial methods. It viewed the person as a set of skills and abilities that could be measured and evaluated. Parsons insisted that success came when similar occupations were grouped based on the amounts of the specific traits that were needed. Specifically, the Trait and Factor Theory contained four propositions which were the core of existence for the theory according to Brown (1990). As reported by Brown (1995), the four propositions were:

1. Each individual has a unique set of traits that can be reliably and validly measured;
2. Occupations require that individuals possess specific traits to be successful;
3. It is possible and desirable to match a person’s unique set of traits to those required by occupations;
4. The closer the match between personal characteristics and those required by an occupation, the greater the likelihood of satisfaction with and productivity and tenure in the occupation. (p. 10)

After reviewing the propositions, Brown asserted that there was no evidence of specific testing of these propositions using African American populations but the theory appeared to be applicable to minorities as well as White males (Brown, 1995). Brown (1995) also noted that several problems with the propositions may minimalize the theories’ applicability to the career development of African Americans. Brown (1995) suggested that one problem with the measurement proposition is that the career behaviors of African Americans may be ill defined
and tested due to an insufficient understanding of the diverse life experiences of African Americans.

Similarly, Brown (1995) questioned the applicability of the proposition that occupations require a person to possess certain traits in order to be successful. Although this tenet may hold true for both Whites and African Americans, there was no documented research on whether or not both groups were mandated to have the same or different sets of traits (Brown, 1995). The contention raised against the proposition acknowledged that the most important or relevant traits of African Americans were both dependable and measurable; but, Brown (1995) asked if the requirements for success were different, then is this acceptable? As a result of the reviews of Brown (1990, 1995) it is hard to conclude the applicability of the Trait and Factor Theory to African Americans due to the missing or incomplete empirical data on the subject.

A second career development theory was developed by Roe. A theory of how personality development affected occupational choice and a psychologically based classification system of occupations were two substantial contributions that Roe made to the career development literature (Roe, 1956; Roe & Lunneborg, 1990). In 1956 Roe suggested that occupations could be organized on a scale based on the intensity and temperament of the interpersonal relationships involved in them and hierarchically on the basis of the degree of responsibility, capacity, and skill involved in each occupation (Roe, 1956). In a follow up research study, Roe and Lunneborg (1990) reported that the previous classification system failed to address minority issues.

In looking at personality development and occupational choice, Roe (1956) projected individual needs were structured based on the combination of genetic endowments, family background, and childrearing experiences. Furthermore, these structures in turn have an effect on the level and kind of occupation chosen and pursued (Roe, 1956). Therefore, she suggested
that social, and not physical, differences might account for ethnic differences in career choice behavior (Roe, 1956). After further studying the issues, Roe expressed a formula that included race within the group of factors classified as background factors (Roe & Lunneborg, 1990).

In a critique of the theory, Brown (1995) posited that though they didn’t specifically cite those minority issues, it appeared that Roe’s occupation categories failed to consider the overrepresentation of African Americans in low level service and laborer fields. Furthermore, many researchers reported that the structure of occupations, not unlike the structure of occupational opportunity, may be very dissimilar for African Americans compared to Whites (Gottfredson, 1978; Swinton, 1992; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). Regardless of Roe’s expression, there was no evidence of her formula proposing that occupations be ordered along a continuum and a hierarchical system being empirically tested on African Americans (Brown, 1995). Furthermore, it seemed that since there may be a difference in occupational behaviors, there is room to question the true applicability to other ethnic groups due to the assertion of genetic inheritance.

A third career development theorist is Donald Super. Super (1990) proposed that self-concept determined occupational choices and that self-concept and the manner in which it is carried out fluctuated as a function of stage of development. However, many scholars argued, without empirical evidence to support them, that there were more important determinants of African American career choices than the self-concept. These determinants were poverty and discrimination (Carter & Cook, 1992; Osipow, 1975; Smith, 1983). Disagreeing with the aforementioned, Super (1990) referenced the research of Salomone and Slaney (1978) and Kidd (1984) to show support for the role of the self-concept in the occupational choices of the economically disadvantaged. Additionally, Super (1990) argued, “socioeconomic status (SES)
probably has a twofold effect on career development: opening/closing career opportunities and shaping occupational and self-concepts” (p. 229). Further, Super argued that career choice is contextual. Ultimately, Super, Savickas, and Super (1996) collaborated to identify the various stages of career development: 1) exploratory stage (ages 15-24); 2) establishment stage (ages 15-44); 3) maintenance stage (ages 44-65); and 4) disengagement stage (age 65+ including retirement planning and living).

Brown (1995) offered a differing view of Super’s Theory. In critique of Super’s Theory, he reported that African American populations still have not been investigated on the basis of the relationship between the self-concept and career behavior. Correspondingly, Brown (1995) suggested it may be that the experience of racial/ethnic discrimination may not just confine ranges and types of opportunity but also outline occupational and self-concepts as reported by many authors. According to Brown’s (1995) review, “Super’s assertions that definable stages of career development exist and that how the self-concept is implemented varies as a function of stage of development are ideas that have not been validated with African American populations” (p. 14).

Similarly, others have criticized Super’s proposed career development theory due to the fact that it is associated with socioeconomic status and, because at that particular time of evaluation, most African Americans occupied the lower socioeconomic strata, they posited that the concept may also be racially/ethnically biased (Smith, 1975, 1983). Smith (1983) further maintained that current career development research inaccurately assumed that career development inventories considered vocational tasks universal to all races or ethnic groups. Therefore, the concept of career development may need to be revised for African Americans.
This gave more of a perspective on whether or not the concept could be used to make
generalizations across many ethnic groups.

The fourth career development theory reported here was offered by Holland. Holland
(1985) proposed that personalities and work environments could be characterized by their
likeness to six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and
conventional. Table 1 provides an overview of Holland’s typology where he gives six
personality types and characteristics of each type and possible career choices for each personality
type. For example, Holland (1985) contended that a realistic personality type likes the outdoors
and prefers activities that use strength and conditioning. Ultimately, this person will most likely
become a farmer, truck driver, or pilot to list a few. Another example from his typology is that
the social type personalities enjoy the company of others and are likely to become nurses,
counselors, or librarians. Surprisingly, educators, although perceived in society as social people,
were not on his list of probable career choices.

Table 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Possible Career Options</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Realistic</td>
<td>Outdoor type. Tend to like and be good at activities that require strength and coordination. Like working with things (tools, machines, etc).</td>
<td>Farmer, truck driver, pilot, builder, carpenter, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Investigative</td>
<td>Interested in logic and concepts. Tend to enjoy and be good at abstract thought. Often associated with science. Like working with information (abstract ideas and theories).</td>
<td>Chemist, Mathematician, Pharmacist, Researcher, Dentist, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Artistic</td>
<td>Tend to use imagination a lot. Like to express their feelings and ideas. Dislike rules and regulations and enjoy music, drama, and art. They also like creating things.</td>
<td>Artist, Actor, Dancer, Designer, DJ, Composer, Painter, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Social</td>
<td>Enjoy the company of other people especially to help them. Tend to be warm and caring people.</td>
<td>Nurse, Librarian, Counselor, Physiotherapist, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Enterprising

Enjoy the company of other people, but mainly dominate or persuade rather than help them. Enjoys actions more than thought. They also like to be leaders.

Sales Rep, Headmaster, Lawyer, Managers, Journalist, etc.

6. Conventional

Likes rules and regulations, structure and order. Tend to be well organized with little imagination.

Secretary, Typist, Clerk, Factory worker, etc.

Note. From John Holland’s Career Choice Theory

Additionally, Holland (1985) posited that a range of “isms” (i.e., ageism, classism, racism, sexism) confined the range of career options available to people and that if persons are prevented from being able to go after the expression of the most prevailing feature of their personality then they will have to go after the next most dominant feature.

Brown (1995) affirmed that the assertion that people seek work environments that allow them to express the character of their personalities is the fundamental underpinning to Holland’s Theory. However, Brown (1995) pointed out that Holland was unsuccessful in his attempt to articulate what the long-term implications of experiencing restricted options might have on the development of work personalities. Holland’s theory proposed that people in different occupations, classified according to Holland’s typological system, should also reflect different patterns of interests. Also, regarding personality orientation research, Miller, Springer, and Wells (1988) found that most of their African American youth respondents recorded Holland’s Social type as their highest or next highest personality type. Holland’s theory yielded another integral component to career development in the notion of person-environmental fit or congruence, that persons of a particular Holland code should be found in occupations classified with similar codes. Furthermore, Sheffey, Bingham, and Walsh (1986) provided empirical support for congruence and African Americans as it related to the people of a particular Holland personality type found working in occupations with others who shared similar personality types.
In summary, there are no single theories of career development that exclusively address the issues significant to ethnic groups in the United States (Osipow & Littlejohn, 1995). However, some studies have mentioned African Americans and career development even though the sample population wasn’t exclusively African American (Hackett & Byars, 1996). Of the four career development theories presented here, Holland’s career development theory addressed issues related to race, gender, and class. Although Holland’s theory does provide the most career research on African Americans, critics suggested that more research is needed that delves into the concepts of identity and differentiation.

Career Development and African Americans in Business/Industry

One such area where research has been conducted in regard to the career development of African Americans is in the workplace. For example, Barrett (2000) observed, “Little is known about the career development of the ethnic or racial minority human resource developer in general, and the black human resource developer specifically” (p. 104). His study sought to describe the career experiences of black human resource developers. This qualitative study consisted of data collection from 10 participants. The findings led to the following conclusions: Careers evolve. Race has an impact. Bicultural competence is beneficial (Barrett, 2000).

First, the study revealed that the black human resource developers’ careers changed over time. This change was due to their shared experiences and their possible careers that were yet to come. As a result, the human resource developers had to adjust their plans and make decisions throughout their careers that were beneficial. Second, race had an impact on these human resource developers in two areas—in the work environment and on careers. Affirmative action was found to be a contributing factor here because of the duality of it. On the one hand it opens doors but on the other it has become racialized. Although the participants cited covert racism, it
included the proverbial glass ceiling, a formidable barrier that hinders upward progression. In addition to racism, sexism often forms this ceiling for women. Another issue was that of limited access to important mentors who were pivotal to career progression. The third issue about the impact of race was affirmative action and the diversity ghetto which according to Barrett (2000), “is because of occupational segregation where Blacks are steered into certain job categories” (p. 203).

The third conclusion is that bicultural competence was beneficial to black human resource developers. Barrett (2000) pointed out that all of the black human resource developers in his study made choices to work in predominantly white organizations. Furthermore, none had ever worked for a predominantly black or minority organization and only one had attended a historically black college or university. However, Barrett suggested that the participants of the study lived within a bicultural life structure. Although they worked within the dominant American culture where they earned their livings, they lived their personal lives far from work within the Black American culture. Barrett further stated, “even the two vice presidents of human resources, persons who would be considered to be the most successful and perhaps the most assimilated, used bicultural strategies to manage their lives” (2000, p. 205).

Similarly, Palmer (2001) completed a qualitative study using 10 participants to analyze the career development of African American managers in the areas of organizational development and training. The purpose of the study was to investigate the career development of African Americans working in the areas of training and organizational development. Moreover, the study was guided by research questions seeking to identify factors that affected the career development of African Americans in the fields of training and organizational development. The
factors fell into three categories—structural, attitudinal, and personal. He discovered these structural factors:

A) Lack of diversity
B) The good old boy network
C) Lack of mentoring
D) Inadequate career succession/development programs. (p. 142)

Palmer (2001) reported that all of the participants expressed the important impact of mentoring for their career development and advancement. Ultimately, the participants concluded that mentoring is a valuable management tactic that benefits both the mentor and the protégé.

The participants identified two attitudinal factors “Prejudice/against African Americans: Stereotypes and Discrimination” and “Prejudice/Gender Stereotypes and Discrimination” (p. 142). Palmer stated, “while prejudice and stereotype are two separate concepts, both are inextricably linked” (2001, p. 184). Furthermore, he concluded that discrimination based on race and discrimination based on gender were two types of prejudices that emerged in this study. Palmer (2001) also reported, “according to some of the female participants, gender prejudice and gender stereotypes are alive and well in corporate America. Sexist attitudes also had a negative impact on career development and aspirations as some participants reported (Palmer, 2001).

Additionally, Palmer (2001) found three personal factors:

A) Networking—family, friends, co-workers/supervisors
B) Education/Training
C) Self-management (p. 142).

According to Palmer (2001) the personal factors included networking (support from friends and other family members, and support from co-workers and supervisors), education and training,
and self management of career. Specifically speaking to networking, Palmer (2001) concluded that, “through a web of networks, participants were able to give and receive support, advice and encouragement regarding their careers and the careers of other African Americans” (p. 206).

Likewise, this study uncovered that education and training contributed to the participant’s professional development. Palmer writes, “Several participants acknowledged that their personal quest for additional education and training has allowed them to gain additional opportunities in the fields of training and organizational development” (2001, p. 215). This had implications for my study as the role of learning in career development was explored.

The self managing of one’s own career is another personal factor of this study (Palmer, 2001). Palmer (2001) states, “confronted with formidable barriers, notably, prejudice, stereotypes, and other structural obstacles, many have taken initiatives and seek out strategies to advance their careers” (p. 226). This self management concept had a twofold meaning. First, self-management can be correlated to self directed learning which could play a pivotal role in career succession and second, self-management against obstacles is the same will to succeed or perseverance that others have concluded in their studies regarding African Americans and career development (Laury, 1988; Thomas, 2004). Using these findings, Palmer concluded that the career development of the participants was impacted by a number of organizational and attitudinal variables including the lack of succession planning, the lack of mentoring, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices and behaviors.

In summary, Barrett (2000) and Palmer (2001) have completed two recent studies in regard to the career development of African Americans in the workplace. The career development of African Americans has not been extensively studied but the workplace is an area that has previously garnered a lot more attention than other realms. Both of the studies were
similar in focus but sought to evaluate different variables. These studies revealed at least three findings that are important to African Americans and career development: the impact of race on the workplace, the importance of education and training, and the relationship between networking and mentoring in the workplace.

Career Development and African Americans in Higher Education

Although limited, there has been some research on the career development of African Americans in education, particularly in higher education. One such study was conducted by Laury (1988) who examined contributing factors of the career advancement of black faculty members at traditionally white institutions (TWIs). She used a questionnaire to derive data from a sample of Black faculty members and faculty development coordinators who were employed in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (SSHE). There were a total of 161 respondents.

There were nine findings that resulted from this study. The findings were:

1) Respondents rated “research and scholarship” activities as being of “medium” to “high” importance to the acquisition of tenure and/or promotion of Black faculty members at TWIs.

2) Respondents rated “assessment and evaluation” activities as being of “medium” to “high” importance to the acquisition of tenure and/or promotion of Black faculty members at TWIs.

3) Respondents rated the “ability and perseverance” of the faculty member as the most important factor of tenure and/or promotion of Black faculty at TWIs.

4) Respondents rated the interpersonal support relationships as being of high importance for the acquisition of tenure and/or promotion of Black faculty members at TWIs.
5) Fifty-three percent of the Black faculty members reported that they had a mentoring relationship during their graduate or professional school experience.

6) Black faculty members reported that interpersonal support relationship activities are rarely performed for them by their colleagues at TWIs.

7) Black faculty members rated “racist attitudes” and “discriminatory practices” as two of the major types of impediments to their tenure and/or promotion at TWIs.

8) Black faculty members rated “lack of minority representation providing internal and external review” of their research as a major impediment to their acquisition of tenure and/or promotion at TWIs.

9) Faculty Development Coordinators rated “lack of contact and access to scholarly journals” and “racist attitudes” as causing “medium” to “high” impediment to the acquisition of tenure and/or promotion of Black faculty members at TWIs. (pp. 142-143)

Laury (1988) concluded that the first three findings, one, two, and three “display a sound regard for several of the prime values of the academy” (p. 144). The second group, four, five, and six, she says, “Exhibit appreciation for the special significance of collegiality for individual members of the academic community” (p. 144). Finally, she concluded that the third grouping, seven, eight, and nine, held the essence of the study. She added, “What findings seven, eight, and nine lay out in unambiguous terms is how the general norms of academe when interpreted in the setting of an institution, a college, division, or department can turn out to be confining for scholarly endeavors rather than open new ideas” (p. 144). This in turn means that relationships such as mentors and sponsors were important to the career progression of African Americans. Persevering and having the support of others are important factors that have already been noted in the career development of African Americans. Finally, as a result of her findings, Laury
(1988) suggested that, “further research is needed to examine a different sample of Black faculty members from one or more states to determine if there are similarities or differences from the findings in this study” (p. 156).

Kauper (1991) completed a study on factors influencing the career decisions of minorities who worked at a predominantly white liberal arts institution. The study sought to identify and describe why minorities made the decision to accept positions, remain in positions, and/or why they considered leaving faculty positions at predominantly white institutions. A case study approach, including document analysis, was used in the study. Eleven minority respondents from a private comprehensive institution participated in the study; “the institution emphasizes the liberal arts and it also awards degrees in occupational and professional disciplines” (1991, p. 82).

One finding of particular interest is that minority faculty at this institution did not have access to early sponsorship. Kauper (1991) concluded, “While educational preparation plays a vital role in career development, sponsorship appears to be a stronger force in shaping academic careers” (p. 162). Other findings in this study were that minority faculty did not depend on media targeted at minorities to obtain information about job openings. Likewise, Black faculty experienced blatant racism in the classroom; however, those experiences did not transform into a feeling of discrimination on the campus. Another finding was that although being a minority was not a main factor in career advancement, it had potential influence on advancement in administrative positions. Moreover, this is germane to tenure and promotion.

Similarly, Alfred’s (1995) study on the professional development of the history of black tenured female faculty in the white research academy sheds some light on the career development of African Americans in higher education. Alfred stated, “The study explored the influence of the Black subculture and the White institutional and societal culture on the
professional development of the participants, the women’s experiences with the white academic culture, and the adaptive procedures they employed to manage the culture” (p. 37). Her study used qualitative methodologies to take an in-depth look into the professional development experiences of five women faculty members. One of the findings was a result of evaluating career structure. The career structure according to Alfred (1995) represented the “aspirations, motivations, and transitions, and satisfactions and other forces that have helped shape the careers of these women (participants)” (p. 273). The study also revealed that the participants didn’t just want a job but they wanted a professional career.

In Alfred’s (1995) study, one conclusion that was reached was that the role of mentors in the professional development of these women was very momentous. They all had very important relationships with mentors who helped direct their way to the academy and often supported them once they were there. One of Alfred’s (1995) implications for future studies is important for highlighting the importance of mentoring. She surmised, “There is a need for further exploration into the role of mentoring relationships in the professional development of Black women” (p. 377). She added, “Participants in such a study should include women who were involved in mentoring relationships as well as those who were not involved in such relationships” (p. 377).

Shumate (1995) completed a study on the mentoring process of African American female middle management administrators in higher education. The purposes of the study were to:

1) develop a definition of mentoring for middle management administrators in higher education with a specific focus on African American females; 2) determine the strategies utilized and confirmed in the mentoring relationships; 3) identify the specific types of development which occurred and the specific learning, benefits, and outcomes; and
4) ascertain how the relationship helped in overcoming barriers or problems in initiating, developing, and maintaining mentoring relationships. (p. 8)

Data was collected through a variety of ways including interviews, surveys, and case studies. Participants came from across the United States and the study yielded several findings that have made a contribution to the understanding of the career development of adults in higher education. Among the findings are five that reflect the importance of mentoring for the career development of African Americans in higher education:

1). “Mentoring relationships were evident in relationships outside the traditional area of mentoring” (p. 261).

2). “Mentoring relationships for African American females can occur at all levels of the organizational structure in higher education” (p. 262).

3). “Availability, proximity, and accessibility could and did limit the amount and quality of mentoring opportunities available to African American female middle managers” (p. 264).

4). “Mentoring relationships for African American females resulted in long-lasting relationships rather than terminated relationships” (p. 270).

5). “Each mentoring relationship dealt with personal and organizational issues which facilitated work adjustment” (p. 273).

Moreover, Shumate (1995) reported that all but one of the relationships involved a supervisor-subordinate relationship. However, there were many relationships including the “transforming” relationship. This assisted the person being mentored with dealing with many isms (race, sex, color, and class). Additionally, Shumate (1995) stated, “In the transforming relationship a
significant amount of emotional support was provided to assist the mentee in dealing with the trauma of conflict and rejection” (p. 284).

In another study, Thomas (2004) also contributed to this base of knowledge on the career development of African Americans in higher education. The purpose of her study was to look at what factors contributed to the career succession experiences of African American women to executive leadership positions in two-year colleges. There were five participants in this case study. The participants were five of the six African American female Directors of Instruction in a southeastern United States two-year college system. The factors they revealed were categorized into three areas: structural factors, institutional and professional factors, and personal factors.

The structural factors were racism and sexism. The research highlighted the absence of African American women Directors of Instruction in the two-year college system used in the study. Furthermore, it was revealed that opportunities for such African American women directors are reserved for colleges with large African American student populations. Similarly, the majority of the women who do serve as directors work at institutions where the presidents are African American.

The institutional and professional factors included mentoring which has been repeatedly mentioned in the literature. Other institutional and professional factors included supervisory and institutional support and restricted network opportunities. Supervisory and institutional support was a common factor identified by all of the women. Specifically, supervisory support for career development and educational attainment was noted. The participants reported that support for their career development included encouragement to pursue promotional opportunities and sometimes flex scheduling to accommodate professional development opportunities. Also, the participants noted that mentoring was important to career succession as it helped to motivate,
build confidence, and/or to develop supervisory and management skills. Additionally, Thomas (2004) stated, “Unlike mentoring and institutional and supervisory support, restricted network opportunities was a less salient factor. But, the restricted network opportunities factor was significant because it was noted by a majority of the five participants” (p. 111).

The personal factors were family motivation and role models, drive and determination, and desire to make a difference. Participants noted the motivation that they received from their families and from fellow African Americans. Moreover, the family support was noted as a key factor in career succession. The drive and determination factor as well as the desire to make a difference is likened to the perseverance finding that Laury (1988) concluded in her study. The mere will to succeed against perceived obstacles and barriers has been shown to propel the career progression of African Americans.

Thomas (2004) concluded three things about the career succession experiences of African American women executive leaders in two-year colleges. First, career succession is affected by sexism and racism. Thomas (2004) reported, “However, racist and sexist practices are institutional and so ingrained that the women turned their energy to coping with them rather than discussing them” (p. 135). Second, career succession was evened out by institutional support for education and career development as well as mentoring and network opportunities. Third, career succession can be molded by self motivation and determination and support from family and other role models. In addition to the drive and determination mirroring Laury (1988), Thomas stated, “African American women who see successful images of family and receive positive messages of encouragement for education and career success exhibit greater self-efficacy in the pursuit of career goals” (2004, p. 145). This conclusion is supported by Betz and Hackett’s 1986 career self-efficacy construct and Hackett and Byars who in 1996 gave confirmation using social
cognitive theory that African American women’s diligence in pursuing academic and career goals is facilitated by vicarious learning through family role models and verbal persuasion.

Wilson (2004) also completed a study using community and technical colleges as her setting. The purpose of her study was to examine the career development of senior-level African American women in these educational settings. This study was unique in that it sought to determine what factors played a role in the women’s career advancement. Additionally, it intended to determine what common mentoring experiences the women had. Lastly, the study sought to identify the common strategies that the women used to advance their career. The qualitative study involved nine African American women who were senior level employees within the state’s two year college system. Professional development opportunities, support systems, and double jeopardy experiences were the three categories of factors revealed in the study. The professional development opportunities included positive organizational context, formal peer groups, and individual self development which can include informal, incidental, and self-directed learning. The support systems included those inside the organization and outside the organization. Examples were inside support systems came from peers and co-workers while outside systems included family, friends, sorority sisters, and church.

The double jeopardy experiences were those influenced by negative and positive experiences. For example, the positive experiences were things such as “being the first” whether it was the first to win a specific award or the first black woman to hold a certain position such as director, vice president, or president. Another positive experience included obtaining advanced degrees. Likewise, the participants experienced negative situations. However, Wilson (2004) wrote, “When the women were asked to describe pivotal career moments, seven of the
respondents viewed their negative experiences as learning opportunities.” These findings led Wilson (2004) to make the following conclusions:

1. Formal, organized and planned, professional development opportunities are needed for African American women to promote their career development and advancement.
2. Proactive self-management and career management are critical to the career development of senior level African American women.
3. Support networks are crucial to the career development of African American women.
4. Issues of diversity need to be managed in order for African American women to succeed in the workplace. (p. 94)

The fourth conclusion listed is in alignment with Thomas’s (2004) study that substantiated that racism is a hindrance to career succession.

In summary, there have been a limited number of studies on the career development of African Americans in higher education. The studies reviewed here included four different settings: research institutions, community colleges, technical schools, and liberal arts institutions. The findings across these studies had a few commonalities. One of the more prevalent findings included racism as a factor in the career progression of some. Racism served as a barrier to career succession making it harder for African Americans to move on to higher positions; however, in one study conducted by Kauper (1991) race was found to enhance advancement in higher education administrative positions. Another factor was mentoring opportunities or lack thereof. The lack of mentoring affected how some participants were not exposed to certain experiences. On the other hand, when mentoring was present, it provided morale boosters and often times provided participants the opportunity to enhance their management/supervisory skills by learning from others.
A third factor included personal factors ranging from self (motivation and desire to succeed), to family, (moral support in general or role reversal while women pursue advanced degrees), and friends, again for moral support. These factors affected career succession by providing encouragement and support to pursue professional and career development opportunities. Likewise, the support network gave some participants the confidence seek other opportunities.

Career Development and African American Principals

Even though the literature on the career development of African American principals is very limited, what little there was focused on women as a minority compared to men and minority women compared to White women. The literature revealed that the only thing researchers know with any certainty about African American women in positions of authority in America’s public schools is that there are not many of them (Jacobson, 1990; Richards, 1988; Rusch, 2004). Because they have been so few in number, there is precious little research about African American women in educational administration, their professional aspirations, the obstacles they confront as they pursue their goals, and the roles of mentors and sponsors in advancing their careers (Allen, Jacobson, & Lomotey, 1995). Furthermore, research has shown that the lack of mentors and sponsors in educational administration for minority women has been detrimental. However, since this 1995 study, Thomas (2004) and Wilson (2004) have concluded in their respective studies that mentoring is important in the career progression of African Americans women in higher educational administration. Research suggested that a lack of involvement and support by such critical figures as mentors has blocked women and members of underrepresented groups from achieving their administrative aspirations (Coursen, D.,
Similarly, Allen (1992) completed a study on the role of mentors and sponsors for African American women in K-12 educational administration. She used a multi-case study approach to gather information on African American women educational administrators in Western New York. A questionnaire was sent to 52 African American women educators. Thirty-eight responded and eight agreed to be interviewed. Allen’s findings led to six conclusions:

1. Mentors and sponsors may not be important to African American women in the intermediate stages of their careers, although sponsors do play significant roles in helping the aspirants move beyond these intermediate stages.

2. Background factors, such as mothers’ education and church and political affiliations, create high levels of expectation for African American women, give them the motivation to pursue their early goals, and enable them to bypass the mentoring process.

3. Race is seen as a barrier to careers for African American women, but these women learn to develop coping skills that enable them to pursue their goals despite this barrier.

4. Even though African American women have often been able to reach the intermediate stage of their careers without a mentor, they may hit a glass ceiling if they do not have a sponsor.

5. The people that could most likely fill the role of the sponsor are white men because they are the largest group of administrators, but they are not taking on these roles for African American women.
6. Institutions, graduate programs, and school districts can and should function as sponsors to bridge the gap until there are more African American women in the field. (p. 93)

Of these six findings, four were important to this study. First, the study revealed that for African Americans mentors and sponsors may not be important in the intermediate stages although sponsors play a major role in helping the aspirants move past the intermediate stages. Second, African American women have been able to reach the intermediate stage of their careers without a mentor; they sometimes hit a glass ceiling if they do not have a sponsor to help them to move on. Third, the people who could serve as mentors and sponsors are white males because they make up the largest group of administrators but they are not taking on these roles for African American women. Simply put, these women made it to the middle of their careers and either topped out shortly before reaching a plateau or stopping at the plateau. However, if they did eventually benefit from having a mentor or sponsor, it was from someone they could relate to, meaning same race and gender. Fourth, race may be a barrier but Allen (1992) pointed out that in spite of this barrier, the participants in the study learn to create and then enhance coping skills that enable them to proceed. This finding was aligned with Laury (1988) who concluded that perseverance is important in the career progression of African Americans. Similarly, Thomas (2004) and Wilson (2004) noted that race did not stop their participants’ career progression.

Nicholson (1999) also completed a study that included six African American women. Citing a shortage of minorities entering the principalship, Nicholson (1999) went on to point out, “with the increasing number of minority students of various ethnicities entering our public schools, there is a definite need to hire administrators who reflect the student population” (p. 115). Nicholson’s study identified nine themes:
1. Black Woman’s work ethic
2. Perceived barriers and constraints encountered
3. Organizational socialization
4. Self-will, determination and the African American Woman
5. Spiritual connection
6. Familial ideals towards education
7. Cultural expectations
8. Future aspirations
9. Advice to aspiring administrators (p. 89).

Of particular note, is the fourth theme, self-will, determination and the African American woman. This finding resonated with Laury (1998), Thomas (2004) and Wilson (2004) who all concluded that perseverance was important to the career progression of their participants.

Similarly, Prescott-Hutchins (2002) study on the lived experiences of 14 African American women principals in Georgia yielded that even though the participants faced obstacles—they turned them into successes. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the experiences of the African American women principals living in the State of Georgia. The participants also shared that they often found themselves of double and sometimes triple jeopardy as they fought discriminatory practices to get ahead. These practices came on the basis of race and gender. Additionally, the study concluded that the women faced stereotypical opposition, challenges when trying to obtain degrees, meeting certification requirements, and receiving favorable employment evaluations. Similarly, mirroring the conclusion of Laury (1988) in regard to perseverance promoting career progression, Prescott-Hutchins stated:
The challenges, not obstacles, to the job and success fostered problem-solving strategies and coping mechanisms for the 14 African American women principals interviewed. There were a variety of successes, success was not expected; nor was it a surprise. In some cases it was a calling, and in others it was all about perseverance. (p. 130)

Prescott-Hutchins (2002) concluded that, “the isms of racism, sexism, culturalism, and classism were challenges, but not obstacles to professional success” (p. 132). This conclusion is inevitably related to the perseverance of the participants reported earlier.

Perseverance was not the only variable in career progression. Another such variable was upward mobility. Rance (1992) conducted a qualitative study using 12 Black assistant principals whose purpose was to:

Determine the factors that had been responsible for selected Black assistant principals obtaining their present positions; to determine what their future career aspirations were; and to determine what conditions or obstacles they had encountered or expected to encounter in pursuing their aspirations. (p. 4)

Upon data analysis, Rance (1992) categorized her participant’s responses into four major groups. They were demographic data related to respondents, factors responsible for becoming assistant principals, obstacles encountered or anticipated in pursuing aspirations, and future aspirations of respondents. The third category is of particular interest as it breaks down the obstacles or perceived obstacles to career aspirations of the participants. They noted administrative preparation; academic and work experience; institutional racism and sexism; tokenism; socialization process; and mentors/sponsors. Based on the findings, Rance (1992) concluded:

1). When blacks enter education and move toward administrative roles, they have high aspirations for major leadership positions.
2). Black assistant principals find that their opportunity to advance, commensurate with their aspirations, is thwarted by conditions unrelated to their ability.

3). After black assistant principals recognize their difficulty in advancing to higher positions, they adjust their aspirations (p. 78).

The third conclusion suggested that participants adjust to circumvent situations. This desire to succeed in spite of is in alignment with Laury (1988) who concluded that perseverance is important in the career progression of African Americans. Furthermore, Rance (1992) suggested that further research be extended to include a broader sample of black educators from various positions that will yield comparisons between blacks and their white counterparts.

In summary, the literature review revealed that the amount of studies in regard to the career development of African American principals was not plentiful. However, those studies that were available focused primarily on minority women. Overall, many of the studies highlighted the shortage of qualified African American principals and gave reasons to why that might be so. Among those factors, one that was found in several studies is the role of mentors and sponsors in the career progression of minorities, especially women. Another factor was that the determination to succeed is very important. An important implication of these studies for this proposed research is the question as to the relevance of the findings for African American male principals.

Adult Learning and Career Development

Learning is an important aspect of adult development and may have implications for career development. For example, Peters (1989) developed a model on the life structure that was derived from a framework in extension education. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) stated that, “in addition to mapping out the model itself, Peters has outlined specific implications for educational
programming in terms of both the needs assessment process and the educational strategies for learning” (p. 135). In other words, Peters’ model demonstrated the potential learning holds for influencing adult development generally, and career development (through the “work subsystem”) specifically. This particular model was a part of an infrastructure that fused biological, psychological, and sociological aspects for adult development together when used in *extension education* programming throughout the lifespan of adults. This structure has three task-related subsystems—work, other, and self. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) defined work as, “job-related activities in which the person engages” (pp. 134-135). Work is the subsystem that this study concerning African American principals would be interested in due to learning being an integral part of adult development.

However, in order to evaluate the career development of adults we must understand that learning is not an independent factor; instead, it is interdependent. Cytrynbaum and Crites (1989) stated, “there is a need to extrapolate and apply the central concepts from adult developmental theory to career developmental theory and for adult development theory to incorporate the subject matter of career development theory” (p. 82). A few adult development theorists integrated career boundaries as markers of adult life course phases. Vaillant (1977), for example, did include career consolidation as a separate phase, covering ages 25-35. Similarly, Levinson (1986) did not focus on career development as a separate type of development, but he does include career and work development as a key element of life structures during the young and middle adulthood years. Likewise, career development theorists including Super have made some effort to infuse family and life development into their career development theories. Therefore, since few direct applications of adult development theories have been applied to the
work setting, such studies are needed to determine how to better link career and adult
development concepts.

Adult learning has been systematically studied since the 1920’s yet, after more than 80
years, there are no single explanations or theories of adult learning (Bierema, 2001). Merriam
(1993, 2001) metaphorically described the knowledge base of adult learning as a mosaic.
Thorndike, Bregman, Tilton, and Woodyard, (1928) yielded the earliest known research on adult
learning and it was centered on whether or not adults could learn.

Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) reported:

Attempts at codifying differences between adults and children as a set of principles, a
model, or even a theory of adult learning have been, and continue to be, pursued by adult
educators. However, just as there is no single theory that explains all of human learning
in general, there is no single theory of adult learning. (p. 83)

Moreover, they suggested that there are several models, frameworks, and theories. These
theories covered many disciplines including learning in adulthood. Of the theories that have
been proposed, self-directed learning, informal and incidental learning, as well as experiential
learning are the ones that were reviewed for this study. They were chosen because they were
well researched theories that held promise for guidance about learning and career development.

The first adult learning theory discussed here is self-directed learning. Self directed
learning emerged shortly after andragogy and was popularized in the 1970’s (Tough, 1979).
Furthermore, as a theory, it was discussed by scholars such as Cyril Houle and Malcolm
Knowles and examined the form and process of learning with the assumption that a great deal
of learning happens outside formal educational institutions (Houle, 1961; Knowles, 1975; Tough,
1979). According to Brockett and Hiemstra, (1991), self-directed learning is grounded in
humanism and pursues self-actualization. Three essential ideas are incorporated into the concept of self-directed learning. First, a self-initiated process of learning that stresses the ability of individuals to plan and manage their own learning; second, an attribute or characteristic of learners with personal autonomy as its hallmark; and third, a way of organizing instruction in formal settings that allows for greater learner control (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Caffarella & O’Donnell, 1989; Candy, 1991).

Caffarella (1993) posited that in self-directed learning, the progression of learning is centered on learner need and that need is more important than the content to be studied or learned. She further suggested that educators must serve as facilitators to satisfy their role to the student in order to be effective in the learning process (Caffarella, 1993). Merriam and Caffarella (1999) reported that self-directed learning is a process that can be formed through three different models of self-directed learning. These models are linear, interactive, and instructional. In linear models, learners progress via self-direction through a succession of steps to reach their particular learning goals (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Next, interactive models were those that were not inevitably premeditated or logical as in linear models; instead, the emphasis was on factors about the learner or surrounding the learner that mutually shape experiences of self-directed learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Finally, the third type of model is instructional whereby instructors incorporated self-directed learning opportunities into their formalized instructional programs and classroom curriculum (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Caffarella (1993) reported:

Self-directed learning has contributed to our understanding of learning by 1) identifying an important form of adult learning and providing us with insights into the process of
learning, 2) challenging us to define and debate the salient characteristics of adult learners, and 3) expanding our thinking about learning in formal settings. (p. 27)

Self directed learning and its goals combined well with the main idea of career succession as it related to career development. Several studies reviewed in previous sections pointed to individual efforts as means to upward career development. Moreover, in the absence of mentoring and networking opportunities, self-directed learning has been the only avenue for some to succeed (Thomas, 2004). Therefore, it is feasible that self-directed learning may be important in the career development of African American principals.

Another type of adult learning is informal and incidental learning; it focuses on the learner and the lessons learned from life experience (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Marsick and Watkins (1990) define informal and incidental learning as:

- Formal learning is typically institutionally sponsored, classroom-based, and highly structured. Informal learning, a category that includes incidental learning, may occur in institutions, but it is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner.
- Incidental learning is defined as a byproduct of some other activity, such as task accomplishment, interpersonal interaction, sensing the organizational culture, trial-and-error experimentation, or even formal learning. Informal learning can be deliberately encouraged by an organization or it can take place despite an environment not highly conducive to learning. Incidental learning, on the other hand, almost always takes place although people are not always conscious of it.

(p. 12)
Similarly, but predating Marsick and Watkins, Coombs and Ahmed (1974) stated:

Informal learning is the lifelong process by which every individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment—at home, at work, at play: from the example and attitude of families and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to the radio or viewing films or television. Generally informal education is unorganized, unsystematic and even unintentional at times, yet accounts for the great bulk of any person’s total lifetime learning—including that of a highly “schooled” person. (p. 8)

Marsick and Watkins (2001) concluded that informal learning is sometimes intentional but not highly structured or organized. They further reported examples, such as self-directed learning, networking, coaching, mentoring, and performance planning which include opportunities to review learning needs. Similar to self-directed learning, this adult learning theory had potential applicability to this study as well. Informal learning experiences were noted in the pilot study as meaningful steps in the career succession to the principalship. Similarly, on the job training also added to the informal learning experiences that aid in career progression.

The final adult learning theory reviewed was experiential learning. Scholars as far back as Dewey (1938) asserted that life and experiences are a type of learning. Dewey further asserted that in order for learning to happen through an experience there must be continuity and interaction (1938). Many scholars wrote on learning as an experience. One of the most noted scholars is David Kolb who built a framework based on the previous works of Dewey, Piaget, and Lewin. Kolb created his model out of four elements: concrete experience, observation and reflection, the formation of abstract concepts and testing in new situations. He later transformed
these into the experiential learning circle. Kolb and an associate, David Fry, worked together to share in the experiential framework (Kolb & Fry, 1975). In their 1975 work, Kolb and Fry suggested that the learning cycle can begin at any one of the four points as it is spherical in nature.

In 1976 Kolb and Fry developed a learning style inventory which was designed to place people on a line between concrete experience (an event) and abstract conceptualization (what was learned, future implications); and active experimentation (what is done differently) and reflective observation (what happened). Consequently, they used this framework to identify four basic learning styles. These styles are the converger, the diverger, the assimilator, and the accommodator. The converger has abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. The diverger has concrete experience and reflective observation. The assimilator has abstract conceptualization and reflective observation. The accommodator has concrete experience and active experimentation. The model has been critiqued and an important critique with respect to this study is that the model does not take into account different cultural experiences/conditions (Anderson, 1988). Another critique is that the empirical support for the model is small since the initial research base was small (Jarvis, 1987; Tennant, 1997). Finally, Jarvis (1987) suggested that the association of learning processes to knowledge is awkward.

Others have contributed to the experiential knowledge base. A fifth component was added to Kolb’s learning cycle by Barnett (1989). He added planning for implementation (what will be done differently). He inserted this between abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. This addition seems to move people toward assured action (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Also, it provided a means for expanded learning and inevitable action after that (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).
Similarly, Peter Jarvis (1987, 1995) used Kolb’s model as a foundation for his learning theory. He used Kolb’s model with several groups of adults while asking them to explore it based on their own learning experiences. The model that he developed began with a person moving into a social situation in which a potential experience might occur. He was able to derive a model that had nine different routes (Jarvis, 1987). These routes were broken into categories: non-learning, non-reflective learning, and reflective learning.

In conclusion, learning is important in adult development and may help us to understand career development in adults. Although there are many contemporary adult learning theories, there are a few that have direct applicability to this study of the career development of African American high school principals. Those theories include self-directed learning, informal and incidental learning and experiential learning. All of these theories hold promise for showing how learning is a part of career development whether it is through experiences, formal educational training, or self-initiated and sustained learning opportunities.

Chapter Summary

The literature in regards to the career development of African Americans is very sparse. More precisely, the literature regarding the career development of African American high school principals is even less and focused mostly on women. However, a discussion of the related literature revealed that there is a disparaging shortage of principals today (Mathews & Crow, 2003; Tirozzi, 2001). There is much speculation as to why this is so but one thing that is certain is that the career development of African Americans is not a highly studied phenomenon. Yet, there are African Americans who have become successful principals. As a result, the literature review sought to find theories or concepts that did not necessarily address this but had some transferability.
Career self-efficacy and Africentrism are two constructs that were evaluated to try to understand the career development of African Americans. Neither one definitely provided the link that was sought. Similarly, based on their appeal to this study four career development theories were also evaluated in an attempt to determine their parallelism to the career development of African Americans. Those theories are the Trait and Factor Theory, Roe’s Theory, Super’s Theory, and Holland’s Theory. No one theory emerged that could lay deliberate claim to African Americans or other ethnic minorities for that matter. However, Holland’s (1985) showed the most promise. Although Holland’s theory doesn’t address differentiation and identity per se, it does attempt to look at race, gender, and class. Therefore, Holland’s career choice theory may very well shed light on the career development of African Americans.

Albeit limited, the literature includes empirical studies of the career development of African Americans in business/industry and in education, more so in higher education than k-12 education but education nonetheless. The studies involving business/industry share many similar findings including race and its impact on the workplace, education, and the relationship between networking and mentoring in the workplace (Barrett, 2000; Palmer, 2001). Several studies were also conducted regarding career development of African Americans in higher education. Again, there are commonalities among the studies with the more prevalent being racism hindering career progression, the lack of mentoring hindering career progression, and personal factors such as self, family, and the support of friends as determining factors in career progression or stagnation (Alfred, 1995; Kauper, 1991; Laury, 1988; Thomas, 2004; Wilson, 2004). Yet, another factor is learning.

Learning is an important part of adult development and thus may be an integral part of the career development of African Americans. Few adult theorists have included careers in their
adult learning or development theories; however, Levinson (1986) included career and work as key elements of life structures. There is no single theory of adult learning but there is a plethora of models and frameworks (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). In this chapter self-directed learning, informal and incidental learning, and experiential learning was discussed. Again, learning is important to adult development and helps us to understand career development in adults.

Although the literature is sparse, a recent study by Thomas (2004) may be well on the way to the start of a paradigm shift. She concluded that professional development opportunities were needed for African American women to promote their career development and advancement.

Inherit in this professional development is individual self development by participation in informal, incidental, and/or self-directed learning.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the career development of African American male high school principals. Three pertinent questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the personal background factors that influence the career development of African American male high school principals?

2. What institutional and professional factors help shape the career development of African American male high school principals?

3. What is the role of learning in the career development of African American male high school principals?

This chapter discusses the methods and procedures used to collect, analyze and describe the research data for this study. The chapter has the following sections: design of the study, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis. Additionally, there are sections for the pilot study, validity and reliability, and the researchers’ biases and assumptions.

Design of the Study

A qualitative research design was used for this study. Specifically, it was a basic interpretive qualitative study. Merriam and Associates (2002) stated the following about basic interpretive qualitative studies:

A basic interpretive and descriptive qualitative study exemplifies all the characteristics of qualitative research … [whereby] the researcher is interested in understanding how
participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon. This meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive. (p. 6)

This method was chosen primarily because qualitative research designs seek to develop sensitized concepts, describe multiple realities, and develop understanding (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Similarly, the supple nature of the qualitative research process will lessen or alleviate the investigation of unforeseen themes, ideas, and constructs as the study progresses (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Qualitative research assumes more than one reality. Many scholars posit that in qualitative research, the world is composed of subjective phenomenon and thus can be interpreted differently rather than just simply measured (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). However, these realities are often personal perceptions. Therefore, it would seem that each individual point of view is critically important (1998).

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) further reported that the designs are often broad, flexible, and are continuously evolving. The data is usually descriptive and is derived from either small or theoretical samples to include field notes, people’s own words, or artifacts. Furthermore, the data is usually collected using observation, participant observation, or interviews. Therefore, this study was concerned with the experiences of African Americans in reaching to the principalship position. I was interested in learning about their interpretation of their experiences. Qualitative research provides the opportunity to investigate the experiences and the participants’ interpretation. As a result, this study allowed me, the researcher, to have personal interaction through interviews with the participants in an effort to make meaning through their experiences in becoming principals.
Pilot Study

Introduction

The purpose of the pilot study was to identify and describe the learning process for becoming an African American High School Principal. There were three pertinent questions that were addressed in that study. First, how did these principals’ past educational experiences influence their learning process? Second to what extent did these principals learn their job from their practice? Finally, what other factors contributed to the learning process?

Sample

Purposeful sampling was appropriate for the qualitative nature of the pilot study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Moreover, purposeful sampling afforded the opportunity to choose a sample from among those practicing and retired principals who I could gain the most knowledge in my pursuit to discover, understand, and gain insight (Merriam, 1988). Criteria for participating in this study included: 1) being African American 2) being a current or former high school principal 3) have at least a Masters degree 4) have at least three years experience in education and 5) have worked or work as a high school principal in the southeastern United States. Based on this, three people were interviewed. Two of the three participants were former administrators that I knew during my student years. The third was identified when I saw him being interviewed during half-time of a high school playoff game in which his school was participating. Before the interviews, they were contacted to determine their eligibility and willingness to participate. Once it was determined that they met the criteria and agreed to participate, they completed a participant consent form and a biographical data sheet. See Appendices A and B.
Data Collection

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Using a semi-structured interview, as a data gathering technique allowed direct interaction between the researcher and the participant, permitted assessment of nonverbal communication and encouraged participation by the participants (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed specific questions to be asked of all participants as well as allowed for participants to tell their individual stories. The questions were outlined in the form of previously developed interview guide derived from current literature and personal interests. (See Appendix C for pilot study interview questions).

Data Analysis

The interviews were tape-recorded and I listened to the interviews on the way home to capture any immediate thoughts. They were transcribed within a week of each interview. Data analysis for this study began after the first interview was transcribed. This analysis was the result of the interview guide being specifically designed to ask questions that would uncover common themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Marginal notes were made during the interviews to note things of interest. Also, these notes provided further elaboration after the interview.

After transcribing the interviews, I read the transcriptions several times without listening to the tapes and several times while listening to the tapes. Then, I used the research questions to try to recognize themes from the data to try to think of ways to conceptualize and organize the data that I had. Next, I broke the data down into manageable themes and/or categories. For example, I used broad categories such as formal learning and informal learning. After that I broke them down even further which included smaller sections such as experiential learning.
under the broad category of informal learning. Finally, the themes were used to unite all three transcripts by comparing the piles for each category. For example, I grouped all formal learning statements from all three interviews into one pile. Analysis of the stacks of information led me to the findings.

Findings

The pilot study revealed two major findings regarding the learning process to become a high school principal and they were formal and informal learning. Regardless of their personal and professional backgrounds the participants of this study spoke of their formal learning experiences, specifically their educational leadership classes/program, as an influential factor in preparing to become high school principals. Though their experiences and backgrounds are different they all had to complete an accredited and state approved educational leadership program. The formal learning then seemed centered on the participants’ classroom instruction while matriculating in their respective Educational Leadership Preparation Programs. However, all three participants shared that their formal learning and leadership classes, did not necessarily equip them for their current positions. On the other hand, the informal learning findings produced several categories including experiential (learning), learning from mentorship/friends, and learning through self-reflection. Speaking about experiential learning, all three participants reported that learning the job of principal is by trial and error and you have to rely on previous learning from experiences in the role of a principal and be adaptable in order to be efficient and successful. They continued by stating that each day on the job is different and you have to determine what worked and what didn’t work.

Also of note was positionality (race, gender, etc.) and its influence on learning. All three participants shared that race and gender do play a role in the hiring practices of some African
American principals. They further reported that race and gender also play a role in how well you are treated once you are employed if you are selected for a high school principalship.

The finding of the pilot study, demonstrate that informal learning is sometimes intentional but not highly structured or organized, which confirms the conclusion made by Marsick and Watkins (2001). The findings of the pilot study further indicate that African American principals utilize self-directed learning, networking, coaching, mentoring, and performance planning in their learning to become high school principals. In the case of this study, it seems that the informal and incidental learning take place wherever these principals are and whenever they have the opportunity to learn to do their job.

*Methodological Adjustments*

After completing the pilot study, the research design was modified. It was determined that the study was best suited to the framework of a basic qualitative interpretive study as opposed to the phenomenological framework that I previously proposed. Similarly, the purpose of the study changed from focusing exclusively on the learning processes of African American high school principals to the influence of learning on the career development of these said individuals due to their career progression having influence from multiple factors and not just learning.

*Sample Selection*

Purposeful sampling seemed to be appropriate for the qualitative nature of this study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This was appropriate because as Merriam (1998) suggested that choosing from participants who were practicing high school principals allowed for interaction with those who I could gain the most knowledge in my pursuit to discover, understand, and gain insight into their career development. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) further posited that purposeful
sampling is the intentional selection of information rich cases whereby one can learn a lot about the issues of most importance to the purpose of the research. For this study, the sample selection began by contacting potential participants who fit the criteria set forth. Similarly, some contacts were obtained through the snowball sampling technique in which one participant recommended other participants to be included in the sample (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Specific requirements for participating in this study included meeting all of the following criteria. First, participants had to be African American males. The focus of the study was on how the careers of African Americans evolved as high school principals. The preponderance of the literature on African American principals has been conducted mostly with women. Second, participants were to be currently employed as high school principals beginning their third year or later. The reason for three years was to attempt to ensure that participants had ample time for meaningful on-the-job experiences. Although many job descriptions read the same, there is an assumption that the high school principalship is different than the elementary school principalship based on daily duties; thus, there is a presumption that on the job experiences are also different. Notable differences may include budgeting, supervising more people and having more direct reports such as department heads and lead teachers, more students, and transportation which on the high school level includes many extracurricular and sports activities. Also, it is important to note that the shortage of minority principals is on the high school level. Third, participants possessed at minimum a Masters degree. A Masters degree is the minimum degree required for certification as an administrator in the state where this study was conducted.

Based on the aforementioned criteria, a sample was obtained by going to the state’s Department of Education website and downloading the contact information for each public
school system in the state. From that list, each System’s website was accessed and a list was made of all of their secondary high schools. From that list each school’s website was searched to seek a picture of the principal. Pictures of white males and pictures of females or websites without pictures but containing feminine names were excluded. Using this method, I located a potential sample population of 38 African American male high school principals. After matching the criteria of the study to the information provided on the websites, the sample population was reduced to 35. Electronic mailing (email) addresses for each potential participant was obtained and subsequently each of them was sent an email explaining the study and asking for their participation. Several principals were contacted more than once. Some replied that they did not meet the criteria while others declined to participate. After receiving replies from those who met the criteria and consented to participate, ten interviews were set up. Two additional participants were identified through snowball sampling whereby one participant recommended the name of another potential participant that had not been contacted. Subsequently, those two principals were contacted and interviewed after I determined they met the criteria and they consented to participate in the study.

Data Collection

A qualitative research design allows for data collection through a variety of ways. According to Patton (2002), interviews, observations, and documents are three of the most important ways to collect qualitative data. In this research study, interviews were the primary method of data collection. The interview was the primary method of data collection because I wanted each participant to delve deep inside to share their experiences as a high principal with me. Furthermore, the interview allowed me as the researcher to enter into participants’ perspectives, to be able to probe and explore feelings, thoughts, and meanings that may be
associated with them. An interview is a procedure in which a researcher asks questions and a participant responds with answers (deMarrais, 2003). As recorded by deMarrais (2003), Maccoby and Maccoby (1954) described the interview as “a face-to-face verbal interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions or belief from another person or persons” (p. 499). Likewise, Denzin (1989) described the interview as like a conversation with give-and-take between two people.

Furthermore, I chose to conduct interviews because they offered the opportunity to seek understanding and construct meaning from the lives of the participants. By doing so, I could encourage the participants to get to the depth of their experiences as principals so that we can together identify the factors that shaped their career. Interviewers seek opportunities to learn about the nature or core of particular everyday experiences in people’s lives (deMarrais, 2003). Also, one of the purposes of conducting an interview is to attain a first person description (deMarrais, 2003). In these interviews, the researcher assumes the role of the learner. Therefore, the interview becomes a conversation with the participant describing their experience however it is that they choose to describe it to the interviewer or listener (deMarrais, 2003).

While a good interview may seem like a conversation between two people, it is a different form of communication. This communication allows the participants to expand on the issues that they feel are important. Therefore, it not only allows the researcher and respondent to have a conversation but it also allows for respondents to have an internal conversation as they reflect and attempt to tell their story. There are several types of interviews, each one with its own use. One such way to view interviews used in qualitative studies is to examine Merriam’s continuum for describing interviews presented in Table 2 (1998). Merriam (1998) categorizes interviews into three types: highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Highly
structured interviews take the form of a written survey and have a predetermined order of questions. A semi-structured interview is more flexible and uses a mixture of structured interview questions. The unstructured interview is very flexible and is more like a conversation using open-ended questions.

Table 2

*Merriam’s Continuum of Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highly Structured/Standardized</th>
<th>Semi-structured</th>
<th>Unstructured/Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• wording of questions is predetermined</td>
<td>• mix of more and less structured interview questions</td>
<td>• open-ended questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• order of questions is predetermined</td>
<td></td>
<td>• flexible, exploratory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• oral form of a written survey</td>
<td></td>
<td>• more like a conversation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From Merriam (1998, p. 73)

In order to obtain thorough descriptions of a particular event or experience, the semi-structured interview should begin with the open ended question that the researcher has previously developed (deMarrais, 2003). Therefore, I used a semi-structured in-depth interview in my research study. Kvale (1996) describes a semi-structured interview as follows:

> It has a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions. Yet at the same time there is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects. (p. 124)

Using a semi-structured interview as a data gathering technique will allow direct interaction between the researcher and the participant, permit assessment of nonverbal communication, and will encourage participation by the participants (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed specific questions to be asked of all participants as well as allow for participants to tell their individual stories. The interview questions were
outlined in the form of 11 questions developed from the current literature, personal interests, and perhaps themes that may emerge in the collection of biographical data. (See Appendix D for interview questions). Using the probes from a pre set interview guide helped to elicit responses from participants that told me how they became principals and the processes which were employed along the way until they reached that particular career status. Patton (2002) stated, “quite simply, a probe is a follow-up question used to go deeper into the interviewee’s responses” (p. 372). Additionally, I recorded my thoughts and observations via marginal notes during and following the interviews.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative analysis was used to analyze data. The method simply is the identification and comparison of units or sections of data. Patton (2003) stated, “understanding unique cases can be deepened by comparative analysis” (p. 56). The ultimate goal was to generate the greatest number of descriptive categories and themes possible. Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested that the constant comparative method allows for the generation of the maximum number of descriptive categories and their properties directly from the data from each transcript.

Data analysis for this study began once the first interview was transcribed. Data analysis was based upon the interview guide being specifically designed to ask questions that would uncover common themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 1988). In addition, marginal notes were made on the transcripts. These notes helped to elaborate even further on key words or phrases that held potential for establishing themes or categories.

Merriam (1998) suggested that the exact literal transcription of recorded interviews provide the best data for analysis. Therefore, the first step in data analysis was to listen to the
tapes of the interviews. After I listened to them once they were copied and one copy was taken to a professional transcriber who transcribed the interviews and formatted the transcriptions. After receiving the transcriptions they were read while listening to the tape to ensure that all spoken words had been captured. The transcripts were then reviewed again to remove any remaining identifying information. Next, I began to re-read each transcript to identify patterns making marginal notes and highlighting as necessary each time comparing within the document and across the documents. Three different highlighter colors were used to correspond with each research question. After doing this for each transcript, I made a copy of each transcript document and highlighted it electronically. Next, I cut out each color coded block of information and re-read it this time using different color markers to subdivide the responses by their sub questions within the research questions. For instance, responses regarding background factors were colored green but family was underlined by a different color marker then the marker for friends. I continued to do this until all responses were accounted for. Finally, I placed each double color coded strip in corresponding manila folders.

By doing this I was able to review over and over again the recurring patterns which helped to construct categories and themes that helped to answer the research questions. For instance, initial categories were formulated after reading the first transcript. Then similar categories were identified while reading subsequent transcripts. The information was then compared and cultivated until sets of common characteristics came forward from the data. This process is supported by Merriam (2002) who stated:

One begins with a unit of data (any meaningful word, phrase, narrative, etc.) and compares it to another unit of data, and so on [all the while] looking for common patterns
across the data. These patterns are given names (codes) and are refined and adjusted as the analysis proceeds. (p. 14)

Validity and Reliability

Myers (1997) suggested that all research is founded on some basic postulation about what constitutes legitimate research and which research methods are appropriate. Similarly, Creswell and Miller (2000) went on to report that there are many views on how to understand validity in qualitative inquiry. However, they asserted that in spite of the various ways many support the notion that qualitative researchers need to show that their studies are trustworthy (Creswell & Miller, 2000). One such way to accomplish this is to show that the study is valid.

Internal validity refers to the accuracy of representation (Wolcott, 1990). He further reported that validity seeks to assess whether the researcher’s constructs coincide with the participants’ experiences (1990). Since there are many views and experiences from the participants, careful listening during the interviews is warranted for accurate representation. A valiant attempt at validity was employed through careful and critical listening. Also, the interview questions were framed in a way to allow the participant to reflect upon their experiences and career development path in an attempt to get more accurate representation.

There are several ways that qualitative researchers can show validity including member checking, triangulation, thick description, peer reviews, or external audits (Creswell & Miller, 2000). For this study, member checking was used by sending my interpretations back to a select few from the sample. The member checks provided for the direct testing of findings and interpretations from the participants directly (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) further exclaimed:
Researchers and evaluators can learn a great deal about the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of their data analysis by having the people described in that analysis react to what is described and concluded. (p. 560)

The participants of this study were sent chapter four and asked to comment on my interpretations of the data collected in the interviews. Later in chapter four the findings are outlined and one such finding is the personal goal to become a high school principal. With that in mind, Vertner was one principal who participated in the member check process. After reading chapter four, he was able to recognize that he along with others stated that having the personal goal of becoming a high school principal was a part of their career development. Furthermore, he had noted earlier that he aspired to be a high school principal to make a difference and because his ultimate goal was to be a superintendent. In responding to reading chapter four he wrote, “I really enjoyed reading this chapter. It’s amazing how things changed. I am now superintendent of XXX School District, which was [my] goal.”

Additionally, I was able to increase the validity through peer reviews. The study was followed closely and consequently reviewed by my major professor and methodologist. Likewise, I participated in an online dissertation buddy service for a while as well as had a current adult education practitioner review the document and give feedback along the way. This technique provided an external check on the inquiry process and helps the researcher to remain “honest” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Validity was also increased through the thick description of the study due to the mere nature of the design of the study and the use of interviews. This falls under the realm of external validity which can be viewed as the extent to which knowledge gained from one research study
can be transferred to similar situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Patton, 2002). Merriam (1998) denotes that external validity addresses the generalizability of the research findings. Furthermore, Merriam and Associates (2002) asserted that in qualitative research, when it comes to generalizability, it depends on the reader to ascertain the contextual applicability of a study’s findings. In this study, even though it is a qualitative study, generalizability was sought using the aforementioned thick, rich descriptions from the participants, their experiences, and the data analysis itself. As a result, this provides the reader with enough detail and wherewithal to compare the experiences of these black male high school principals to determine like career development and learning paths to the high school principalship. Finally, in addition to internal and external validity, the issue of reliability was germane to my study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) affirmed that reliability is the level of regularity of the process of the study across researcher and methods. Merriam (1998) stated, “One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered.” (p. 202). Therefore, to increase the reliability of this study, as much information as possible was provided on the methods and data collection procedures. Also, an attempt was made to make certain that the questions in the interview guide were clear and related to both the study design and research questions. Merriam (1999) questioned, “If the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, how can we be sure the researcher is a valid and reliable instrument?”(p. 202). This concern is addressed by providing the audience with as much information possible about the methods and collection procedures. Furthermore, the interview guide itself was designed to support dependable probes and to be able to obtain truthful answers. This notion
was also supported by Silverman (2000) who suggested that semi-structured interviews such as the ones in this study, allowed for more reliability than the use of unstructured interviews.

Researcher Bias and Assumptions

Although researchers envision qualitative interviews as conversations between two people, this notion neglects to accurately describe the roles of the researcher and the participant (Kvale, 1996). According to Merriam and Associates (2002):

There are, of course, several possible biases that can result from the research process when the researcher is also the interviewer and these biases can affect the subsequent generalizability of the findings. Foremost is the possibility that the researcher would find what she was looking for through selective attention to details and selective interpretation of data. (p. 147)

Usually the researcher has a greater stake in seeing that the interview is accomplished (Kvale, 1996). He/she has a research purpose in mind, has designed the study, selected the participants, and intends to implement it (Kvale, 1996). However, as previously mentioned, the researcher must account for reliability, validity, and their own subjectivities to keep the study as real and natural as possible (Patton, 2002).

Interviews are often mechanisms where participants find out things about themselves by sharing their experiences with others; however, the purpose of a research interview is first and foremost to gather data, not change people (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, upon hearing these personal accounts, the researcher must remain neutral and remain focused in order to gather high-quality data (Patton, 2002). Getting off task may hinder or jeopardize the data collection process. Additionally, interviewing can be emotionally and legally threatening (Patton, 2002).
The interviewer, in establishing rapport, is not an imaginary entity that is waiting to be used for verbal target practice (Patton, 2002).

Many subjectivities affected my position in this study. First, I am an African American. Since the participants were also African American, this helped to strengthen the rapport between us. Additionally, race could have affected the study because as an insider I was more in tune to cultural norms than a non-African American researcher. However, as an insider I was able to detect verbal and non verbal cues and was able to use them to create more effective follow up questions during the semi-structured interview. For example, when the participants “winked” that implied that there was more of a story that could be elicited through probing as well as body language such as sitting up straight on the edge of the chair seemed to suggest emphasis or excitement about a particular statement.

Second, I am a former assistant principal in an elementary school. As an outsider by virtue of being on the elementary level, the participants may have been apprehensive about sharing their experiences for fear that I would not understand the realm of high school education. The focus of the study was on high school education because certain issues are different than those of elementary education especially in regards to content. However, this did not imply that there was much of a difference between the career development of elementary principals and that of high school principals.

Third, I am a student of adult education and thus I was familiar with adult learning, adult learning theories, and career development theories. As a result of being knowledgeable in these fields I brought further insight about how adults learn which may have served as a filter for how I perceived what my participants discussed in regard to learning during their career development.
Finally, I brought to the study experiential knowledge gained via a non-traditional route to teacher certification.

Similarly, a basic presupposition of this study is that many African American males were appointed to high school principalships because they had allies in fellow coaching/teaching buddies who are White who have been appointed to superintendent jobs. These allies in turn “looked out” for their former colleagues and helped them to get jobs whether they were the most qualified candidate or not. As a researcher, I was the main instrument for gathering data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 1998) and therefore needed to be cognizant of my behavior, assumptions, and biases throughout the research process. As a result, an attempt was made to address this bias by keeping notes to stay in touch with my sensitivity to my personal assumption and bias. Additionally, an attempt was made to distinguish this subjectivity by describing and reflecting on my thoughts and reactions during the data collection and analysis.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the career development of African American male high school principals. Consequently, the findings in this chapter will reveal an interpretation of how the participants’ career developed by answering the following research questions: 1) What are the personal background factors that influence the career development of African American male high school principals? 2) What institutional and professional factors help shape the career development of African American male high school principals? and 3) What is the role of learning in the career development of African American male high school principals? Using semi-structured interviews in a basic qualitative study, 12 participants were interviewed so that their experiences could be represented. Finally, this chapter gives an overview of the participants, presents the findings of the study, and gives a summary.

Participants

The findings of this study are based on semi-structured interviews with 12 African American male high school principals in a southeastern state. These individuals had been high school principals three or more years and held at least a Masters degree. Table 3, Biographical Data of Participants, gives a brief overview of the participants. The information in the table reflects the order of the interviews as they took place from February to June of 2007. This information was obtained from a biographical data sheet that each participant completed at the interview session.
Following the table will be a narrative description of each participant.

Table 3

Biographical Data of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Highest level of education</th>
<th>Years in education</th>
<th>Years as a high school principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Ed.S.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertner</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Ed.S.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Ed.D. (in progress)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heath</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Ed.D. (in progress)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>M.S.Ed</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Ed.S.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Ed.S.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>Would not disclose age</td>
<td>Ed.S.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 reports basic demographics of the participants. Pseudonyms are used to ensure anonymity. All but one of the participants revealed his age; thus, based on the 11 who did, the average age of the principals was 45.4. One of the criteria for the study required the principals to have at least a Masters degree. Two of the participants had only a Masters degree; five of the participants hold an Educational Specialist degree while the remaining five have earned doctoral degrees or are in the process of obtaining a doctoral degree. The principals are veteran educators as the average number of years in education was 22.8. Another criterion for participation required that participants had to have been high school principals for at least three years. For this group of participants the average number of years as a high school principal was 6.5 years.

*Steven* is a 55-year-old principal of a rural high school. He has worked in education for 34 years and has been a high school principal for five years. He has only been principal of one high school and he was the assistant principal in that same school before receiving the principal
appointment. He also attended that same school as a student. Additionally, he holds both B.A. and M.A. degrees.

Charles is a 36-year-old principal of an urban high school in a metropolitan area. He has worked in education for 14 years and has been a high school principal for three years. He has only been principal of one high school. His teaching background is in middle school and curriculum and instruction. Charles had administrative experience as assistant principal in two southern states before being appointed principal. Additionally, he has obtained an educational specialist degree (Ed.S.).

Vertner is a 49-year-old principal of a rural high school. He has worked in education for 27 years and has been a high school principal for seven years. He has only been principal of one high school. Previously, he served as an elementary school assistant principal and principal, as well as a middle school principal, before receiving his high school appointment. He also attended the public schools in the system where he works. Additionally, he has earned B.S., M.Ed., and Ed.S. Degrees.

Walter is a 45-year-old principal of an urban high school in a metropolitan area. He has worked in education for 20 years and has been a high school principal for six years. During those six years, he has been the principal of three different high schools in both rural and urban settings. Walter has administrative experience as an assistant principal, alternative school director, and he served as a high school principal in two southern states. Prior to entering into the profession of education, Walter worked in private industry in an engineer-related job. While working in the industry he obtained a Masters of Public Administration degree. In addition to his MPA, Walter earned a B.S. and an Ed.S. Degree and is currently working on his Ed.D. Degree.
Heath is a 36-year-old principal of an urban high school in a metropolitan area. He has worked in education for 15 years as an English teacher and assistant principal and has been a high school principal for four years. He has only been the principal of one high school. Both of Heath’s parents are retired principals. Heath has earned B.S.Ed., M.Ed., and Ed.D. Degrees.

Robert is a 40 year-old-principal of a rural high school. He has worked in education for 14 years and has been a high school principal for four years. He has been the principal of only one high school. Prior to coming into education he was a professional athlete in another country. Additionally, Robert earned B.S., M.Ed., and Ed.S. Degrees and is currently working on his Ed.D. Degree.

Nathaniel is a 45-year-old principal of an urban high school in a metropolitan area. He has worked in education for 21 years and has been a high school principal for four years. He has worked in only one high school as principal. He was promoted internally from teacher on special assignment to assistant principal for discipline and attendance and finally to building principal. Nathaniel has earned both a B.S.Ed. and M.S.Ed. Degree.

Jesse is a 58-year-old principal of an urban high school in a metropolitan area. He has worked in education for 32 years and has been a high school principal for 17 years at the same school. He was reassigned in the middle of a school term from an elementary school principalship to his current appointment as high school principal. He has also previously worked in higher education administration as the Director of the Counseling Center at a four year college. Jesse has a Bachelors Degree, a Masters Degree, and an earned Doctorate.

Henry is a 43-year-old principal of an urban high school in a metropolitan area. He has worked in education for 16 years and has been a high school principal for seven years. He has served as principal of two different high schools. He has also served as a middle school principal
and assistant principal staying two years in each position. Prior to coming into education he spent time in the criminal justice field in state government. Henry has a bachelors degree, a masters degree, and an earned doctorate.

*Eugene* is a 36-year-old principal of an urban high school in a metropolitan area. He has worked in education for 13 years and has been a high school principal for five years. He has served as a high school principal in two different schools, currently in an urban setting and previously in a rural setting. As an educator, he worked as a teacher and as the Diversified Cooperative Training (DCT) Coordinator before officially becoming a building administrator. He was an assistant principal prior to his appointment as a building principal. Eugene has earned B.S., M.S., M.Ed., and Ed.S. Degrees.

*Marcus* is a 56-year-old principal of an urban high school in a metropolitan area. He has worked in education for 31 years and has been a high school principal for 10 years. He has served as a principal in two different high schools both of which were in an urban setting. Prior to entering education he was a salesman in retail sales. He entered the education profession by substitute teaching before getting his first teaching assignment as a middle school health and physical education teacher. Finally, Marcus has B.A., M.Ed., and Ed.S. Degrees.

*Franklin* is the principal of an urban high school in a metropolitan area. He has worked in education for 37 years and has been a high school principal for six years. He has served as principal of only one high school. Previously in education he served as a school counselor in a junior high school, worked as an assistant principal in an elementary school, and worked in an alternative school setting. Franklin has B.A., M.S., and Ed.S. Degrees.
Results

The findings are grouped and organized into three broad categories: personal background factors, institutional and professional factors, and the role of learning (see Table 4). The personal background factors that influenced the career development of these African American male high school principals are a support network which was inclusive of family and friends; having the goal to become a principal; and the personal confidence of the participants to do the job of high school principal. Three institutional and professional factors influenced the career development of these African American male high school principals and these factors were guidance from mentors; encouragement from colleagues; and the perception that African American males as principals are good disciplinarians.

Similarly, the role of learning in influencing the career development of these African American male high school principals included both formal and informal learning. The formal learning encompassed the participant’s educational preparation in an institution that offered degree programs. The overall degree programs as well as individual classes within the program were influential to these African American male high school principals. The informal learning included on-the-job experiences, self directed learning through readings, and learning through participation in workshops and seminars.
Table 4

Factors that Influence the Career Development of African American Male Principals

Personal Background Factors
I. Encouragement from family and friends
   A. Family support
   B. Support from friends
II. Principalship as a career goal
III. Confidence to be a principal

Institutional and Professional Factors
I. Guidance from mentors
II. Encouragement from colleagues
III. Perception that African American males as principals are good disciplinarians

Formal and Informal Learning Experiences
I. Formal learning experiences
   A. Degree programs
   B. Specific courses in degree programs
II. Informal Learning Experiences
   A. Learning from professional workshops
   B. Learning on the job
   C. Learning from self-directed reading

Personal Background Factors

In this study, personal background factors include those aspects of an individual’s life outside of their profession. Examples of these factors are people including friends, family, and fellow members of like civic organizations. Additionally, these factors include emotions that are germane to just the individual such as ambition, motivation, or confidence.

Encouragement from Family and Friends

The first personal background factor evident in the data was the support of family and friends for the participant’s career development as an African American high school principal. Family refers to those individuals who are related by blood or marriage. Furthermore, it is inclusive of spouses, children, siblings as well as in-laws. The support of friends means the encouragement given these principals by personal friends who were not colleagues. Although
colleagues are important, for this study there has been a distinction made between personal friends and colleagues. Colleagues’ support appears in the next section of findings.

Support from family. Some of the participants in this study explained how their families seemed to be there for them and subsequently do all that was necessary to help promote success. Two such examples are provided by Steven and Nathaniel. Steven recalled:

I have a wife who is very understanding and she knew what my goals were. So we only had two kids at the house, so my wife was my backbone through this because she knew exactly what I was doing to get the leadership certificate. She knew I had to work the long hours. She knew I had to go to all the school activities. She was there as a mother and father for our two kids. I had plenty of support. Even things that I had to do on a personal level, I had a wife who was really willing to do some of my jobs around the house.

Likewise, Nathaniel said:

It was very important to my family. I say that it was important to my family in that it was important that they supported me in this endeavor. The sacrifices that they would have to make. Once I became a principal they had to sacrifice some time. Having young children you have to spend time with them. A lot of time we talk about quality time so that’s important to me, having young children, once I started as a principal I was away from home more.

Support from friends. For this study, friends are thought of as those people who the participants identify as a personal friend. These are individuals who are not colleagues from work. The majority of the participants in this study thought that the support of friends was important in their career development as a high school principal. Notably, three participants said
that the support of friends was not that important. Nonetheless, those who did say that friends were important shared examples as to how the support was manifest.

Vertner and Steven shared similar experiences as being hometown citizens who were encouraged by long time friends and who were promoted from within. Vertner said, “Oh yeah…this is my hometown too. To them [fellow hometown citizens] that was real important.”

Likewise, Steven shared:

There were people, particularly African American, who said you are going to be the principal one day. I had people that supported me in the community. I had a lot of spiritual support. I know because of prayer, I knew one day it would happen. …So I knew that I had enough people verbally supporting me and saying that I could do it. I remember one of my friends told me, well you just sit there as assistant principal, because you’re in the rocking chair, you just rock. So in other words, you’re going to become principal…

To a majority of these participants one group of friends stood out in their influence on their career development to be high school principals and that group was their fraternity. Two examples of the support from this group of friends is provided by Marcus and Henry.

First, Marcus said:

As a fraternity brother, they want us to be successful, but the main thing to remember that we are a beacon in the community and we should prosper and also help the community to grow. With that I think that becoming a high school principal, I was put in the position where I could continue to help children and adults.

Second, Henry speaks from the networking perspective. Correspondingly, he said:
There were a lot of great educators there. We’ve always had a number of brothers in the field of education. While there are a good number in the XXXX School System, we typically always had someone that was at the level above principal—we had one that retired four or five years ago who was the Deputy Superintendent. It is important to continue to carry that mantle to know that these brothers will continue to be used—one that is there in that particular position as a role model. Any time someone has come to the area that’s connected to the fraternity that is a brother, whose wife may be trying to enter the field of education, I get all of those phone calls. From a brother to a brother. When they’re trying to get into education and trying to get into XXXX County, I get that phone call. Whether it is them or their daughter, whether it is the son, whether it is a cousin, I get those phone calls. That’s the connection. That’s a part of the network. That’s what happens in fraternities and sororities.

*Principalship as a Career Goal*

Another important factor discussed by most participants in this study was their personal ambition to be a principal or specifically a high school principal. What the participants conveyed was an overwhelming desire to obtain a pre set goal with a plan of action to achieve it. They were direct in their desires and why they wanted to continue their career progression towards the high school principalship. One example comes from Steven who said:

I felt like every individual must have goals, they must [have] desires, expectations in life. So I knew I wanted to be a principal one day. I was in no hurry, but I wanted to get a shot at it before I retired….So yes, I wanted to become principal, because my father was a principal. I felt like I’m intelligent enough to be a principal without any hesitation. My father was principal before integration, so he was a principal over all of the grades, 1-12.
I knew that with a lot more help that I do have, that I would be able to run the high school also. So it was a goal of mine to become principal and to follow in my father’s footsteps.

Similarly, Vertner explained that:

It was the only thing left that I hadn’t done. I had gone from elementary, from middle to high school. Initially, I wanted to go from the elementary level to become a high school principal. I was passed over for that position. I moved to the middle school, and then I moved to the high school. My aspiration was to be a superintendent. My real goal is to be superintendent. So I think the fact that I felt that I could be better prepared for the superintendency, if I were a high school principal. All of the superintendents that I know had access to have been high school principals. That is what I applied to my thinking.

There were others who wanted to be educators but not necessarily high school principals at the beginning of their careers. However, as their careers in education continued, they realized that the principalship was a goal for them. For instance, Robert and Nathaniel noted that they didn’t seek the high school principalship initially, but during their career the principalship evolved as a goal.

Here is Robert’s experience:

Initially I don’t think that was my intent to become a high school principal. I think it just developed over time. I had been in education for years as I continued to grow and develop my skills, I think I finally realized that I could be and probably should be because I am not a status quo individual. I believe in positive change. I believe I need to be in a better position to affect change.

Similarly, Nathaniel reflected about working in middle school then realizing he wanted to return to the high school level as an administrator:
All of my career has been in high school with the exception of five years in middle school. …the majority of my career was in high school [so when it was time to be a principal] and that’s where I wanted to be [as a principal].

Confidence to be a Principal

Another personal background factor was personal confidence. In this study personal confidence simply means the belief of the individual that he can do the job and do it well. The majority of the principals explained that they were confident in their ability to be appointed as a high school principal. Two examples of this confidence are shared by Steven and Henry. Steven said, “I knew I could do the job. I knew that after serving for four years as an assistant principal, I had enough confidence in myself. “

Likewise, Henry explained that:

I was an assistant principal and I was okay with that, but when I saw others that came aboard with me being promoted to principal, I said, I’m ready then. While I thought that I wasn’t ready, but when I saw who was getting promoted, I said, well hell if they [are] ready, I know I’m ready. So it was a comparative analysis and a self evaluation to those who had come along with me and the job that they were doing based on my assessment and others assessment, it was like okay I am ready to be a principal so that kind of gave me a little more fuel to put myself out there.

Summary

There were some salient background factors that were found to influence the career development of African American male high school principals although it is important to note that these same factors have been previously found to influence the career development of white males as well. These factors were encouragement from family and friends; the principalship as a
career goal; and the confidence to be a principal. The study revealed that several of the participants had family support that included both their nuclear and extended families. Similarly, many participants had a support network that included friends such as social acquaintances and fraternity brothers. The participants also had clear defined goals and also were persistent and ambitious in seeking appointments to a principalship. This was supported from their own level of confidence to be able to perform the job of a high school principal.

Institutional and Professional Factors

Participants also identified institutional and professional factors as influential in their career development as high school principals. In this study, professional/institutional factors include those that relate to people or circumstances on the job itself. These included guidance from mentors, encouragement from colleagues, and the perception of African American male principals as good disciplinarians.

Guidance from Mentors

One of the most prominent findings in the career development of African Americans is the importance of mentors (Shakeshaft, 1987; Thomas, 2004). Ten of the participants noted that they had some sort of opportunity to be mentored or they at least had supportive colleagues in their career development to the high school principalship. The majority of the participants were able to share experiences in which having a mentor influenced their career development as African American male principals. First, Heath shares his experiences with mentors. He has both official, assigned by the District, and unofficial, self chosen, mentors whom he attributes to his success:

At that particular school there was training me as they call it, grooming me to become a principal. ….No, I have had several mentors. Both my mom and dad were
principals. My mom was an elementary school principal and my dad was a middle school principal. And I have had other mentors. Right now my mentor is a former superintendent for district near here. She shows me how to look at the instructional program; she guides me on my career path. I can call her for free. I think part of the reason that I have been successful is because of my support [from mentors].

Charles is an example of how mentoring influenced his career development as a high school principal. It started when he was a teacher and his mentor encouraged him to go into administration. It continued as she hired him in his first role of administration which was as assistant principal. It ultimately led to his being appointed a building principal. Even after his appointment his mentor continues to guide him along his career progression. Charles comments:

… My mentor actually approached me and encouraged me to go into the MAT program; I think it was called MAT. It was a program designed to get more African American males into educational leadership at the University of XXXX. She had some associations there and asked me to consider it and had me to meet some of the professors. I changed from a counseling major to a leadership major based on the referral or support from my mentor, who was my current principal at the time. When we met we were working at a middle school. So she was my middle school principal and I actually finished my program at the University of XXXX. To me that was the pivotal moment in that someone else saw what they thought was a characteristic that would make a good principal or a good school leader. Then to do more than just say I think you should do it, to actually go out and provide support and mentoring through the process. I did my internship under her. [After finishing graduate school with the leadership credentials] she pulled me to the side and said I owed her. She told me I owed her two years. My first
two years as an assistant principal were served under her leadership. Originally I had planned to go to [another city]. She relocated to [that city] because they had appointed her to a high school that was struggling, because she had a history of turning schools around. So she actually interviewed and hired me there at the high school with her. That began my journey as a high school principal.

Marcus was mentored by his Deputy Superintendent who started to work with him and offer career advice to help him throughout his career. In fact, Marcus referenced his relationship with his mentor several times during pre and post interview conversations. Marcus shared the experience of his initial entry into administration:

At the school that I coached, the principal saw that I was able to get along well with all the students and I treated them fairly. I was also able to get along with my peers, so he assigned me Assistant Principal for Student Affairs.

After budget cuts, Marcus had to return to the classroom and teach but during that time the deputy superintendent, a fellow black male, encouraged him to obtain the credentials to go into administration permanently whenever the budget would support that position again or a similar one. It was at this point in their conversation that he and the Deputy Superintendent developed a working mentoring relationship. He noted that they continue to communicate periodically.

Marcus recalls:

The only person, really, that inspired me in reference to going back to school and becoming a principal or getting my advanced degree, was the deputy school superintendent, XXXX, and he inspired me to go back. He said well if you are going to stay in this thing for twenty or thirty years, then you must get paid for what you know
and what you are doing at the utmost as high as you can go in that area. So later in my career, I served as assistant principal here at XXXX High School and the superintendent needed a principal. He looked for individuals, I would say “that were able to manage a school setting.” He chose me and I became the principal at XXXX High School and I do feel that the reason that he chose me is because of my coaching ability and being able to deal with the students.

*Encouragement from Colleagues*

As noted in the previous section, the participants were encouraged to become principals by family and friends. Similarly, they had support from colleagues. These were individuals in their workplace who supported them but who weren’t their mentors. Charles, Eugene, and Walter are examples of those having support from colleagues.

Charles recalls:

Even now as we meet and as I talk to colleagues and friends we talk about that [current issues in schools]. I have a great support of friends now who are strong educators. Not just out there trying to make it day to day, but we talk about some of the issues and we come with strategies and we share them…we get together and hang with friends and watching the game and stuff, we talk about some of the things we see and things we struggle with.

Eugene’s situation is unique because his friends are actually his colleagues because he was a staff member who was asked to help out then promoted from within. Eugene was on staff at a school with a very small staff and was initially asked just to help out in a teacher leader capacity. Moreover, the assistant principal had to take an unplanned leave so Eugene was asked to help out with administrative duties. He did this for a while, serving unofficially as assistant
principal, but still doing some of his classroom duties. During this particular phase in his career
development he was on a staff level but still had line power. Thus, at certain times he had
colleagues because he was the boss while other times he had friends because he was their equal
and worked on their same level.

After serving as a teacher leader, interim assistant principal, and then officially as
assistant principal Eugene explained how his colleagues supported his appointment to be
principal:

I was pretty much the de facto principal…so my staff there when the job came open they
really did want me to move up in the position that was good. That was a good support
system.

After asking Walter about the pivotal moment in his journey to become a high school
principal he reflected about how a colleague got him involved [in administration]. Walter and
this particular individual were working together part time. The colleague asked Walter to provide
transportation and in return, he would pay Walter’s fees for the class. After one class was
completed, the colleague asked Walter to take another. Walter explained further:

I had a friend [colleague] of mine …ask me to take a class with him. He asked me take a
class primarily because he was depending on me for transportation. I already had a public
administration degree, which was a Masters. Also, I had a Masters in education so I
wasn’t interested so after taking the first class, he asked me to take another one with him.
I was working with him part-time and he signed me up to take the administration degree
certification…So I told him, I wasn’t going to do it. He signed up, paid for it and we went
and took the test. …there had been some concerns in terms of my career in the classroom.
[So when] and the opportunity in XXXX County ….fifteen twenty miles away, and …. I went for it.

_Permception that African American Males as Principals are Good Disciplinarians_

Several of the participants felt that an important factor in their appointment to the principalship was the perception that African American male principals are good disciplinarians. I was able to infer that this is perhaps due to the perceived machoism and sternness that society perceives black males to exhibit. A few participants observed that the career development of African American male principals is determined by the perception of them as disciplinarians. For example, Franklin perceives his appointment to the high school principalship was influenced by his work as a disciplinarian while he was an assistant principal and subsequently as a principal. He shares:

Now, if you ask about being assistant principal, I would say that it was racial, because most of the time they always want to put the assistant principal, a black male into discipline. All that extensive training but practically in every county that you go to you will never find a black male in the instruction or anything like that. You put him in charge of activities, and all that but [sigh] the principals here in this county are particularly like that.

Nathaniel’s experience also reflects the perception of African American male principals as more oriented to handling disciplinary responsibilities. He recalls:

There are different expectations for African American male principals. You are to keep the kids under control. You are to keep the building clean and it is still to that effect; however, there is an expectation for you to be in the instructional leader. However, it is an intimidating factor when you can control the kids, keep the building clean, and know
the instructional component as well. Then you are a threat to them [Upper level administrators] and they start moving you out. Just understand that the black male will always be held to different standard. You have to do twice as much.

Similarly, when Henry was asked if there was anything else that he would like to share about the career development of African American male high school principals that had not been asked, he shared:

Yeah, just that I still believe that African American males are pigeon holed and slated for positions in discipline based upon the age old stereotype. Typically female teachers will send male students, typically African American male students to male teachers. I was one of the only male teachers at XXXX I experienced that. So that stereotype continuously perpetuated almost to the point where mama said, I’m going to tell your daddy. So that male figure that exists in the house or the home also transcends into the school. So then as you prepare for positions in leadership ….in the streets, coworkers, they are looking…they’re looking…and I’ll honestly say we need a zookeeper in every school we need someone that has that presence.

Summary

In this study, the participants said that professional and institutional factors such as guidance from mentors, encouragement from colleagues, and the perception of African American male high school principals as good disciplinarians were all things that influenced their career development as African American high school principals. The support of colleagues and having mentors seem to be directly related to the success of these individuals. Additionally, although superintendents are looking to hire instructional leaders for high schools, it seems that they are hiring strong disciplinarians to serve as building principals in high schools.
Formal and Informal Learning Experiences

The purpose of this study was to understand the career development of African American male high school principals. The career development literature has not addressed the role of learning but the adult education literature has suggested that learning may be a factor for the career development of adults. Therefore, this study examined whether or not learning is indeed a factor. The participants’ formal and informal learning experiences yielded several themes. Therefore, the factor was subdivided into formal and informal learning. Formal learning included degree programs and specific classes that were included in the degree program. On the other hand, the informal learning contained experiences on the job, self-directed learning, and learning from workshops, seminars, and conversations. All of the participants were excited to discuss learning in their career development to the principalship. Most of them could recount many on the job experiences that enhanced their learning. The formal learning was a requirement for all of them but many contended that the formal learning is pretty much laden with theory, and it doesn’t prepare you for the job as much as the informal learning that takes place.

Formal Learning Experiences

The participants shared information about formal learning experiences that have had an impact on their careers. These experiences have included attending courses that led to certificates of study or degrees. In this case, the certificate of study refers to those who participated in add-on programs in which case they already had a masters or educational specialist degree in one area and then added the educational leadership area. Also, some learning experiences were captured via participation in workshops and seminars.

Degree programs. All of the participants mentioned something positive about their formal educational preparation as they sought the high school principalship even if it was simply
to admit that the degree was an essential qualification to become a high school principal. Overall, the general consensus was that the best preparation programs were those that taught not only theory but also provided practical application at the same time.

Robert and Vertner saw the value of the preparation for establishing baseline credentials. In response to the formal preparation as it relates to the career development of the high school principal, Robert said, “[It was] directly related. Obviously it gave me the qualifications that I needed”. Similarly, Vertner said, “If I had not had those degrees, I’m not sure I would be principal of XXXX High School. I would still be an assistant somewhere.”

Heath also alluded to his formal training as the essential, initial preparation:

Well I think that having the degrees on the wall is really a baseline criterion. You have to have those degrees. I had some great professors at the University of XXXX. They really set an example of what it means to be a leader.

Charles and Marcus were complimentary of their Masters degree programs while Eugene appreciated his specialist degree program because they prepared them by giving theory and practical application of the theories. About his leadership program Charles said:

[It was a] strong program there that put a lot of emphasis on a lot of the theories but also has a practical feature to it where we did a lot of practicum work…activities…if you were principal in this situation, what would you do? I got a very strong masters program.

In the same way Marcus said of his master’s program:

Well, the major thing that I saw was that the professors that I had at the University of XXXX, they have this system where what they call the “in basket type training” where on Saturday they allow you to go to XXXX at a school area setting and then they stereotype
a setting of a day in high school or as being principal so you have to fulfill all those different requirements during that particular day, called “in basket.”

Eugene also found an important blend of theory and practice in his specialist degree program:

Now I will say this. XXXX Leadership Program is the best. …Things that I had to do were real world. We built master schedules. I built a budget from the ground up. It was a lot of little practical things. I scored near perfect on the Praxis exam. I’ll now call some of my professors and say I have a problem with some things and how should I go about it?

Walter pointed to how his degree program helped him see the big picture and offered him a network:

I think the educational preparation piece is basically to heighten your awareness more so than just give you, you go to the right versus left, up versus down. I think it is just to heighten your awareness. It also creates a networking opportunity. It enhances your ability as it relates to reading parts and those things. So it does, but I think the principalship in my opinion with the networking, the things that are learned in the classroom, with the reading…it is a common sense approach to the everyday operation of a business.

Specific courses in degree programs. The participants told of several classes that were germane to their specific development. There were many different classes including Finance, Curriculum, Policy, Research, Law, and Technology. Overwhelmingly, School Law was the number one class. Other positive courses were those that dealt with research and data analysis as
well as curriculum and instruction. But, almost all of the participants cited School Law as being helpful. Charles provides this example:

> It made you more aware of what was available to, what was out there as far as how I should relate to kids who were special ed, because of the laws that are out there. Issues of gender, inclusion, issues dealing with equal access, those were things that were huge for me.

Due to the nature of having to use interpersonal skills as well as learning and dealing with the developmental stages of the students, Jesse said, “If anything, I think psychology. Psychology helped with the interpersonal skills needed for the job.”

Similarly, Vertner was able to apply knowledge learned in his curriculum class. He noted:

> Yes, the curriculum class I took, we talked about kids from Piaget’s Levels from the beginning to the end of high school, and those have been invaluable in understanding the child, so that when you deal with this type of child [at the high school]…

*Informal Learning Experiences*

In this study, the participants spoke of informal learning opportunities such as attending workshops and seminars and being able to engage in conversations and activities that aided in their career development as African American high school principals. They went on to distinguish this type of learning as being different from their formal classroom learning because these activities were often unstructured and were more like round table discussions and were often in symposium type formats. The participants also spoke of informal learning opportunities that made them better and that enhanced their career development as African American high school principals. In this study, informal learning was non structured activities that included activities or experiences they had on the job and self-initiated learning opportunities.
Learning from professional workshops. The participants reported that they attended workshops and seminars to enhance their learning. These principals chose which conferences to attend based on their needs; they take away only information that they need, and sometimes the gatherings are interactive in nature and the learning is not via delivery from a formal presentation; instead, it is from talking with peer groups regarding best practices.

All 12 participants spoke of attending seminars, workshops, and sharing conversations with others. In two instances, Heath and Henry have both participated in workshops and presented at workshops about things happening within their school. Others have attended leadership institutes sponsored by private sectors such as Allstate. Participants also stated that they don’t like being away from their buildings so they are careful in what they choose to attend.

One such individual who got a lot out of attending an informal learning activity was Franklin who said:

Yes, I go to conferences every year. The workshops and the conferences they really have helped me now because they have some experts coming in there talking about their experiences and what they have done to be successful and we look at the things they have done and you may want to come back and take some of those things and try it here. But believe it or not, the best training I ever had, no matter how many institutions I ever been to, was with Allstate Zone Training School. I learned more in thirty days there, than I learned in four years at XXXX and in XXXX because it taught me a lot of things. How to deal with people. How to overcome objections and how to get people, ultimately manipulate people around to understand what you are saying or what you are trying to do.

Learning on the job. All but one participant gave accounts of how their on-the-job experiences either led to their appointment to the actual principalship or how those experiences
helped them develop as principals. Charles gives an example of how he had to learn how to staff his school without making mistakes:

I’m not allowed to interview by myself. You hire someone and they are wrong, you own that person. Versus if a committee does it, you’ve got a group already. If you say yeah, we want that person. If I come in here and interview in isolation, hire the person. Mr. XXXX you hired them. I learned that from the job. I learned that from watching a good friend of mine. …So we don’t interview one-on-one.

Similarly, Walter speaks about how he learned his responsibility for being the instructional leader on the job:

Instructionally, I was behind [as a principal], because, keep in mind, I was coming from an alternative setting, wherein the instructional piece in terms of what you were doing was basically implementing what was already in place [he had to oversee the curriculum that was already being implemented at the home school, but he didn’t have to develop the curricular components myself. He was a director of a small alternative setting before becoming the building principal for a larger school]. The other piece of that was the instructional piece probably was the greatest on-the-job experience I got from a principalship.

Likewise, Franklin said about being a high school principal:

It is called O-J-T because we are dealing with a generation of people now, nothing has been written to deal with that group. To do that you are not going to get rich by writing a book. Even through college days and all the courses I had, they had nothing to do with what I have been doing here and now. It has taught me how to deal with people.
Marcus and Heath spoke of their learning on the job as assistant principals that was beneficial to their positions as principals. Marcus said:

The only job training was at XXXX High School where I served as an assistant principal. I was able to work with the principal and was able to observe some of the things that he did for about a half a year. Then I worked as an assistant principal in a middle school setting under XXXX so she gave me full reign to handle discipline and you learn a lot from discipline, especially dealing with the kids and their parents and Policies and Procedures and that is what really helped me to, I think be successful as a High School Principal. I also served as a High School Assistant Principal and what I found out there is that all kids want to learn but they want to learn the way they want to learn, OK, and as reference to Policies and Procedures and the area of discipline, they would go as far as you would allow them to go. Students now want structure, but if you don’t give it to them they are going to do whatever they feel they want to do, whatever they feel is necessary. They want structure. But if you do not put them where they should be and guide them, then they will go astray. I think that really helped me in the area of discipline by working as an Assistant Principal.

Similarly, Heath explained that:

Working with the master schedule, serving as the test coordinator, designing plans, I am a program implementer. I like implementing programs. In fact I put a lot of time into that. For example, I found a program to increase PTA membership. I did that. A program to decrease student referrals. I did that. A program to utilize technology for writing referrals. I started that. …certain committees like Governor’s Council, School Council, Textbook Committee and I directed the Freshman Academy Awards Program.
Steven provides an exemplary summary of the importance of on-the-job experiences:

Sometimes you will have a parent come to school and they want to talk to the kids.  
…Well, I can’t let that parent talk to another student. I learned that on the job… because if another parent gives me permission to call their child up here to talk to this other adult, then I would. So that’s just a little thing that I learned on the job. You’ve got to have both parents there to represent each child. I never learned that in any of those classes. But that is something that I learned on the job, when I thought about it.

*Learning from self-directed reading.* Participants admitted that reading was not for pleasure, but it was a way to learn more about the profession. Reading professional works enabled the principals to gain more knowledge in a convenient way. By nature of the job, they cannot be away to attend workshops and classes regularly, but they can read online journals, articles, or books at their leisure to stay abreast of what is going on. All of the participants cited that they read professional material to discuss with their staff. They said that they read *Educational Leadership*, the journal of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Some even read books or book excerpts in reading groups among the staff.

Vertner talked about the journals that he reads:

[I] subscribe on line to [NorthStar](http://www.northstar.org), a monthly newsletter for educators. It gives you tips on what might be going on in schools. I read those. [NASSP Journal](http://www.nassp.org). I read those. Normally I read those in reaction to things that I need to know about.

Eugene described the books he reads for professional development:

I have crates and crates of books that they [Central Office] give us to read. But what I do with my professional staff is I read technical books. I don’t read books that make you feel good about whatever. I like national books about certain topics. Like this book about
block scheduling. I have had this book for a while. My third book for this year is by John C. Maxwell, *Becoming a Person of Influence*. The first one was *21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*. How [I can] potentially impact the lives of others. I find that that’s more of my job. I always get books that are readable. You can’t say oh by the way, read this 500 page novel. It’s not an easy read. It gets lost in the shuffle. Or we do excerpts. It’s a form they can use to digest it.

Marcus explained how he and his staff read and discuss books throughout the year:

Well we are in the process now in reference to the entire staff, *Whatever it Takes* [a book], we are going to start this in the fall. Each staff member received a copy of this book and we are going to take it chapter by chapter and we are going to read a chapter then we are going to come together in small groups and also in a large group to discuss this chapter. So this is one of my things that we will be doing next year for our school.

**Summary**

In this study, the participants revealed that both formal and informal learning was influential in their career development as African American high school principals. The formal learning consisted of degree programs, specific classes within the degree programs, as well as participation in professional workshops. The informal learning in this study included things such as on the job learning experiences and learning from self-directed readings. Those participants who cited that degree programs that taught practical application versus theory saw that knowledge manifest in their daily activities and responsibilities. They were able to use the theoretical knowledge learned in those degree programs to apply them to practical situations. Also, on the other hand, those with the opportunity to learn by simulations and practical experiences saw their on the job learning experiences mean more to them as they were able to
apply the previously learned situations. The informal learning was equally as important to the principals. Participating in activities with colleagues gave them more prudent information about real life day to day situations than their formal learning provided.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the career development of African American male high school principals. The findings indicate the importance of other people in the career development of these African American male principals. Family members, friends, mentors, and colleagues offered encouragement and professional guidance that influenced their appointments and in some cases, their subsequent job performance.

Findings also point to the value of setting the goal to become a principal. For some, it was a goal held at career entry. While for others, it evolved. The goal to become a principal is complemented by their belief in their ability to carry out the responsibilities of a principal, specifically, a high school principal. Similarly, how African American males are perceived as good disciplinarians also emerged as a factor in their career development. Some of the participants explained that as African American men there is a societal perception of sternness and machoism as alluded to in chapter one. They also went on to explain that although everyone takes classes that deal with curriculum and instruction, they are often steered towards jobs that deal with students directly which often means that school discipline is a major part of their job.

Finally, the learning experiences included both formal and informal learning. As mentioned, this study demonstrated formal and informal learning experiences. The value of formal learning was providing essential base level preparation. Its importance was heightened when courses in degree programs offered considerable practical application to complement theory. One such individual course reported to be influential was school law because the
participants felt that it kept them informed of the legal rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

Informal learning was also important to the career development of these African American male high school principals. Of particular importance was on-the-job training (O-J-T). The participants stated that the O-J-T helped them to use more of the theoretical lessons and put them into practical usage. Some also appreciated what was termed “trial by fire” meaning that sometimes you have to learn by doing. Additionally, these experiences were complemented by self-directed reading and occasional participation in a workshop or seminar.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the career development of African American male high school principals. There were three research questions used to study this phenomenon. The questions were:

1. What are the personal background factors that influence the career development of African American male high school principals?

2. What institutional and professional factors help shape the career development of African American male high school principals?

3. What is the role of learning in the career development of African American male high school principals?

A basic interpretive qualitative research methodology was chosen for this study because it allowed for a deeper understanding of the career development of these African American male high school principals. Furthermore, I used the constant comparative method of data analysis whereby one interview’s transcript was compared with another in the same data set until common themes began to emerge. Next, the data was coded and similar responses were eventually categorized and labeled as findings. These findings were the answers to the research questions on the career development of African American male high school principals.

The resulting findings revealed that personal background factors influence the career development of African American male high school principals. These factors include
encouragement from family and friends, personal goals to become a high school principal, and the confidence to be a principal. Similarly, institutional and professional factors such as encouragement from colleagues, guidance from mentors, and the perception of African American male principals as disciplinarians were also found to be influential. Lastly, formal and informal learning experiences were found to be influential to the career development of African American male high school principals. The formal learning experience factors included overall degree programs and specific courses in degree programs. Likewise, the informal learning experiences included learning experiences on the job, learning from self-directed reading as well as attendance at professional workshops.

Conclusions and Discussion

This study has three conclusions about the career development of African American male high school principals that are suggested by the data. First, factors that influence the career development of African American male principals are similar to the prominent factors in the career development literature. Second, factors that are unique to the career development of African American male principals are the perception that they have strong disciplinary skills, that they hold memberships in traditionally Black Greek Letter Organizations such as fraternities, and that they are mentored by other African Americans. Third, formal and informal learning help shape the career development of African American principals.

Conclusion one: Factors that influence the career development of African American male principals are similar to the prominent factors in the career development literature. The principals in this study identified personal background factors that included encouragement from family and friends and their own personal goals to be a principal and beliefs that they could be a principal as influences in their career development. This is consistent with similar studies such as
Thomas (2004) who concluded that personal factors such as family motivation and role models, personal drive and determination and the desire to make a difference were defining factors in shaping the careers of African American women who were executive directors at two year colleges. This is also in alignment with Farmer (1997) who developed a model for looking at personal and environmental factors that influence the career achievement of women. Likewise, it is supported by Palmer (2001) who found that networking that included family and friends [as support systems] have an impact on the career development and aspirations of African Americans. Finally, Laury (1988) found that interpersonal support relationships were important to career advancement for African Americans in higher education.

Based on my experiences, the perception of the continued marginalization of the African American race, especially the males, has often caused for a lot of family support to promote success. Previous studies have also revealed that family motivation is important to the success of African Americans and in this case, we say African American males (Thomas, 2004; Wilson, 2004). We can infer that this correlates with Roe’s (1956) Career Development Theory. She named family background as one of the structures that had an effect on the level and kind of occupation chosen and pursued by individuals. She went on to say that as a result of this assertion that social differences may account for ethnic differences in career choices (Roe, 1956).

Another of the structures that she said combined with family background was genetic inheritance. This may prove prudent as participants in this study shared that they went into education because of family members and two of them specifically went into administration because of their parents. This finding regarding family support is not surprising because again, drawing from personal experiences, the African American race is often portrayed as a large
family. Perhaps this portrayal is based on the clans and tribal roots from the Mother continent of Africa where members are taught strong values and develop a support system from early in life.

The participants in this study also felt like they had support from friends that helped in their career development. These included personal friends as well as people that they associated with at church and within other organizations. Besides social friends, African Americans typically have friends from church, college, and a large number from being a member of one of the nine historically Black Greek Letter Organizations (fraternities and sororities). What is absent in this research to my surprise is that the participants did not mention friends from church as a support system since a lot of African Americans by societal perception are avid church goers. Although a couple of participants mentioned that church was important to them and that the church is always encouraging but no one specifically mentioned the church as an institution nor the church and its members as an entity as a system of support and this was surprising given the value that we place on church within our culture. I think that this absence may be due to the fact that, based on my observations, even though the male has major roles in the African American church they do not talk about church with those who do not attend their church.

Additionally, many of the participants matriculated at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). HBCUs have been traditionally known for their small enrollment size and their nurturing environments. Thus, it was no surprise that some participants reminisced about their experiences and support as well as the networking opportunities that can come from within this realm. However, there was no data from this study to substantiate it as a finding that clearly affected the career development of these principals.

A majority of the participants had a career goal of wanting to be a principal, specifically, a high school principal. These participants also felt that they had the qualifications and skills to
be a high school principal and they were very confident in that. This is consistent with Thomas (2004) whose study on African American women executive directors at two year colleges concluded that drive and determination were influential in the career success of these women. Likewise, it is consistent with Wilson (2004) who conducted a study on African American senior level position holders in two year colleges and concluded that support networks were vital to the career development of these women.

We can infer that the principals in this study had a lot to do with self-efficacy simply because of their internal and external motivational desires to be successful. Hackett and Byars (1996) alluded that persistence in pursuing academic and career goals is facilitated by vicarious learning through family role models and verbal persuasion. Similarly, the review of the literature revealed that Betz and Hackett (1986) asserted that the career self-efficacy construct offered a positive outlook upon our understanding on the career development of African Americans. In this study, two participants said that they entered the profession because of previous family members being principals but this can also lead us to the assumption that family encouragement as well can lead to the exhibition of greater self-efficacy in the pursuit of career goals.

I have often thought that having goals is the sign of a successful person. Many of the participants set out to be a high school principal while others developed the goal after beginning work in some other aspect of education. This is in alignment with Rance (2002) who concluded, “when blacks enter education and move toward administrative roles, they have high aspirations for major leadership positions.” (p. 78). Career development theories including goal setting and career choice is prevalent throughout the career development literature (Parsons, 1909; Roe, 1956; Holland, 1985; Super, 1990). Specifically, Super (1990) supported a doctrine that self-concept determined occupational choices and that self-concept and the manner that it is carried
out changes as a function of a stage of development (career). Super (1990) further argued that career choice is contextual. With that in mind, we can look at the participants in this study because some of them emerged as leaders at the insistence of others. Moreover, others meaning those who were colleagues, family members, or those who went on to become their mentors. For those who didn’t already have the principalship as an immediate goal they may have had their awareness heightened and subsequently decided to pursue the high school principalship due to the position within education (context) that they were in. Finally, once these principals set the goal to become high school principals they were confident that if given the opportunity they could succeed.

The principals had the self confidence that they could do the job of a high school principal. Being confident that if given the opportunity they could perform the job is similar to the drive and determination factor that was concluded in Thomas’s (2004) study of African American female Directors of Instruction. Like those women, these African American males were determined to succeed towards the career goal that they set for themselves. This overwhelming desire to make it to their goal also coincides with Laury’s (1988) perseverance finding. Perhaps, already feeling marginalized, these men wanted to succeed against any obstacles because they had the confidence that they could do the job. Similarly, this confidence can be parallel to self efficacy which is a construct of career development (Betz & Hackett, 1986). The self-efficacy construct along with social cognitive theory suggests diligence in pursuing career goals is manifested by learning through role models and the persuasion of others.

Conclusion two: Factors that are unique to the career development of African American male principals are the perception that they have strong disciplinary skills, that they hold memberships in traditionally Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) such as fraternities,
and that they are mentored by other African Americans. The findings of the study lead to the conclusion that three factors are unique to the career development of African American principals. Furthermore, it is this uniqueness that helps add to the sparse literature on the career development of African American male administrators. This is important because the previous literature did state the importance of mentoring to the career development of African Americans especially when the mentoring occurs by those who look like them. Likewise, one previous study of the career development of African American women by Wilson (2004) concluded that Black Greek Letter Organizations such as sororities influenced the career development of those women. Thus, we now have parallel data that suggests that membership in a BGLO is influential on the career development of African American men. Finally, although it is assumed that many assistant principals are assigned to assist with school discipline, it was found in this study that African American males who are perceived to have strong disciplinary skills are often sought out to be hired for this particular characteristic.

Many of the participants stated that they believe that they were appointed to the principalship because they were perceived as good disciplinarians. African Americans in general are often thought to be good disciplinarians but males are specifically targeted due to societal perception of machoism and sternness. This has not been addressed directly in the literature. However, what has been addressed in the literature are attitudes toward and perceptions of African American educational administrators. Those researchers have reached different conclusions about the correlation between race and representation in administrative positions (Hughes, 1972; Jackson, 1988; Williams, 1984). Hughes’ (1972) study was about the effects of race on the perceptions that elementary school principals had of themselves as change agents.
Williams’ (1984) study on superintendents was on the way racial discrimination hindered the success of African American administrators.

In addition to feeling like they were appointed due to the perception of their disciplinary abilities, some asserted that they are held to higher standards than their white male counterparts. Jackson’s (1988) study helped to shed some light on this assertion. She concluded that African American (administrators) were forced to adjust to two cultures at the same time. She went on to suggest that African American administrators had to emulate their white male counterparts in order to be considered to be successful leaders, while at the same time maintaining their ties to the African American community. This is important to note because although they are appointed because of their strong discipline skills, they have to produce the same overall results as their counterparts in schools that don’t necessarily have major discipline problems. Ultimately, this leads to African American males who have to be confident to do the job once they set their goal to obtain the job.

Finally, I think that the threads of this conclusion are intertwined. Once African American males aspire to be high school principals they are faced with the notion that they will only be appointed if they display strong disciplinary skills or have a proven background in discipline. Consequently, they have to feel that they are up for the challenge and they have to develop or enhance the confidence that they have in themselves to persevere and not only achieve the goal of receiving the high school principalship but to succeed once there.

Being in a historically Black fraternity or sorority is a big deal for a lot of people. It is so much so, that mainstream America is cashing in on its importance with the release of several motion pictures such as School Daze, Drumline, and Stomp the Yard which all depict the life of college students in these organizations. Seven of the participants in this study are members of a
Historically Black fraternity. As a member of one too, I can personally attest that membership is for life, membership promotes brotherhood, and membership encourages success. Within the brotherhood is a level of friendship that promotes success. In this study, fraternities and fraternity brothers were given as friends who supported the success of these principals who are members. Similarly, Wilson (2004) in a similar study of African American women’s career development found that some of her participants said that their membership in a Black sorority yielded a support network of friends.

The support of African Americans through mentoring was a salient theme that emerged. The majority of the participants showed enthusiasm about having a mentor or group of supportive colleagues in their corner. The mentors were those who were onsite as well as those who were not. The participants in this study suggested that having the support of mentors and colleagues was influential in their development. The importance of mentors is evident in the comments made by the principals. Some spoke of the very formal and professional side of having a mentor while others spoke of the more informal, collegial relationship. What distinguishes the two in this study is a mentor is someone with line power above the participant while a colleague is someone with line power equal to or below the participant. Mentors were important because they were often the ones who inspired and encouraged these men to not only go into administration but administration on the high school level.

The mentoring seemingly helped to foster relationships that gave both professional and personal support to these principals. African-Americans who are or aspire to be principals think that they can succeed, but they are not sure that others do. Therefore, the emotional support, encouragement, and validation of their beliefs by mentors provide African American male principals with a crucial component to their success. All of the participants in the study were
mentored by an African American at one point or another in their career. The fact that the mentoring was influential and it came at the hands of fellow African Americans is important to add to the literature because previous studies such as Shakeshaft (1987) have concluded that most of the mentors for African Americans are white males. Additionally, studies such as Allen (1992) suggested that mentoring is important but at not all stages of a person’s career development.

Although, these mentors were not all African American men, the majority of them were African American. This is extremely important to note because the shortage of African American principals and African American District level personnel usually results in a shortage of mentors. This shortage of mentors leaves many aspiring principals and practicing principals default of role models who can help to guide them through the process to become high school principals. As a result, these findings now add to the previously sparse literature on the career development of African American principals. Additionally, knowing that mentors aid in the career progression of African American principals now program planners and formal leadership preparation program directors/leaders can implement a component that involves mentors to help recruit and retain qualified African American males who aspire to be principals.

This finding about mentoring as a factor in the career development of African American male high school principals is supported by the review of the literature that gave several citations for mentoring in terms of career progression and success of African Americans (Alfred, 1995; Shumate, 1995). Similarly, Laury (1988) and Allen (1992) both concluded that mentors are important to the career progression of African Americans. Also, more recent studies by Thomas (2004) and Wilson (2004) confirm the importance of mentoring and support networks to the career development of African Americans.
Conclusion three: Formal and informal learning help shape the career development of African American principals. One of the gaps in the literature on career development theories and models is the role of learning. This study was designed to examine the importance of learning for the career development of African American principals. The findings of this research demonstrate that both formal and informal learning are influential in African American principals’ career development.

Many scholars, such as Merriam and Caffarella (1999), Peters (1989), and Thorndike et al (1928) to name a few, have previously written about learning as an experience. Learning experiences in adults help us to understand their career development. These learning experiences included both formal and informal experiences. The participants in this study all experienced formal learning by having to earn the foundational credentials to be educators first and administrators second. After working in their careers, they continue to have informal learning experiences by participation in workshops and seminars. This is supported by Palmer’s (2001) earlier study which concluded that education and training contributed to his participants’ professional development which in essence had a positive effect on their career succession.

Like the formal learning experiences, principals encountered informal learning experiences as well. Marsick and Watkins (2001) suggest that informal learning is sometimes intentional but not highly structured and organized. This definitely describes the types of experiences that these principals encounter on a daily basis according to their comments during the interviews. For example, Steven spoke of having to learn to deal with parents who requested to speak to other students regarding conflict with their own children. He inferred that he knew general procedures for dealing with visitors but never learned how to diffuse situations such as this until one actually occurred.
Similarly, a majority of the participants spoke of informal learning experiences such as learning on the job and learning from self-directed reading as factors influential in their career development. The participants experienced on the job learning experiences such as learning rules and procedures as well as having to learn the instructional component of being a building principal. The on the job learning experiences are important to adults. This is in alignment with John Dewey who in 1938 stated, “all genuine education comes through about experience” (p. 13).

Another informal learning experience that was revealed in this study included learning from self-directed reading. The principals said that they learned by reading books, articles, and papers and then discussed them with their staff to enhance everyone’s knowledge base. Many enjoyed this and even gave vivid and descriptive details about books previously used and those to be used in the upcoming school year. As stated before, adults learn in many ways. Self-directed learning is one such way. The literature review revealed that self-directed learning is centered on learner need (Caffarella, 1993). This confirms what many participants said about choosing books or topics that they or their staff members needed to know more about. Also in the literature review, it was reported that Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) gave three different models of self-directed learning. They were linear, interactive, and instructional. Based on the comments of the participants this study showed two of the three types- linear and instructional. The linear model suggests that learner’s progress via self-direction through a succession of steps to reach a particular learning goal (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). The study also exhibited instructional in which the instructor, principal in this case, incorporated self-directed learning opportunities into their formalized instructional program (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).
I think that the fact that two of the three types of self-directed models showed up in the findings shows that adults learn in different ways and they like to have a choice in their learning. In the case of the linear structure, it is similar to a principal’s job in that he or she is given a directive by the superintendent or his designee and he must execute it. For example, a principal’s charge may be to improve test scores for his school. There is no set solution to achieve this goal but a principal may design a series of steps or tasks that will help to achieve the goal. The learning has to be self-directed and informal because there are no set criteria for improving test scores for each child or subgroup of children in each school. Although textbooks outline strategies, they are often not germane to the situation at any one particular school. Likewise, it is not unexpected to see the instructional model in this study. Even within the formal education component, many participants spoke of practical things they did to enhance their learning. When given the opportunity to personalize the learning outcomes, the principals were able to gain knowledge that they needed that was not necessarily the same information that was needed by a fellow classmate.

Being able to make a link between learning and career development adds to the literature base for both career development and adult learning. It is here that we are able to understand that in order to evaluate the career development of adults that we have to understand that their learning is an interdependent factor as opposed to an independent factor. The participants of this study gave examples of how during their career succession learning occurred just as much outside the formal learning realm as it did inside. Likewise, these findings add to the career development literature on African Americans where other recent studies such as Palmer (2001) and Wilson (2004) both concluded that learning is important to the career development of
African Americans. As mentioned, learning played a role but so did goal setting and confidence in the ability to do the job of a high school principal.

**Implications for Further Practice**

There were implications for practice from this study. First, the study revealed factors that influence the career development of African American male high school principals. This study provides role models who look like them. Additionally, this will add to the sparse literature base of the said group. Representation in the literature will allow aspiring administrators to learn from the success of others. It allows us to look at a major topic within career development from a new perspective by those who have been conspicuously absent from career development theories. Also, it provides support for some of what has been previously reported in the career development literature for other careers and other people who are not African Americans. Similarly, it will add a component to the adult education literature that will look at the role and influence of learning in adults, males, and African Africans that have not been extensively documented before now.

Second, the findings of this study revealed information that could help formal institutions to evaluate the usefulness of their educational leadership programs and it could help fellow educators create staff/professional development activities that will be time efficient and professionally relevant. By evaluating what we should do by those who are in the field and haven’t had their voices documented provides us with fresh perspectives to think about our current practices. The experiences of those in this study depict areas that we should address in our program planning if we want to have a positive impact on the career development of African American principals, especially high school principals.
One such area is that the findings help those in program planning positions to understand that when they plan the curriculum for formal degree programs or staff development activities for practicing professionals, they should include practical components to any formal portion of the program or activity. Furthermore, the formal institutions can help produce more qualified African American administrators by providing them African American mentors to guide them through their academic matriculation and initial career advancement into administration. Similarly, these program planners at the institutions can provide classes or formal instruction on classroom discipline, school-wide discipline, and how to effectively discipline students since the study concluded that those who are perceived to be strong disciplinarians are viable candidates for administrative jobs.

Lastly, there are implications for program planners and administrators of administrator/educational leadership preparation programs. The study highlights the role that mentors and colleagues can play in the career development of African American male high school principals. Thus, the study allows for those who might be in a key role to play a significant part in the career development of African American male principals to understand the role they might play. Furthermore, it allows the program planners and program administrators the opportunity to realize that their participants benefit from mentoring opportunities; therefore, they should help to provide such opportunities.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study on the career development of African American male high school principals, the gap in the adult learning and career development literature has begun to be addressed. However, the following recommendations are made for further research:
1. The study was only conducted in a southern state therefore the career development of African American male high school principals should be conducted in other geographical areas such as the other southern states or perhaps across the country to determine if the findings are comparable. This is because other geographical areas may also have large populations of African American students but have a shortage of qualified African American administrators to hire. Additionally, the African Americans in the south have experienced different cultural norms than our counterparts in the north, Midwest, and west due to situations of busing and equity in schools.

2. Only African American males were used in this study of the career development of male high school principals; therefore, the study should be replicated using males of other races for comparisons. This will allow researchers to ascertain if race is indeed a factor and if certain perceptions due to race are indeed used in hiring decisions. Similarly, the study could be replicated using minority females for comparisons. Although females have been previously studied more than males, there is not a large amount of empirical data. This would provide more data on how race and gender might influence a person’s career development.

3. This study involved the career development of African American high school principals but other studies could include African American elementary school principals and/or African American middle school principals. This would potentially address the perception that the high school level maintains a certain amount of status and prestige and as previously mentioned the job responsibilities of high school principals is slightly different than middle school and elementary principals. Looking at these career areas in educational administration could offer insight into the whole picture of career development of administrators.
4. This study used African American males and one of the findings was having strong disciplinary skills was important for obtaining a high school principalship. Therefore, further studies could be completed to determine whether or not having strong discipline skills/abilities is a criterion for hiring male principals from other racial or ethnic groups.

5. This study used African Americans and one of the findings revealed that social networks are important to the career development of this group. Thus, a another study could seek to know whether social networks of other racial/ethnic groups is important for their career development.

6. This study has added to the current adult and career development literature the influence of learning on career development. However, the role of learning for career development needs to be further investigated. Formal learning, informal learning, and the interaction of learning with personal and institutional factors.
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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

I, _________________________________, agree to participate in a research study titled "THE BRIDGE THAT BROUGHT US OVER: THE LEARNING PROCESS OF BECOMING AN AFRICAN AMERICAN HIGH PRINCIPAL" conducted by Dennis L. Humphrey from the Department of Adult Education at the University of Georgia (706-353-0326) under the direction of Dr. Bradley C. Courtenay, Department of Adult Education, University of Georgia (706-542-2214). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to identify and describe the learning process of becoming an African American high school principal.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:
1) Complete and sign a consent form.
2) Complete a biographical data sheet.
3) Participate in a one to three hour face-to-face interview.
4) Review and return the transcript of the interview for clarification and accuracy.

I understand that my total time commitment will be six months or less.

The benefit of my participation is that I will personally be able to make sense of my experiences in a more formalized process. Additionally, as an educator, I will help to identify the learning processes of a marginalized group not overwhelmingly documented in current literature.

No risk is expected but I may experience some discomfort or stress induced by the anxiety of reflecting on my career and past experiences. If this does occur, I will be provided by the investigator with a list of counseling services available in my area. However, my participation in these services will be at my own financial expense.

All information concerning me will be kept confidential. If information about me is published, it will use pseudonyms. However, research records may be obtained by court order. I understand that the researcher will keep all audio tapes and copies of transcripts indefinitely. There is a possibility that audiotapes could be used in either teaching or conference presentations.

This is subject to my permission below.

Audiotapes with my voice recording may be shared at researcher conferences.
Circle one: YES / NO. Initial _____.

Audiotapes with my voice recordings may be shared in classrooms for teaching purposes.
Circle one: YES / NO. Initial _____.

I give my permission for the researchers to use excerpts from my interview transcripts and audio-recordings for educational purposes in classrooms with students.
Circle one: YES / NO. Initial _____.

The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project (706-353-6963).

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Dennis L. Humphrey
(706) 353-0326
236 Frederick Drive
Athens, Georgia 30607

Signature
Date
DennisLHumphrey@aol.com
Dennis@uga.edu

Name of Participant
Signature
Date

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D. Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu
APPENDIX B

Biographical Data Sheet

The information collected here will also be confidential. Furthermore, it will only be used for informational purposes to categorize data and will not be released in a manner in which the identity of the subject will be compromised.

1. Gender: ______________

2. Age: _______________

3. Please list ALL of your post high school experiences. Be sure to include the institution, area of study, and the degree or certificate obtained.
   For example, Johnson C. Smith University, General Science, B.S.
   Piedmont College, High Science Education, MAT
   University of Georgia, Educational Leadership, Certificate

4. How many years have you worked or did you work in education? _______

5. How many years have you been or were you a high school principal? _______

6. How many years have you been or were you a high school principal in the southeastern United States? ______

7. Are you presently a high school principal? _______

8. When was the first year that you were a high principal? _______

9. When was the last year that you were a high principal? _______

10. In how many different schools have you served as a high principal? _______

11. Please check all that may apply. Which types of school settings have you served in as a high principal?
    ________ Urban      ________ Rural       ________Urban/Rural
APPENDIX C

Pilot Study Interview Guide

The bridge that brought us over: The learning process of becoming an African American high school principal.

1. Tell me about your decision to become a principal.

2. Tell me about your career path to becoming a principal.

3. Describe any courses taken while matriculating in school that have influenced how you function as a principal.

4. Describe your learning process for becoming a high principal.

5. What types of things have you encountered in your pursuit to become a high principal?

6. Once you became a high principal what job-related experiences informed your learning about being a principal?

7. What else would you like to tell me about your formal or informal learning of how to be an African American high principal that I haven’t already asked you?
Interview Guide

Research Question 1-- What are the personal background factors that appear to influence the career development of African American male High School Principals?

- Tell me how you became a high school principal?
- What do you think was the pivotal moment in your journey to become a high school principal?
- How important was it to you to become a high school principal?
- How important was it to your family and friends for you to become a high school principal?
- What were the most important challenges you faced to become a high school principal?

Research Question 2-- What institutional and professional factors help shape the career development of African American male High School Principals?

- In what way(s) was your career development to the principalship influenced by institutional policies and procedures?
- How important was it to your colleagues for you to become a high school principal?

Research Question 3-- How do African American male High School Principals describe the role of learning in their career development?

- Would you describe your educational preparation for becoming a high school principal?
- In what way(s) has your educational preparation contributed to your appointment and performance as a high school principal?
- What on the job learning experiences have contributed to your appointment and performance as a high school principal?
- Tell me about any workshops, institutes, seminars, or other learning experiences that have contributed to your appointment and performance as a high school principal.

-SDL
-Publications