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**AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES IN RURAL EAST TEXAS THAT
TRANSITIONED FROM COACHING INTO EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY**

by

Andre L. Emmons, B.A., M.A.

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

Stephen F. Austin State University

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of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological inquiry was to gain a more in depth insight into a unique phenomenon of five African-American administrators in rural public schools in East Texas that have made the transition from athletic coaching to educational leadership. Through the use of interviews, phenomenological inquiry allowed the inquirer to gain a more in depth personal account into a phenomenon, in hopes of discovering the true essence in which makes this shared, lived experience so unique. All participants in this inquiry were African-American male administrators and had at least four years' experience as a coach before their transition into educational leadership in which they currently preside, where they have at least eleven years of experience.

This study has helped to fill a gap literature and provide a voice for the underrepresented African-American male in educational leadership, while incorporating Schlossberg's 4S system (the situation, self, support, and strategies) in examining the challenges and complexities of coaches that have transitioned from coaching to educational leadership in rural East Texas. Four themes emerged during this transcendental inquiry to be significant: (a) transformational leadership, (b) relationships, (c) missing coaching, and (d) race.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family. You are my inspiration. You have been by my side every step of the way, and for that I am forever grateful. To Cohort 20, this three-year journey with you has been very tough, but rewarding. I have learned a lot from each of you. To future scholar practitioner who will travel a similar path as I have, never give up and never give in. Know that your steps are ordered by God and he will give you the desires of your heart.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Many high school coaches after they hang up their whistle, transition into a career in educational leadership. Fahrni (2001) stated that one of the most common pathways to educational leadership was a career in coaching. Coaching and educational leaders share many of the same roles and responsibilities. Both are charged with the responsibility and are ultimately judged by their ability to lead a collective group to a shared vision.

Although their goals may be different, whether the individual seeks a championship or title, versus higher student achievement and test scores. The fact remains, both must lead a group or team in the pursuit of a common goal. This ability to lead must be done in a stressful environment and in the face of public scrutiny. Coaches, as well as educational leaders, gain strength through these adverse conditions, and it is what sets them apart from others (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007).

Background of the Problem

Minority males have a relatively small representation in educational leadership positions, which is even more prevalent in rural areas such as East Texas (Bireda & Chait, 2011). In fact, Bireda and Chait (2011) found that over 40% of public schools lack

a single African-American teacher on staff. Rusch and Marshall (2006) stated that educational leadership continues to be dominated by white men. According to the Texas Education Agency (2014), there are 1227 public school districts in the state of Texas. Of these 1227 districts, approximately 80% are led by Caucasian superintendents and approximately 6.2% of them are headed by African-American superintendents. Kim and Brunner (2009) stated that “the glass ceiling” exists, which prevents minorities from moving into educational leadership positions. “The glass ceiling, especially in top levels of leadership, separates minority groups who differ from the dominant groups by ethnicity or gender, and works as a screening process in vertical and radial organization career mobility” (Kim & Brunner, 2009, p. 83).

To add to this intriguing phenomenon is the role interscholastic sports have played in American schools and culture. Delaney (2009) stated that it is impossible to understand American culture and ignore the role that athletics played in shaping it. Cahn (2014) stated that athletics has been an integral part of the fabric of United States history. Athletic participation has increased to its highest level ever with more than seven million high school students participating in athletics during the 2014-2015 school year (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2015). Sports have not only shaped American schools and culture, but also the world. Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, stated:

Sports have the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create

hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers. (Carlin, 2008, p. 4)

John Dewey, arguable one of the most significant contributors to education in the twentieth century, also believed in the value of play and physical activity. Mechikoff and Estes (2006) stated that

Dewey believed play to be a purposeful activity that directed interest through physical means. Play was not a physical act that had no meaning. Rather it was an activity that integrated mind and body. This approach gave the play act meaning, and therefore it became an argument for play as an important educational tool. Play became a “quality” experience valuable for its educational possibilities rather than an activity in and of itself. (p. 203)

Every team has a leader. In team sports, this person is referred to as “coach”. The coach may not account for a single point or play on the field, but is perhaps the single most important factor in a team winning or losing. One example that made evident the importance of the role of a coach was, dates back to 1875. In one of the first American rules football games between Harvard and Yale, Yale hired a football coach while Harvard did not. The results, Harvard not only lost that game, but also over the course of the next three decades, won only four times. Needless to say, Harvard has since hired a coach (Gawande, 2017).

Bass (2008) defined a coach as one who provides guidance and feedback about specific knowledge, skills, and abilities involved in a task, the performance of a job, and the handling of assignments. The coach’s feedback according to Kouzes & Posner

(2012) is essential to personal and team success, “. . . because no one ever got to be the best at anything without the constructive feedback, probing questions, and active teaching of respected coaches” (p. 264). Coaches are, by nature, transformational leaders.

Transformational leadership “. . . changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics . . . and treating [followers] as full human beings” (Northouse, 2007, p. 175). Kouzes and Posner (2007) went developed the five practices of transformational leadership – model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.

Leadership is essential in the arena of athletics. Dwight Eisenhower stated that leadership demands a leader motivate in such a manner that others do something they want done because they want to do it. According to Blanchard and Ken Blanchard Companies (2007), “. . . at its best, leadership is a partnership that involves mutual trust between two people who work together to achieve common goals” (p. 117). “Leadership is a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow” (Kouzes & Posner, 2003, p. 1). Kouzes and Posner (1995) stated “Leaders communicate their dreams so that others clearly understand and carry them out as if they were their own” (p. 164). Vella, Oades, and Crowe (2010) stated that, “coaching is often assumed to be synonymous with leadership” (p. 425).

Statement of the Problem

The coach’s ability to transition into an educational leadership role depends on the ability to cope with multiple factors. Understanding the lived experience of a coach that has transitioned into a formal leadership role, i.e., principal, raises a series of questions

about the nature of the lived experience. What is it about the coaching experience that makes the transition to administration so seamlessly? What experiences and qualities do coaches possess that make them such a hot commodity to administrators after their coaching days are over? What aspects of administration do coaches find so appealing after they hang up their colloquial whistle? The problem addressed in this phenomenological inquiry was the nature of the lived experience and what the individual coach experienced. While research had been conducted on the transition from coach to educational leadership role, there is little research that examines the phenomenon itself, specifically research that considers African-American coaches.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to examine the essence of the lived experience of African-American males living in rural East Texas that have transitioned from a career in athletic coaching into a career in educational leadership. Phenomenological inquiry, as Creswell (2013) explained, seeks to examine and understand the “lived experiences” of individuals that have experienced a specific phenomenon. Phenomenology emphasizes a focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world, from a first person point of view Creswell (1998) stated that phenomenological data analysis proceeds through the methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings. A phenomenologist wants to understand how the world appears to others (Patton, 1990).

Research Question

This phenomenological inquiry, focused on a culturally sensitive phenomenon of African-American males transitioning in careers, was guided by a single question:

What is the lived experience of the African-American male who has transitioned from a coaching career to a position in educational leadership?

Significance of the Research

This transcendental phenomenological inquiry examines the lived experience of five African-American males serving schools in rural East Texas, that currently hold a position as an educational leader and who transitioned out of a position as an athletic coach. This study was of importance because it addressed a culturally sensitive phenomenon and the gap in the research literature by providing a first-hand account of the lived experiences of African-American male coaches transitioning from a career in coaching into a career in educational leadership. The lived experiences of African-American males in educational leadership positions must be examined so that school districts can better understand why this scarcity of African-American male in education exists.

Through the words of these African-American males, school districts, school leaders, as well as school boards, can hear, first hand, what barriers, motivations, and experiences these African-Americans educational leaders endured in hopes of discovering the “essence” of this unique phenomenon. Tillman (2002) advocated for the need to advance research agendas that used culturally sensitive research approaches from an African-American perspective. “Culturally sensitive research approaches use

qualitative methods such as interviews . . . to investigate and capture holistic conceptualized pictures of social, political, and educational factors that affect the everyday existence of African-Americans, particularly in educational settings” (Tillman, 2002, p. 6). This phenomenological inquiry aligns with Tillman’s advocacy of culturally sensitive approaches.

In 2016, a report by the United States Department of Education highlighting diversity in the educator workforce indicated that Black principal representation was 10% during the 2011-2012 school years. Therefore, this study employed a phenomenological paradigm to facilitate the shared lived experiences of Black males in the position of educational leadership to gain a deeper understanding of how race impacts and shapes their leadership experience.

By exploring the experiences of African-American males in educational leadership positions, the findings of this research can be used as a guideline/blueprint for new and aspiring leaders to assist in proven best practices. These practices can be utilized and implemented to promote more African-American males to enter into the leadership field and become successful in the upward mobility of the leaders, students, schools and the educational system and give a voice to an underrepresented population in educational leadership, the African-American male.

Definitions

The following definitions are provided to inform the reader of important conceptual terms that are essential for understanding the study. Each term is grounded in the theoretical framework, research design, and/or literature review.

Leadership.

Burns (1978) defined leadership as “. . . inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations, and expectations – of both the leader and followers” (p. 133). Hackman and Johnson (1991) stated that leadership is human (symbolic) communication, which modified the attitudes and behaviors of others to meet group goals and needs.

Bracketing.

The act of bracketing occurs when the researcher sets aside any preconceived notions, experiences, and perceptions to attempt to dismiss any biases that would prevent the researcher from viewing the experience through the eyes of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Moustakas (1994) calls this epoché.

Lived experiences.

Lived experiences is “. . . a term used in phenomenological studies to emphasize the importance of individual experiences of people as conscious human beings” (Creswell, 2007, p. 236).

Transformational leadership.

de Poel, Stoker, and Van der Zee (2014) defined transformational leadership as the extent to which a leader can transform the beliefs and attitudes of individuals (employees, players) for them to perform beyond expectations. Transformational leaders provide direction through inspiration and with a clear vision to complete the task or mission as best they can (de Poel et al., 2014).

Essence.

An expression associated with phenomenological research that seeks to describe the nature and central meaning of a lived experience (Van Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology.

The term phenomenology “describes how one orients to lived experiences” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 4).

Transition.

Transition is any event or non-event in an individual’s life that alters one’s “. . . roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions” (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 10).

Structural description.

A structural description is used to delineate how the participants experienced the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994).

Textual description.

A textural description is used to convey what the participants experienced with the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994).

African-American.

“One of the largest of the many ethnic groups in the United States. African-Americans are mainly of African ancestry, but many have nonBlack ancestors as well” (Britannica Academic, 2015, para. 1). The term Black can also be used to describe African-American.

Brown v. Board of Education.

The Supreme Court unanimously ruled that racial segregation in the form of “separate but equal” in public schools violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment (Green, 2004, p. 269).

Member checking.

The transcripts were sent to co-inquirers to affirm their lived experiences. Once the steps of the transcendental phenomenological method were completed for each co-inquirer, the digital audio recordings were transcribed, and the results were sent to them for review. Member checking was used for cross-validation (Moustakas, 1994).

Rural district.

The Texas Education Agency (2014) defined a Texas school district as being rural when either its enrollment is fewer than 300 students, or the district fails to maintain a 20% growth rate over a 5-year period with an enrollment between 300 and the state median. Provasnik et al. (2007) reported that over 50% of schools in the United States are rural and one-third of all public schools are rural.

Rural, in this transcendental phenomenological inquiry, refers to rural East Texas and rural schools as schools that are located within Texas Region VI and VII Education Service Centers.

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to what the researcher is not going to include in the study and also includes the boundaries of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The following delimitations are included in this study:

1. Five African-American male educational leaders in the same geographical location that have transitioned from coaching to educational leadership were investigated. Therefore, the experiences of these educational leaders may not generalize to other educational leaders.
2. This study included only African-American male educational leaders of rural districts; not any urban or suburban districts.

Limitations

Limitations are “potential weaknesses or problems with the study defined by the researcher” (Creswell, 2012, p. 199). This study had the following limitations:

1. The study was limited by the experiences of African-American educational leaders who were investigated and their willingness to share their information.
2. Data were only collected through study participant interviews.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into six chapters as follows: Chapter I includes an introduction, background and statement of the problem, purpose of the study, guiding question, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, definition of terms, organization of the study, and the summary. Chapter II includes a review of the literature relative to a phenomenological inquiry of African-American males in rural East Texas transitioning to educational leadership after a career in athletic coaching; Chapter III includes a detailed description of the design, as well as the methodology and procedures used in the study. Chapter IV consists of the epoché, in which the author shares their experiences with the phenomenon to expose any biases that may be present. Chapter V

includes the findings, and the final Chapter VI includes a summary, implications, and recommendations for future research. The ultimate purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to examine the lived experience of African-American males that transitioned from coaching to educational leadership, as well as to understand the shortfalls in promoting African-American males in educational leadership positions.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Introduction

Chapter I introduced the problem as the lack of research conducted on interscholastic coaches that have transitioned to educational leadership, as well as the underrepresentation of African-American males in such roles. Chapter II explains how through the use of phenomenological inquiry, the researcher seeks to provide a voice to this marginalized group in hopes of discovering the true essence of this unique phenomenon. This literature review takes an in-depth look into the role that sports have played in American culture, as well how social constraints, such as Critical Race Theory, have impacted the voice or lack of voice for the African-American male educational leader. Therefore, this chapter provides a historical overview of African-Americans in positions of educational leadership, both in the arenas of sports and in the school building, dating back to the Supreme Court decision in 1954, *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Finally, Chapter II examines Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman's (1995) theory of transition and how transformative coaches are able to make this transition from coaching to positions in educational leadership almost seamlessly.

Phenomenology

Transcendental phenomenology, described in detail in Chapter III, is a methodology for describing and understanding the essence of lived experience through “disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22). A phenomenon can be an emotion, relationship, or an entity such as a program, an organization, or a culture. A phenomenologist and those using phenomenology as a research method seek to understand how the world appears to others (Patton, 1990). The main purpose is to learn the essence of experience of a phenomenon for those who experience it (Patton, 1990).

Phenomenology refers to knowledge at the conscious level and describes how one perceives, senses, and knows an experience (Moustakas, 1994). One reason for conducting qualitative research is to give voice to silenced voices (Creswell, 2013), in particularly the underrepresented African-American male.

Specifically, transcendental phenomenology was utilized in this research study. According to Moustakas (1994), transcendental phenomenology is “a scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness” (p. 49). Transcendental means that the study of the phenomena moves beyond what is seen in the everyday, and to the inner ego, in which everything is perceived with a fresh lens, as if looking at it for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). I chose transcendental phenomenology because I wanted to set aside my own experiences with the study phenomenon. Due to the author’s experiences with the phenomenon as an African-American in rural East Texas that have transitioned from coaching into a career

in educational leadership, I did not want personal experiences to cloud the interpretation of the data. Rather, I wanted to look at the phenomenon with fresh eyes, as if experiencing it for the first time.

Rural East Texas

There are 12 million school-aged children in rural areas, which account for a quarter of the students attending schools in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Texas Education Agency (2014), reported that 451 of the 1,068 independent school districts in the State of Texas are classified as rural. TEA (2017) classifies a district as rural based on enrollment and enrollment growth. Rural districts either have: “(a) an enrollment of between 300 and the median district enrollment for the state (879 students) and an enrollment growth rate over the past five years of less than 20 percent; or (b) an enrollment of less than 300 students” (para. 19). Johnson, Showalter, Klein, and Lester (2014) found that Texas was one of 11 states in which over half of all rural U.S. students resided.

The rural community and its school are deeply interconnected (Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995). Malhoit (2005) noted, “The link between school and community is especially strong in rural areas where schools often serve as community centers” (p. 5). According to Laub and O’Connor (2009), “rural school leaders face a variety of challenges, shoulder enormous responsibilities and wear many different hats from instructional leader and resource manager to politician and consensus builder” (p. 152). Many rural educational leaders expressed that it was necessary to be a “jack of all trades” (Lamkin, 2006, p. 21). Jimerson (2004) stated that unlike their urban and suburban

counterparts, rural districts encounter higher rates of poverty, a greater number of limited English proficient (LEP) students, above average special education populations, higher teacher turnover rates, and more educators performing duties outside of their certifications.

Advantages of Rural Schools

Prior research has shown that teaching in rural schools provides several distinct advantages (Ralph, 2006). In his extended study of 85 teaching interns and 71 cooperating teachers in 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001, Ralph found nine common benefits of teaching in a rural school (2006). These benefits included:

1. Better relationships with students
2. Greater community involvement
3. Support by community and staff
4. Connection with families
5. Variety of opportunities for active involvement
6. Fewer students
7. Serene environment
8. Less student discipline issues
9. Securing a rural teaching position.

Monk (2007) elaborated, stating that rural schools tend to have smaller classes, experience fewer discipline issues, have greater autonomy, and have a more direct role in local school policy. Jimerson (2004) identified several advantages associated with

working at a rural school district, such as smaller classes and fewer discipline issues. According to Provasnik et al. (2007), compared to urban schools, rural schools tend to have greater parental involvement. Provasnik et al. (2007) indicated that rural schools provided better learning environments.

Disadvantages of Rural Schools

Although there is a substantial amount of research that suggests there are advantages to being in a rural school district, there is also a plethora of research that suggests that working in a rural district has disadvantages. Monk (2007) identified several disadvantages of teaching in rural schools, including lower compensation, increased workload, need for training, and living conditions. Jimerson (2004) noted rural school teachers are often required to teach more than one subject at a lower rate of pay compared to urban or suburban teachers. Jimerson (2004) went on to state that, rural districts encounter higher rates of poverty, a greater number of limited English proficient (LEP) students, above average special education populations, and more educators performing duties outside of their certifications.

Malhoit (2005) discussed that declining enrollment for rural schools has created financial hardships that limit their availability to fund technology initiatives. Sundeen and Sundeen and Sundeen (2013) further stated that, compared to large urban schools, rural schools face challenges that limit equal access to technology. Serving students in rural schools also differs from that of urban and suburban schools. This transcendental phenomenological study examines both advantages and disadvantages are associated with teaching and learning in a rural school setting.

Critical Race Theory

This transcendental phenomenological inquiry will also examine the role that race has contributed to such an underrepresentation of African-American males in positions of educational leadership. Critical race theory (CRT) emerged from the early work of Bell and Freeman (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Critical race theory acknowledges that in American culture racism exists and is deeply rooted in the fiber of our society (Chapman, 2013). According to Delgado & Stefancic (2001), “racist behavior is not an aberration in everyday life; it is often normal practice of our daily existence” (p. xviii). CRT examines how race and power in the United States are used to suppress a certain group or race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT is a form of oppression in which the dominant culture exerts their will on the minority. The struggle begins as the oppressed group experiences “yearning to be free” and reclaim their humanity that was lost (Freire, 1970, p. 32). “Most oppression does not seem like oppression to the perpetrator” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 57).

Milner (2012) stated “. . . knowledge can and should be generated through narratives and counter-narratives that emerge from and with people of color” (p. 28). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) asserted that “. . . the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system” (p. 58). Historically, African-American positions or views of leadership have been excluded from leadership research studies and the literature (Gooden, 2012). Research by and about African-Americans in positions of educational leadership is underrepresented in educational leadership, leaving gaps in the literature from the African-American perspective (Tillman, 2004). African-

American administrators comprise only 10% of public school administrators in this country (Johnson et al., 2014). According to Tallerico (2000), research about school administrators over the last 75 years has primarily focused on White administrators.

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) defined CRT in the educational field as:

A framework or set of basic perspectives, methods and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the marginal position and subordination of African-American and Latino students. (p. 42)

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) noted that a platform was needed where people of color could show their lived experience with racism. Critical Race Theory centers on five fundamental points: (a) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, (b) the challenge to the dominant ideology of racial neutrality, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the importance of experiential knowledge, and (e) the reliance and use of interdisciplinary perspectives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The firsthand accounts of African-American male coaches transitioning into educational leadership positions serve as CRT's notion of 'counter-narratives', or stories told by historically and systematically marginalized people of color that paint a different perspective of the experience and that expand knowledge on the issue (Milner, 2012).

African-American Males in Athletic Coaching and Leadership

The classroom education does not end when the bell rings. For many students, learning extends in the area of athletics. Interscholastic athletics is an extension of school learning taught in non-traditional classroom settings. Thus, even though coaches are

teachers in classrooms that are non-traditional, their pedagogical methods, behaviors, and dispositions impact learning (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003). Legendary Duke University Coach and Haller Mike Krzyzewski stated, “I’m a teacher and a coach. To be considered a good basketball coach, you must be able to teach the game. And make no mistake about it, teaching is an art” (Krzyzewski & Phillips, 2000, p. 213). Coaching refers to guidance and feedback about specific knowledge, skills, and abilities involved in a task, the performance of a job, and the handling of assignments (Bass, 2008). Trikojus (2003) defines coach as one who transforms a person from where he or she is to where he or she wants to be. Feltz, Chase, Moritz and Sullivan (1999) stated “Athletic coaches are also teachers. They provide instruction, guide the practice of skills, and give feedback to their athletes” (p. 2). Vella, Oades, and Crowe (2010) stated that “. . . coaching is often assumed to be synonymous with leadership . . . leadership has been argued to be the essential and indispensable element of coaching practice” (p. 425).

African-American males in coaching, as well as education, represent overall, a relatively small percentage of educators nationwide (Bireda & Chait, 2011). According to Lewis and Toldson (2013) African-American males comprise only 2% of the teaching force. In 2010, the U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan understood the need to help combat this shortage of African-American males in education and launched a national teacher initiative to address the lack of diversity in the teaching force. He further stated:

I’m very concerned that increasingly, our teachers don’t reflect the great diversity of our nation’s young people, and so making sure we have more teachers of color

and particularly more men, more Black and Latino men, coming into education is going to be a significant part of this Teach Campaign. (Bireda & Chait, 2011, p. 1)

This national initiative addressed by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, concerning the shortage of African-Americans in educational leadership positions, was then and continues to be a concern today. The results, if not addressed could be damaging to all stakeholders in the field of education, in particularly the African-American youth who will suffer because of Black individuals that look like them.

African-American in Educational Leadership: After *Brown v. Board of Education*

There has been a shortage of Black leaders in the United States since the Supreme Court decision of 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education*. This decision did not only drastically affect White schools, but it brought a massive change to African-American schools, as well. As White schools were forced to welcome African-American students, most African-American schools were ordered to cease and desist. This, order led to the disbursement of African-American educators and administrators to Whites schools as well as some of them being laid off or fired (Hall, 2013). In the post-Brown era, the Black principals were often demoted or transferred to other central office positions such as serving as coordinators in federal programs (Heath, 2011). Some of the titles of the jobs were nontraditional to the education industry. This was devastating for many former Black principals since they appeared to be lacking authority and security (Heath, 2011).

The loss of jobs among Black principals came as an unintended consequence of the reform process, the reform intended to rectify the inequalities, instead perpetuated and

exacerbated segregation in the school system (Clotfelter, 2011). Before Brown, there were 82,000 Black teachers (Brown, 2005). Following Brown, 38,000 Black teachers and administrators in twenty-one southern and southern bordering states lost their jobs (Oakley, Stowell, & Logan, 2009). Those that were fortunate enough to gain employment in the Post-Brown era were typically assigned to the worst schools in the worst neighborhoods with the lowest performing students (Tillman, 2004). The Brown decision made the Black administrator powerless than before by ejecting them from the places where they could influence the education policies, leaving them with no influence over the direction of the education of Black children (Clotfelter, 2011).

Brown (2005) also attributed the lack of Black educational leaders to the fact that there are less candidates to choose from. Brown (2005) stated that because Black males are choosing the teaching profession at a relative small rate, and the fact that many schools promote teachers to positions in educational leadership, a low ratio of Black leaders in schools can be linked to a shortage of the Black teachers in the leadership pipeline. There are more than 14,000 school districts in the United States. Of these 14,000 districts only 2% or approximately 323 are being led by Black superintendents (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Importantly, the United States Supreme Court decision of 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* resulted in substantial changes to the landscape of educational leadership and administration, especially for African-American teachers and principals.

Transformational Leadership

Bass and Riggio (2006) described transformational leaders as:

. . . those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity.

Transformational leaders' help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization. Evidence has accumulated to demonstrate that transformational leadership can move followers to exceed expected performance, as well as lead to high levels of follower satisfaction and commitment to the group and organization. (p. 3)

Ehrmann, Ehrmann, and Jordan (2011) defined transformational coaches as coaches who use their coaching platform to impart life changing messages. James MacGregor Burns' *Leadership* (1978) is generally recognized as the seminal work in the conceptualization of transformational leadership. Transformational Leadership refers to “. . . the process whereby an individual engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower” (Northouse, 2004, p. 131). The transformational leader creates a culture of cooperation and trust (Northouse, 2007). High-pressure jobs call for transformational leaders who motivate followers (Hayati, Charkhabi, & Naami, 2014). Transformational leaders lead with a strong sense of values and morals; they motivate people to do things for the greater good rather than their own self-interest (Kuhnert, 1994). “Leadership is a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow” (Kouzes & Posner, 2003, p. 1). Kouzes and Posner (1995) stated: “Leaders communicate their

dreams so that others clearly understand and carry them out as if they were their own” (p. 164). Kouzes and Posner (2007) shared that leaders cannot command that others follow, only inspire them.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

As coaches transition to other educational roles, which may be a difficult time in an individual's life. Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) define transition as “. . . any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (p. 33). Schlossberg (1981) identifies four factors that influence an individual’s response to any given transition. These factors include: self (the individual), situation, strategies (coping responses) and support (external resources in the form of relationships, services and environmental constructs) (Goodman et al., 2006).

A transition can be said to occur if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behavior and relationships (Schlossberg, 1981). Schlossberg (2008) further noted:

Even though we expect to experience certain transitions in our lives, we still have difficulty since any change, even elected, alters one’s roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions. In addition, the fact that these transitions are common doesn’t mean that everyone experiences them in the same way. (p. 22)

Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman’s (1995) transition framework assisted in examining the challenges and complexities of coaches that have transitioned from coaching to educational leadership in rural East Texas. Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman’s (1995) transition theory focuses on how adults adjust and cope with changes.

Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) defined transition as “. . . any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (p. 27).

Schlossberg (2011) explained the first action an individual must take when attempting to adapt to change is to understand the various types of transitions that can occur. The three types include: anticipated, unanticipated and non-events (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995). *Anticipated transitions* occur as a natural part of life, examples include graduating from college or getting married. *Unanticipated transitions* are unexpected events where there is no possible way of preparing for, such as the death of a loved one or being fired from a job. *Non-events* transition refers to expectations that are not realized. For example, a *non-event transition* could be the feeling of being disappointment experienced by a coach, or an educational leader, who does not receive a promotion.

According to Schlossberg (1981) career transitions are understood most profoundly by the individual that experienced the transitions. Schlossberg (2011) identifies four key factors believed to influence an individual's ability to cope during transition that were used to understand the transitional experiences of these coaches that have made the transition to educational leadership:

1. The situation – What are the contextual factors surrounding the coaches' transition from coaching to educational leadership (age, education, opportunities)?
2. The self – How does the coach feel about transitioning from coaching to educational leadership (personal characteristics, background, resources)?
3. The support – What types of support does the coach have available during the transition (family, friends, mentoring connections)?

4. The strategies – What strategies does the coach have to help him cope with the transition from coaching to educational leadership?

Summary

The review of literature demonstrates that not only is there an absence of and a need for African-American males in leadership positions, it also offers understanding of the barriers, motivation, and lived experiences of African-American males that have transitioned into educational leadership.

CHAPTER III

Method of Inquiry

Introduction

Chapter III begins by looking at an overall description of transcendental phenomenological which is the framework for how the study was conducted. The phenomenologist seeks to transcend his own assumptions and seek the essence of participants' experiences of transitioning from coaching into educational leadership through their own consciousness of thoughts, feelings, and sensual awareness. The chapter contains a review of the purpose for the study and examines the research question for the study. The role of the phenomenologist and the participants as co-inquirers, in this study is to examine the lived experience of the phenomenon. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological inquiry is to examine the lived experience of African-American males in rural East Texas that have transitioned from a leadership role in athletic coaching to a position in educational leadership. Chapter III provides a discussion of transcendental phenomenology and a detailed description of the data collection process as well as the data analysis procedures for this phenomenology inquiry.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a research design that aims to describe the “lived experiences” of individuals behind a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Schutz (1967) noted that the only way an individual truly understands a participant’s experience is to be in possession of their consciousness, which would require that the phenomenologist become the individual. Phenomenological inquiry demands the phenomenologist to become a “. . . sensitive observer of the subtleties of everyday life and an avid reader of relevant texts in the humanities, history, philosophy, anthropology, and the social sciences as they pertain to her domain of interest” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 29). “It is tough stuff, very abstract, and very conceptual” (Knafl 1994, p. 134).

Edmund Husserl, a German mathematician, coined and popularized the phenomenological philosophy in his writings from as early as 1913 (Creswell, 1998). Moustakas (1994) stated that “. . . there is no evidence that objects are real, apart from our subjective experience of them” (p. 46). Phenomenology focuses on a phenomenon and examines individuals sharing that same phenomenon. Van Manen (1990) used the term “. . . lived experience” as “a determinate meaningful aspect of my life” (p. 38).

Husserl, regarded as the intellectual founder of phenomenology, explained the goal of phenomenological inquiry was to understand human thought and experience through rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear (Dowling, 2007). According to Husserl, phenomenology seeks to find the essence of experience (Zalta, 2003). He also indicated that what appears in the consciousness is the actual phenomenon and through

the study of the phenomenon, meaning and the essence of knowledge are discovered (Moustakas, 1994).

Patton (1990) presented a clear detailed explanation of the aim of phenomenological inquiry since he bases this method on:

. . . the assumption that there is an essence or essences to shared experience.

These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. The experiences of different people are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to the identity of the essences of the phenomenon, for example, the essences of loneliness, the essence of being a mother, the essence of being a participant in a particular program. The assumption of essence, like the ethnographer's assumption that culture exists and is important, becomes the defining characteristic of a purely phenomenological study. (Patton, 1990, p. 70)

Husserl (1931) contended that phenomenology allows the phenomenologist to revisit the world as it is lived and experienced. Therefore, in search of the true essence of an experience, no event, experience or aspect should be considered as minute or trivial. Phenomenology simply stated is “. . . illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within the experience that may be taken for granted in our lives” (Lavery, 2003, p. 24). This phenomenological inquiry sought to illuminate the lived experiences of African-American athletic coaches who have transitioned into a career in educational leadership in rural East Texas.

Transcendental Phenomenology

Husserl frequently used the words “transcendental” and “phenomenology” interchangeably to describe the distinct method of the reduction used as the means to explain the phenomena (Van Manen, 1990). Moustakas (1994) outlined transcendental phenomenology in four distinct steps: Epoché, Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and a Synthesis of Meanings and Essence. Transcendental Phenomenology requires the phenomenologist to transcend his or her biases and assumptions to see the phenomenon “. . . freshly, as for the first time” and be open to its totality (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34).

Step 1. epoché.

Moustakas (1994) explained that the epoché
 . . . does not eliminate everything, does not deny the reality of everything, does not doubt everything- only the natural attitude, the biases of everyday knowledge, as a basis for truth and reality. What is doubted are the scientific ‘facts’, the knowing of things in advance, from an external base rather than internal reflection and meaning. (p. 85)

The first step, the epoché, is considered as the foundation of the transcendental phenomenology inquiry (Moustakas, 1994). The Greek word epoché means “. . . to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). Morley (2010) explained, “. . . the epoché is a practice that involves the full existential engagement of the researcher as a whole person” (p. 230). The epoché allows the phenomenologist to become aware of and

describe things in a state of their existence (Moustakas, 1994). This process allows the phenomena to ‘speak for itself’. The epoché is unblemished by prejudices, and results in either new meaning, fuller meaning, or renewed meaning (Gray, 2014). The epoché “is a commitment to assume the position of perpetual beginner and a childlike yet disciplined openness to the world as an ongoing birth of meaning” (Morley, 2010, p. 230). “Nothing is determined in advance” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 87). Moustakas (1994) stated the concept of epoché is a very difficult process because it affects one’s own experiences, emotions, and thoughts. The phenomenologist clears all value judgments, prior knowledge or experience and thoughts about the phenomenon out of the mind (Moustakas, 1994). According to Wertz (2005), shifting back and forth between bracketing one’s own assumptions and examining the participants’ lived experiences permits the phenomenologist to:

. . . recollect [his] own experiences and to empathically enter and reflect on the lived world of other persons . . . as they are given to the first-person point of view. The psychologist can investigate his or her own original sphere of experience and has an intersubjective horizon of experience that allows access to the experiences of others. (p. 168)

In transcendental phenomenology, the phenomenologist is most focused on the experiences of the participants and not on any interpretation by the phenomenologist (Moustakas, 1994). This placed upon me as the phenomenologist, the obligation to separate any past knowledge or experience of being an African-American male in rural East Texas that has transitioned out of a career in coaching into a career in educational

leadership.

Step 2. phenomenological reduction.

Following the Epoché, the second step, phenomenological reduction, is called ‘bracketing’. Creswell (2013) stated, “To fully describe how participants view the phenomenon, researchers must bracket out as much as possible, their own experiences” (p. 81). For instance, a phenomenologist examining the aspects of coaching basketball would not take for granted the reader’s knowledge of what a basketball is, rather the phenomenologist would describe the lived experience of coaching basketball. The phenomenologist would however go into great details in describing the orange, spherical object that rolls and bounces, typically 29 to 31 inches in circumference and weighing 20 to 22 ounces for men and 18 to 20 ounces for women. The challenging aspect of bracketing according to Moustakas (1994) requires the phenomenologist to:

. . . describe in textural language just what one sees, not only in terms of the external object but also the internal act of consciousness . . . the rhythm and relationship between the phenomenon and self . . . The task requires that I look and describe. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90)

The horizontalization process, which is the next aspect of the bracketing process, requires the phenomenologist to keep an open mind and avoid presumptions and biases in order to examine each statement equally. “Later, statements irrelevant to the topic and question as well as those that are repetitive or overlapping are deleted” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). During this process, “. . . every statement [was] initially treated as having equal value” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97) and each statement was considered for its relevance to

the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Integral to the phenomenological inquiry process, in particular in examining each statement as it relates to either reduction or elimination (Moustakas, 1994), are two questions: 1. Do statements reveal information related to the individual's experience that deepens one's understanding of the phenomenon? 2. Should the statement be labeled or categorized in terms of being essential to revealing the deep meaning of the phenomenon?

Deciding whether to bracket my thoughts, emotions and experience out of the research, as Husserl would suggest, or to use my presumptions and experiences, according to Heidegger (1962) as the baseline to gain new knowledge, will prove to be my most difficult decision in establishing the theoretical framework for this research design. Creswell (2013) pointed out that the phenomenologist analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines into themes.

Step 3. imaginative variation.

Wertz (2010) describes imaginative variation as the process through which the phenomenologist examines the data collected through multiple perspectives with respect to “. . . what is possible and impossible regarding an essence” (p. 287). Moustakas (1994), explained imaginative variation as seeking

. . . possible meaning through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals' and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. The aim is to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced; in other words the

“how” that speaks to conditions that illuminate the “what of experience”.

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 85)

Imaginative variation involves asking questions of the phenomenon in order to remove inessential features and explore all possible meanings of the data (Beech, 1999). The purpose of this step is to “arrive at structural descriptions of an experience . . .” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Imaginative variation allowed me as phenomenologist to gain a deeper understanding of how other African-American coaches in rural East Texas have transitioned to a career in educational leadership. During this process, the phenomenologist contemplates all possible meanings of the experience and must look at the phenomenon from different vantage points and perspectives.

Step 4. synthesis of meanings and essence.

The final step requires integration of the composite textual, and composite structural descriptions, to provide synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 181). Husserl (1970) explained:

I can take no empirical determination as actually belonging to the object; I can only say that it is experienced under this determination. Even in thought I cannot hold fast to the determination in an absolutely identical way; I can never, in approaching the experienced object, say that the determination I experience now is absolutely the same as the one I have experienced. (p. 314)

The steps in this phenomenological inquiry will be further elaborated in Chapters IV and V, with Chapter IV presenting Step 1 and Chapter V presenting Steps 2-4.

Participants

This transcendental phenomenological inquiry requires that the participants have lived the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994). As a phenomenologist using the transcendental phenomenological inquiry approach, the participants and the phenomenologist are considered co-inquirers (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). A purposive selection method for selecting participants was used, as I tried to identify participants located within the same geographical region that meet the criteria of this unique phenomenon. Starks and Trinidad (2007) stated that the sample size of phenomenological research should range from 1 to 10 participants. Giorgi (2009) recommended that phenomenological research include a minimum of three participants.

The participants for this study met the following criteria: (a) African-American, (b) male, (c) 3 years of coaching experience before transitioning into educational leadership, and (d) 5 years' experience in educational leadership in a school in East Texas. A letter of invitation to participate will be sent to potential participants that met the selection criteria (see Appendix A).

Informed consent forms were distributed to all participants in the study (see Appendix B). Each form was returned to the phenomenologist before any data collection began. Primary data were compiled through in-depth interviews and the phenomenologist's field notes of the phenomena being studied of African-American males in rural East Texas that had transitioned from coaching into educational leadership.

All interviews were audio taped as a safeguard to document any data that may have been missed by the phenomenologist throughout the interview. The five African-American male participants chosen for this study worked in rural public schools in East

Texas. Each participant had at least three years' experience as an athletic coach before transitioning into a position in educational leadership, where they currently have served for at least 5 years.

Data Collection and Data Sources

After IRB approval, the interview process was initiated. The phenomenologist conducted three levels of interviews for each participant lasting approximately an hour each, at a convenient location for the participants. Participants were asked to complete an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix B) prior to beginning data collection.

The first round of interviews was used to create a relationship and become more acquainted with the participant (see Appendix C). The second round of interviews consisted of open-ended questions derived from an analysis of the first level of interview data. The second level of questions allowed the phenomenologist to go deeper into the lived experience phenomenon and gather additional data on each participant. The third and final level of interview questions were open ended, and the format was intentionally designed to address any questions that required clarification from the previous two levels of interview. The third level of interview questions allowed for data saturation.

The data analysis process began by organizing and familiarizing myself, as phenomenologist and co-inquirer, with the data. Creswell (2013) stated that interviews should be transcribed, and all documents organized and checked for accuracy. Each interview was audio taped, in which the researcher took notes during the interviews. Verbatim transcripts were produced, which required listening repeatedly to check for errors and clarity of responses. Non-verbal responses captured during the interviews

were incorporated into the transcription. Individual interviews were printed for participant (co-inquirer) review and for subsequent analysis.

According to Creswell (2013), coding “. . . represents the heart of qualitative data analysis” (p. 184). Coding begins with horizontalization, in which the researcher initially gives equal weight to each statement. NVivo assists in the coding process by counting the frequency of direct terms stated by participants (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenologist then organized common themes together in the process called thematizing. Thematizing enables the researcher to filter through the codes and arrive at the essence of the phenomenon, in which can be shared in an organized, systematic manner.

The Role of the Phenomenologist

As phenomenologist, I served as the instrument of inquiry in this phenomenological study of lived experience by conducting interviews in order to collect data (Creswell, 2013). For the purposes of this study, I suspended my personal understandings and experiences as a coach that had transitioned into educational leadership as part of the epoché, or bracketing process (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing entailed setting aside my beliefs and experiences in order to accurately describe the lived experiences of these novice teachers as they relate to administrative support.

I achieved this by being fully present in the interviews and by attending closely to what the participants said. Specifically, I utilized the strategies discussed by Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013) to bracket my own experiences and prejudgments: (a) acknowledge and then set aside my own perceptions and experiences, (b) allow the literature review to

ground the research questions that drive the study, (c) use semi-structured interview protocols and open-ended questions to allow the participant response to guide the interview, and (d) suspend biases during data-analysis.

As the phenomenologist and co-inquirer in this phenomenological inquiry I collected data through personal interviews and observations during interviews through the use of open-ended questions. Due to my own experiences and interest in coaching and transitioning into educational leadership, it was important for me as the phenomenologist to recognize all assumptions and biases as they may relate to this phenomenon (Creswell, 2003).

Moreover, as phenomenologist and co-inquirer, I assumed the responsibility of providing a rich description of the lived experiences, challenges, conflicts, and administrative practices of five rural East Texas educational leaders that transitioned from a career in athletic coaching. Kafle (2013) noted that phenomenology is the most appropriate inquiry method to use when interpreting and describing the lived experiences of subjects. To interpret the essence of participants' lived experiences, the phenomenologist conducted in-depth, face-to-face interviews as the primary method of data collection.

Provisions for Trustworthiness

Creswell (2013) suggested that validation in qualitative inquiry is an assessment of the accuracy of the findings of the inquiry as described by both the phenomenologist and the participants as co-inquirers. One validation strategy suggested by Creswell

(2013) and used in this study was triangulation. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness requires four key components: credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability.

As phenomenologist in this phenomenological study I established trustworthiness by triangulation, member checking and acknowledging the phenomenologist's biases through the process of the epoché (see Chapter IV). Creswell (2013) suggested that the phenomenologist clarify his bias from the very beginning of the study. Triangulation was established by personal interviews, observations, and the participation of participants in multiple sites. Member checking was established by asking the participants to review the transcripts of interviews for accuracy and meaning. Peer review by my dissertation committee and colleagues served as another means to ensure trustworthiness.

Communicating the Findings

After the findings were coded to find the essence of the phenomenon, as phenomenologist I communicated the results in common themes through a process called thematizing. Thematizing is important because “. . . the critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can, but to ‘can’ (i.e., get rid of) much of the data you accumulate” (Wolcott, 2009, p. 39). Van Manen stated, “Themes give control and order to our research and writing” (1990, p. 79). Themes “. . . consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea,” (Creswell, 2013, p. 186) and are later used as research findings (Creswell, 2013).

Summary

Chapter III outlined the phenomenological inquiry methods used in the study. A transcendental phenomenological design was chosen because it allowed the phenomenologist to provide a rich description of the lived experience of African-American male coaches that have transitioned into a position of educational leadership in rural schools in East Texas. Data were collected through face-to-face individual interviews, then analyzed following Moustakas' (1994) procedures for analyzing phenomenological data. Analysis of significant statements and themes captured the essence of the participants' lived experiences. The trustworthiness of the results was established through triangulation and member checks.

CHAPTER IV

Epoché

Step 1: Epoché

Epoché is a Greek word used by Husserl meaning to stay away or abstain from presupposition or judgments about the phenomena under the investigation (Moustakas, 1994). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that researchers must approach the phenomenon of a study as if no prior knowledge exists. Moustakas (1994) recommends that the phenomenologist set aside any preconceived ideas and experience with the phenomena before conducting the research to bracket their potential biases. Through the process of epoché, I set aside my biases, prejudices, and preconceived ideas in order to be able to look at the phenomenon of transitioning from athletic coaching into educational leadership with a fresh perspective (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological epoché does not deny reality or experience, rather, it brackets, or sets aside, “ordinary thought” to present “a phenomenon to be gazed upon . . . freshly through a purified consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Creswell (1998) asserted that “. . . clarifying researcher bias from the outset of a study is a verification technique. In this clarification the researcher notes past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that may influence the study” (p. 202).

I acknowledge that as an athletic coach that has made the transition into educational leadership with my current position of assistant principal, my lived experience has allowed for the development of beliefs and assumptions. I have interests and opinions that could, if not set aside, influence my decisions and rationale to conduct this study. As a phenomenologist, I recognize that I cannot reconstruct a perfect understanding of someone else's lived experience, however, transcendental phenomenology allows me as the phenomenologist to get as close as possible by setting aside my own experiences as I gather a comprehensive picture of the context and participants' points of view of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). According to Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013), "bracketing should be in the researcher's mind throughout the research process" (p. 3).

My Transition

As I reflected upon my transitional experience as an athletic coach into educational leadership, I can't help but think about my childhood and how sports have always played an integral part. Raised in Indiana, I have a strong affection to the game of basketball. Growing up, the one thing that I seemed to excel in was sports. It was how others identified and knew me, and it was the way that I began to gain notoriety. As I got older, I found myself either consciously or subconsciously seeking after this attention, often at the expense of education. I spent hours upon hours working on my craft, in hopes of becoming the next Michael Jordan, while spending little to no time studying. It wasn't until I got cut from a college tryout that I came to the realization that I probably should focus on exercising my mind more than my muscle. Everything that I knew about

myself or thought I knew was taken away from me. I suddenly had this daunting task to create a new identity. Reputation is said to be what others know you to be, but integrity is the person you truly are. For the first time in my life without basketball, I can honestly say I had no clue of who I was. I knew who people thought I was, or the person that others believed to be me. But who I was underneath the uniforms was still to be discovered.

To stay close to the game that I love, I sought a career in coaching. It was like love at first sight. It reminded me of my childhood and I was eager to learn the game from this very different perspective. I always loved the strategy and technical aspect of the game of basketball. My favorite players such as Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, and Isiah Thomas, not only beat their opponents with their superior athletic ability, but also with their mind. They always seemed two and three steps ahead of their opponents mentally, which made the game at times look so effortless. As a coach I sought to imitate this same philosophy, outwork you and to always be two steps ahead of you mentally. It has proven to be a successful formula as I have won several district championships and several regional appearances. I was beginning to rediscover who I was as a person and was finding true meaning and purpose for myself through, of all things, sports again. Just as I was feeling comfortable in my skin and on my way to becoming the best coach in the world, I was thrown a curveball. I was promoted to the assistant principal at my high school, which would require me to begin from ground zero in the discovery of who I was, again. For the second time, just as I began to become confident in who I was and my identity with sports, it was suddenly changed. I am now in a world that, at times, I feel is

very foreign. I am now an educational leader of the entire school. This is going from a career as a jock and coach to a person that was responsible for producing a climate and culture that leads to winning in the classroom and not just on the court. As a principal I have made it my mission to make sure that all students understand the importance of education and the importance that it, or lack of it, plays in shaping their identity.

As the interview process began for this transcendental phenomenological inquiry, and the co-inquirers began to tell their stories, I knew immediately how difficult the phenomenological reduction process would be, as my mind began to reflect on a variety of emotions, feelings, and experiences that sound so familiar. My prior experience as a coach that has transitioned into a career in educational leadership was useful in the research phase of this study but proved to be an obstacle that I had to overcome in the bracket and analysis stages of this inquiry. I developed a habit of quiet meditation both before and after my encounter with the phenomenon. During this time, attention was given to clearing my mind of anything preventing “an open consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 89). Also, by writing post-interview reflection memos throughout the research, the phenomenologist ensured that bracketing of potential biases was sustained throughout the process.

Final Reflections

In the epoché process in transcendental phenomenology, the phenomenologist approaches the phenomenon as if they do not already know what it means (Creswell, 2013). Epoché is a process and state of mind. It should be constantly engaged throughout the inquiry. This practice is a challenging endeavor as it demands incessant “attention,

concentration, and presence” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 88). Moustakas (1994) describes the pursuit of epoché as requiring transparency with myself, taking a neutral stance in every interaction with the phenomenon so that “every quality has equal value” (p. 87), and freeing the conscious to not be in “bondage to people and things” (p. 87).

Reflecting on my transitional experience into educational leadership from a career in coaching was important to me because I wanted to be open to the readers, as well as allow the findings to guide me to the discovery of the true essence of the unique phenomenon. Within the context of Husserl’s (1931) transcendental phenomenology, the essence refers to “that which is common or universal” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100) across participants’ lived experiences. To do this, I spent time in quiet reflection both before and after I interviewed participants, paying careful attention to each thought I had related to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The epoché also allowed me to keep an open mind and heart to the stories of my co-inquirers. Moustakas (1994) stated that the “. . . empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience” (p. 13). Van Manen (2014) added, “While natural science inclines to mathematics, phenomenology gravitates to meaning and reflectivity” (p. 17).

As my epoché has uncovered, coaching and leadership are very dear to my existence. According to Moustakas (1994) this is an essential aspect in phenomenological inquiry because the phenomenologist should have “a personal interest in whatever she or he seeks to know” and should be “intimately connected with the

phenomenon” (p. 59). This phenomenologist is intimately connected to educational leadership and the discovery of the essence of African-American males in rural East Texas that have transitioned from coaching into a career in educational leadership.

CHAPTER V

Data Analysis Approach

This phenomenological inquiry examined the essence of the lived experience of African-American males living in rural East Texas that had transitioned from a career in athletic coaching into a career in educational leadership. The phenomenologist used a modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method for analysis of data, which was originally used by Moustakas (1994) and later modified by Creswell (2007). There are six steps to the method: (a) begin with full description of the participants concerning the phenomenon, (b) develop a list of significant statements, (c) group the significant statement into “meaning units” or themes, (d) write a textural description, (e) write a structural description, and (f) write a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both textural and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2007). Throughout this phenomenological inquiry process, as phenomenologist, I bracketed out my own lived experiences as a head coach and my experience making the transition into educational leadership. The bracketing process was recursive and served to reduce bias.

Co-Inquirers Profiles

The co-inquirers were all African-American males that were athletic coaches in schools in rural school districts in East Texas within the geographical boundary of the

Region IV Education Service Center (ESC) for at least 3 years. The co-inquirers each transitioned from coaching into a career in educational leadership in rural East Texas, in which they currently serve. All participants resided in East Texas and served as rural school educational leaders at the time of the study. The schools they served were located in the Texas Region IV Education Service Center designated area. This region encompasses a high concentration of rural schools in the State of Texas and met the requirements for investigation outlined in this study.

To protect identities and ensure confidentiality of participants and schools in this study, the phenomenologist assigned pseudonyms (Creswell, 2008). Other identifying information (e.g., names of schools, school districts, and counties) was also eliminated. Many of the experiences shared were sensitive in nature and confidentiality was imperative. The same pseudonym was used in reporting data.

All participants understood and signed consent forms to participate in the research study. Each interview was conducted in a secure area in order to avoid disruptions and distractions. Each interview was audio recorded: the phenomenologist took notes during the interviews. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 65 minutes. Verbatim transcripts were produced, which required listening repeatedly to check for errors and clarity of responses. Non-verbal responses captured during the interviews were incorporated into the transcription. Individual interviews were printed for participant review and for subsequent analysis.

The phenomenologist completed the coding and data analysis using a manual coding method. Initial color-coding was done on each interview transcript to help identify the emerging themes. Within each theme the subthemes were coded.

The researcher created a table that identified each participant by several demographic characteristics, including age, years of experience, size of school served, and highest degree earned (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (co-inquirers)

Participate	Age	Coaching Experience	Highest Degree Earned	Educational Leadership Experience	School Size	Current Position	Level
Co-inquirer 1	59	15 years	M.Ed	11	5A	Assistant Principal	HS
Co-inquirer 2	57	4 years	M.Ed	20	5A	Principal	HS
Co-inquirer 3	45	5 years	Ed.D	19	5A	Associate Principal	JHS
Co-inquirer 4	50	24 years	M.Ed	8	3A	Principal	HS
Co-inquirer 5	58	5 years	M.Ed	27	2A	Superintendent	HS

Note: HS = High School; JHS = Junior High School.

Co-inquirer 1.

A 59-year old African-American male, co-inquirer 1 is married and a father of 8 who is an East Texas native. He currently serves as assistant principal of a large 5A school in East Texas. He has been in the field of education for 26 years, 15 of those as a football coach at the high school level and 11 as assistant principal. His entire educational career has been in rural East Texas. He has held the position of assistant principal at the high school level his entire educational leadership career.

Co-inquirer 2.

A 57-year old African-American single male, father of two, co-inquirer 2 has been in education for 26 years, 2 years as a teacher, 4 as a coach and 20 years in leadership roles, with years all within the same district in East Texas. An East Texas native, currently serves as a principal at 5A school. His first four years in education he served coaching football, basketball and track. He has served in various administrative positions including Jr. high principal, associate high school principal, and now currently serves as an alternative school principal at a 5A school in East Texas.

Co-inquirer 3.

A 45-year old African-American male, married, father of two, has been in education for 24 years. A native from East Texas, he has spent his entire life in East Texas. The first 5 years of his educational career he served as a football, basketball, and track coach in a school in East Texas, with 19 years served in leadership roles. He currently serves as associate principal at one of the largest middle schools in East Texas.

Co-inquirer 4.

A 50-year old African-American male, native from East Texas, co-inquirer 4 is married and a father of two boys. He has been in education for 26 years. He has served in roles as athletic director, associate superintendent, principal, assistant principal, and teacher. Eight of the 26 years in education he has held dual roles as both a basketball coach and educational leader. His last two years has held a single role of high school principal at a 3A school in East Texas.

Co-inquirer 5.

A 58-year old African-American male, married father of three, co-inquirer 5 started his educational career as a Jr. High Coach/Teacher at small 3A school in East Texas in 1988. He has held various positions in education over his 32 year career in education including, elementary assistant principal, high school assistant principal, associate principal, principal, and currently holds the position as superintendent of schools at a 2A school in rural East Texas.

Step 2: Phenomenological Reduction (and Individual Textural Descriptions)

Moustakas (1994) noted that the Epoché is Step 1 of the phenomenological inquiry (see Chapter IV). In Step 2 Moustakas (1994) recommended the following three procedures for the phenomenological reduction:

1. Bracketing the focus of the study that concerns the topic and the central research question.
2. Horizontalization, a process that involves treating every statement with equal value. Data discovered to be insignificant to the central research question was removed and only leave the textual meaning and invariant aspect of the phenomenon.
3. Codifying the horizons and themes into a logical textual description of the phenomenon.

Moustakas (1994) described horizontalization: “We consider each of the horizons and the textural qualities that enable us to understand an experience. When we horizontalize, each phenomenon has equal value as we seek to disclose its nature and

essence” (p. 95). Reduction and elimination determined invariant constituents by removing overlapping and repetitive statements (Moustakas, 1994). During this process, also referred to as horizontalization, “. . . every statement [was] initially treated as having equal value” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97) and each statement was considered for its relevance to the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Statements unrelated to the focus of the study or overlapping statements were eliminated leaving only the textual description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

All interview transcripts and journal entries were transcribed by the phenomenologist, read several times, and notations were created in the margins to generate a document of statements organized by the interview questions (see Appendix C). All co-inquirers reviewed these documents for clarity and did not offer any corrections.

Textural Narrative and Description of Journey into Educational Leadership

Co-inquirer 1: Textural description of journey.

Co-inquirer 1 shared that his journey was:

Kind of a funny situation, a coaching friend of mine talked me into starting the Principal Certification courses with him, I didn't think I would like it but after starting the courses, I fell in love with it. When my coaching career led me to East Texas, I transferred to a University in East Texas, where I completed my Principal Certification courses. My first administration job was in a 5A school in East Texas as an assistant principal. I was in that position for a year and a half, but I still had the coaching itch in me. I left that position and went back into

coaching at another 5A school in East Texas. Immediately after making my decision to get back into coaching I realized how much I missed administration. I stayed in coaching there for two years, which was my final years of coaching before I enter administration for good.

Co-inquirer 2: Textural description of journey.

Co-inquirer 2 came into coaching at a relatively late age of 31, after first working as a prison guard for 10 years. After obtaining his alternative certification, he began his teaching career at the alternative school where his first year he was not coaching. After his first year he was offered a job as a defensive line football coach. He served in that capacity for two years and became the coordinator his final 2 years of coaching. At this same time he was completing his principal certification. After a superintendent change, his new superintendent offered him a position as an administrator, and there his educational leadership journey began.

Co-inquirer 3: Textural description of journey.

After excelling in sports, the East Texas native, co-inquirer 3 was able to earn a football scholarship to play division 1 football at a university in East Texas. He went on to obtain his Principal Certification from that same university. The first 5 years of his educational career he served as a football, basketball, and track coach in a school in East Texas. After 5 years of coaching, his administration journey began as the principal of a 1A school in East Texas. He served there for 3 years before leaving to become an assistant principal at an elementary school where he served for 5 years. From there he moved to be the associate principal at a large 5A school in which he served East Texas

for five years, before moving to a principal position where he served for 5 years. He is currently an associate principal at the middle school level.

Co-inquirer 4: Textural description of journey.

Co-inquirer 4 has held a dual role of both coach and educational leader for 8 of his 26 years in education. He admits that his ideal job would be a dual role situation where he was a principal and basketball coach. His career in education began because after five years of coaching, his superintendent was so impressed with the discipline his teams displayed on the court, he was offered the job of assistant principal. Co-inquirer 4 stated:

That kind of was a launch pad of my career in educational leadership. I have moved around quite a bit, but that kind of goes with the profession. I must say each stop has definitely been a blessing. I have learned a lot from each and every stop along the way.

Co-inquirer 5: Textural description of journey.

Co-inquirer 5 shared that his journey as an educational leader began in a dual role. He explained:

I held the position as the Jr. High coordinator and assistant principal at the school that I began my educational career at. I went back and held that position for a year. After a year the high school principal came to me and asked was I certified. When I told her no, she said to me, and I will never forget, “You may not be certified but you are qualified.” She gave me the job and told me that the only requirement was that I started my Principal certification classes, in which I did at

a University in East Texas. I held this position as Jr. High assistant principal and head basketball coach for three years. I was then promoted to high school principal and wanted to keep the dual role but they didn't let me, so I then was solely the high school principal. Because coaching was not out of my blood, I left after a couple of years to go back to a dual role of head basketball coach and principal of the high school at a 2A school in East Texas. I held that position for a year and it was just too much for me to both so I dropped the coaching duties. My superintendent came to me and told me he would be retiring soon and that I needed to get my superintendent certification, in which I did. It did not work there because I think I just had too much on my plate. I left there and took an elementary head position at a large district in East Texas, in which I stayed at that position for eight years. That is where I really learned how to be an administrator. I finally left that position after 8 years. I felt that I began to get too comfortable and needed a change. I left and took an associate principal job at a large 5A in East Texas to make myself more marketable to obtaining a superintendent job. I stayed there one and a half years and left to go back to the school in which the superintendent was close to retiring, in hopes of becoming the next superintendent. I was able to earn the job of superintendent after he retired and have served in the role of superintendent of schools for the past two years. During the course of my career I have been turned down for 4 superintendent jobs in which I was runner up to.

Composite Textural Description

Each participant in this transcendental phenomenological study was an African-American male between the ages of 45 and 59 years of age, that had at least 3 years coaching experience before they transitioned into the field of educational leadership in a rural school in East Texas. The phenomenologist, in order to gain a greater understanding of this unique phenomenon, selected participants from various roles and levels of educational leadership. Co-inquirer 1 has been in education for 32 years, with 15 years in coaching and 11 years in a leadership role, and his educational leadership experience has all been in the role of Assistant Principal at the secondary level. Co-inquirer 2 has been in education for 26 years in various roles; including Jr. high principal, associate high school principal, and alternative school principal, all with the same district in East Texas. Co-inquirer 3, is a 26-year veteran in education, and has held the role of educational leader and basketball coach 24 of his 26 years in the profession. He currently serves in a single role of principal of a 3A school in East Texas. Co-inquirer 4 has been in education for 26 years, 24 years as a coach with 8 years in dual roles in coaching and leadership. He currently holds the position of associate principal at a large Jr. high school in East Texas. Finally, co-inquirer 5 is a 32-year veteran in the field of education, and is the only participant serving in the role of superintendent of schools.

Salient Themes

Moustakas (1994) noted, in order to have a more complete description of the phenomenon, the textural and structural themes must be integrated to form what is known as the “essence” of the phenomenon. In combining the textural and structural themes that

emerged through data analysis and imaginative variation, the essence of the phenomenon of African-American male coaches in rural East Texas that transitioned into educational leadership experiences was examined. Although the essence of any phenomenon will never be completely exhausted or transferable, all of the experiences and themes in this study relate back to the lived experience of these five African-American male educational leaders' transition. Through analysis of the data, common categories were identified then overlapping statements were removed in accord with Moustakas' (1994) process.

In this qualitative study four major themes emerged after the first cycle coding: (a) transformational leadership, (b) relationships, (c) missing coaching, and (d) race. In addition to the major themes, sub themes emerged from the interviews as well. Emergent subthemes included (a) work-family balance, (b) mentorship, (c) impact on students, (d) dealing with adults, (e) discrimination, and (f) stereotypes.

Step 3: Imaginative Variation (Structural Descriptions)

In step three of data analysis, imaginative variation is used. During this phase of data analysis, Moustakas (1994) recommends the following procedures to achieve imaginative variation, systematically varying the possible structural meanings that underlie the textural meanings:

1. Recognizing the underlying themes or contexts that account for the emergence of the phenomenon;
2. Considering the universal structures that precipitate feelings and thoughts with reference to the phenomenon, such as the structure of time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, relation to self, or relation to others;

3. Searching for exemplifications that vividly illustrate the invariant structural themes and facilitate the development of a structural description of the phenomenon. (p. 99)

The phenomenological inquiry process began with individual face-to-face interviews conducted with each participant at a time and location convenient for the participant. Following each interview, the phenomenologist bracketed thoughts and feelings about the content of the interviews to maintain an accurate reflection of the collected data. This prevented the phenomenologist's personal opinions and feelings from biasing the research. Participants were provided the opportunity to review their transcript for accuracy and member checking.

Data condensation.

After the interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were read multiple times. All identifying information was carefully removed from the interview transcripts to protect the identity of the participants. Words, phrases, thoughts, and ideas that appeared throughout the interviews were highlighted. Themes and supporting sub themes were identified after further review.

Theme 1: transformational leadership. Transformational leadership characteristics were prevalent themes that were consistent throughout these five African-American males in rural schools in East Texas that have transitioned into educational leadership from a career in coaching. Transformational leaders have the ability to motivate people, they lead by example, and they have a strong sense of their morals and values (Kuhnert, 1994). Co-inquirer 1 agreed and stated:

My leadership philosophy is to lead by example. I believe it is important to share your knowledge and expertise with the individuals that you are leading. All my experiences as a coach and as an administrator, I take and share my experiences and help individuals grow in their careers. A great educational leader always lead by example, they are able to communicate well, and consistently do what is best for students in your decision making.

Co-inquirer 2 shared:

I would say that I am a transformational leader. I take people from where they are, their strengths and weaknesses and formulate a plan of where we need to go and how we are going to get there. Just like coaching, as you evaluate your staff, you evaluate teachers and decide where and how teachers will be most effective within the school. From there we strategize on how we can best serve the needs of the students we serve. Many times those decisions are not popular but as long as I am doing what is best for the kids it's okay.

Co-inquirer 3 shared:

I put students first in the decisions that I make. I consider myself a transformational leader and I am data driven in my decisions for student success.

Co-inquirer 4 stated:

My philosophy is to be an example. Let everything that you say align with your actions. Finding a way to have inclusive, collaborative leadership. Inclusive does not exempt you from the ultimate responsibility, as leader I realize the responsibility is ultimately mine, but inclusive leadership allows you to grow the

people around you. Even in coaching, my goal was not necessarily if I could get the top players to produce, I knew I could do that, my goal was to get production from that twelfth player on the bench. As an educational leader you are still a coach, just not with a ball.

Co-inquirer 5 added:

Motivating the unmotivated. The top students will be successful, but there are so many that you must uplift. That is what I enjoy the most.

Theme 2: Relationships. Another major theme that emerged in this phenomenological inquiry was relationships. Each of the co-inquirer stated the need to obtain and sustain strong relationships was an instrumental part to their success.

Wubbolding (2007) holds that “the quintessential and fundamental element for a successful school is healthy human relationships” (p. 254). The type of relationships, which were identified as sub-themes in this inquiry were: relationship with family, relationship with mentors, relationships with students, and relationships with adults.

Work-family balance. The participants in this study repeatedly referenced to the importance of relationships as they transitioned in the role of educational leader. Each of the five participants stated the importance of balancing work and family. When speaking about the ability to achieve work-family balance, the participants shared their experiences. Co-inquirer 1 shared:

The way I balance work and family is simple, when I am at work I am at work, and when I am with the family, I’m with the family. I try not to blur that line. I

keep them both separated. You have to understand what is important. Family is very important to me and I cherish my time with my family.

These sentiments were the same for co-inquirer 2 and co-inquirer 4, as that stated by co-inquirer 5:

I am doing better. My wife has been very supportive. She understands that the job of the superintendent is 365 days a year 24 hours, 7 days a week. I usually try to do my work in the morning or at night while my family is sleep, so I can get done, spending as much time as I can with them. I don't ignore my family. Your family must be on your schedule.

Co-inquirer 2 went on to state:

You have to cut out time for family and work. I never talk about work at home. Saturday was always family day. I always set time at home that staff and teachers could reach me at home, but after a certain time I would not accept any more calls.

Two of the co-inquirers stated that they understood the importance of balancing family and work but have not been too successful at it yet. Co-inquirer 3 stated:

I have not gotten good at that yet. I have gotten better. I saw a friend when I was single and he said I was never going to get married if I didn't get out of that gym (Laughter). I am starting to come to the realization that if I don't complete a specific task, I can leave it for tomorrow.

Co-inquirer 4 agreed, stating:

I must say I haven't done a very good job of that. I will confess that I am somewhat a workaholic. My wife is amazing and she shoulders a lot of the family responsibilities as far as getting our kids to events and things around the house. I really try to finish all the tasks for the day before I go home, because if I don't I will be thinking about it all night.

Mentorship. All of the participants in the study also expressed the need to have a relationship with mentors that you trust, that you can go to when you are in need of advice or simply an encouraging word.

Co-inquirer 1 shared:

I have several colleagues that I frequently talk to on a weekly basis, about different incidents, and how they handle certain incidents at their particular schools. We talk about various programs that we are implementing at ours schools and I get his perspective. Mentors and colleagues are very important. The ability to bounce information off one another and sharing of ideas allows both the mentor and mentee to grow in the craft of becoming a better, more effective educational leader.

Co-inquirer 2 stated:

When I first started out I relied on mentors a lot. I feel that now that after 26 years in education that I am the mentor in many cases. More people come to me for advice. Most of my early mentors have already retired, but at times I do rely on colleagues to bounce ideas off of. Starting off it was very important. To talk to someone who has walked that road before and learn from their experiences was

very important early on in my career. Many minds are better than one. Mentors also provide that jolt of confidence when you are down and out, they provide that lift and tell you to keep going.

Co-inquirer 3 said:

Early on in my educational career as an administrator, I had a lot of mentors. As I began to move up it seemed like I began to have less and less. I believe because we are in a small rural area and educational administrative jobs are sometimes scarce, some of my mentors began to see me as competition. That being said many of my mentors at the beginning of my career were older African-American men, and most of them have retired now. Since I started so young in educational leadership, I now find that I am the old man on the block. I must say that I really had to learn a lot by fire. Trial and error, seeing what worked and didn't work.

Co-inquirer 4 added:

Mentorship is huge. I am thankful that each and every step of my life I had someone that I could turn to for advice. I believe your mentors should come from a variety of places outside of education. I believe that is the error that many leaders make is they only have mentors in their specific areas of expertise. I will look within the community and may go to the local top performing car salesman and ask him for advice. In administration when you arrive each day you never know what you will encounter that day, so having someone to ask for advice that has been there is very important.

Co-inquirer 5 stated:

Mentors are extremely important in administration. Something that sounds great to you may sound like nonsense to your mentor. So find someone you trust that you can bounce off ideas to. Also, when I attend conferences I make sure I take notes and learn from other administrators so that I do not become stagnate.

Always look for something to add to your system.

Impact on students. Another prevailing theme stated by each of the co-inquirers related to the reason they left coaching and transitioned into a career in educational leadership. The co-inquirers emphasized that they were able to impact many more students as an educational leader than they ever could as a coach.

Co-inquirer 1 goes on to say:

I would say that I wanted to impact more lives. In coaching football, I was only limited to a selected few, as an administrator I felt that I had or would have a greater impact on more students as well as the entire student body.”

Co-inquirer 2 agreed and went on to say:

Being in administration has allowed me to impact so many young people. It is very rewarding being able to hire individuals that you feel will enhance the culture of a school and community. As an administrator you are directly tied to and responsible for providing students with experiences that will enhance the learning experience. Coordinating those experiences I find very fulfilling.

Partnering with churches, setting up college tours are just some of the few things I try to ensure our students are exposed to. It was also very important to me that our students signed up for SAT/ACT test. Before I got to the district I found that

many of our kids were talented and smart enough to attend college but for whatever reason was not do the necessary things that would allow them the opportunity to attend. I quickly changed that.

Co-inquirer 3 added:

I believe that God has placed me in the role of educational administration so that that I can impact more lives than I ever could have while coaching. When I was coaching I primarily only dealt with athletes, now I spend just as much time with the band members, UIL Academic participants, etc. I know that I am fulfilling God's purpose in my life. I believe that's why I don't think I had a hard time transitioning into educational leadership from coaching because I was serving my purpose. I feel God prepared me and equipped me.

Co-inquirer 4 shared:

I do think I am impacting more lives in my current role as an educational leader, but I just don't necessarily feel the impact as much as I did while coaching. I believe the impact just seemed to come back to you more directly as a coach.

Whether it be a former player calling you and say thanks for being like a father to me.

Co-inquirer 5 shared, "I find that I get to coach the whole district. I have the same passion that I had while I was coaching. I don't coach a sport I coach life."

Dealing with adults. Each of the five administrators stated that their biggest adjustment of the transition into administration was dealing with adults. Whether it is

with parents, teachers, or members of the community, they all expressed that communication with adults was the greatest adjustment they had to make.

Co-inquirer 1 said:

I had to adjust to speaking in front of large crowds, from talking mainly to students as a coach, to now as an administrator, having to communicate effectively to teachers and staff. Motivating students is a lot different than motivating teachers. But I have found, the same way as in coaching, where you have to learn your players, their strengths and weaknesses, the same way you have to learn your teachers and staff. You have to learn what motivates them and who you can push and who you can't push as hard. Coaching and educational leadership has basically the same goals in getting a group of individuals to work together for common goals. Coaching taught me how to adjust on the fly so I was able to adjust and adapt well into educational leadership.

Co-inquirer 2 said:

I went from being a colleague to a supervisor. Your circle becomes a lot smaller. I was not invited to a lot of the after hour social events anymore. What people come and visit with you is a lot different, as an administrator you are confronted with problems a lot more. Bullying, kids skipping school, students with not enough credits to graduate to name a few. You become a fixer. As an administrator you feel like you are in a fish bowl and your actions are judged a lot more. If I walk out the grocery store with a six-pack of beer everyone around town will be talking about it. The toughest thing is when one of your former

coaches that you use to coach with has to be disciplined by you, that can be a awkward situation, but you as the educational leader have to do it.

Co-inquirer 3 said:

I would say the level of upset parents is at a much higher level in educational leadership, than it was in coaching. In coaching, parents would get upset, but it seems like when you are dealing with a students' education the parents are much more intense and angrier in their disagreements. So the biggest adjustment that I had to make was learning how to deal with irate parents.

Co-inquirer 5 stated:

Leading adults was the biggest challenge. When you are leading a crowd of educators I know I must be on my toes. Students are easy; they respond. Adults, not so much, they are sometimes a little more resistant. I have learned that when people resist, I must insist. When you meet resistance; you better step up or people will laugh at your position. The thing that helps me to be really prepared is knowing that I must face some tough crowds. All in which don't believe in you.

Theme 3: Missing coaching. The next major theme that emerged in this transcendental phenomenological inquiry was the void that was felt by each of these educational leaders after their coaching career was over. Each of the five participants stated that they do miss coaching from time to time. All of them have developed strategies to help deal with the loss of coaching. Co-inquirer 1 shared:

I did at first. That was the reason why I got back into coaching after my first stint in administration. During that time back into coaching I then realized that I was much more effective as an administrator, than I was in coaching in terms of the impact in the lives of the students. There are times that I miss it but realizing that you can't do them both, I chose administration, which I felt I had a greater impact on students.

Co-inquirer 2, who shared the sentiments of co-inquirer 1, stated:

All the time. Coaching was a lot of fun. However, I do not miss all of the long hours. To compensate I spend a lot of time volunteering on youth sport boards and occasionally will coach a team to get that itch out of my system. I also sometimes just go watch practice and hang in the coaches' office. From a selfish point of view, I do miss it at times. I must say I had a lot more fun as a coach. Administration a lot of times is not as fun.

Co-inquirer 3, when asked if he missed coaching, said:

Oh yes, especially when I attend games. My boys were not born while I was coaching and sometimes tell me that they wish I was still a coach. What helps me is that I realize that educational leadership is my calling and purpose in life. I find that talking to some of my old coaching friends about x's and o's helps fill the void.

Co-inquirer 4, when asked if he missed coaching said:

Yes, everyday. I must say there is no thrill like coaching. The highs are the highest and the lows are the lowest, but there is nothing that compares to

coaching. I believe the hardest part is watching a team that I feel that I can mentor or make better and not be able to help.

Co-inquirer 5 shared:

I did at first, but now what I have found that I have the same passion as I did in basketball, I have as superintendent. I use coaching analogies all the time. I have to know my data like I knew my teams shooting percentage. I have to know my teachers and staff tendencies like I knew my opponents I played. You have to know your schools weaknesses and turn them into strengths. What I miss the most is the halftime speeches and game day speeches. I now find that I have replaced those with assemblies and programs in which I find just as fulfilling. As an administrator you still are coaching, only without a ball.

Theme 4: Race. The final major theme that emerged in this inquiry was race.

Under the major theme of race, two sub-themes also emerged: discrimination and stereotypes. Each of the five participants expressed that race and discrimination has in one form or another been a factor to transition into educational leadership. Co-inquirer 1 stated:

African-American students, I realized needed someone that looked like them in leadership. I wanted to provide them with someone that they could look to as a role model. I knew I could fill a void that was missing that coaching did not allow me to fill.

Co-inquirer 2 noted:

I have always considered myself a liaison for the African-American community. Before I got to my school we never had a Black coordinator in football, we never had a Black counselor, a Black secretary. I was able to bring a lot of diversity to the campuses that I served. With a predominantly Black population I felt strongly that the students of color should see people in leadership position that look like them. I also was able to establish the African-American parent council that addressed the needs of our African-American students. I looked at the African-American students, and realized they needed someone that looked like them in leadership. I wanted to provide them with someone that they could look to as a role model. I knew I could fill a void that I felt was missing that coaching did not allow me to fill.

Co-inquirer 3 explained:

No doubt, I wanted to be an example to the youth coming up, especially the African-American boys, and let them know that I am from your same neighborhood and if I can use education to change my life so can you. I only had one African-American male administrator when I was in school and he was the reason why I chose to become an administrator. I want to be that same example.

Co-inquirer 4 shared:

I believe that some of my early leadership roles came because I was an African-American male, and people were hungry for someone that looked like me to be an example to young African-American little boys. I do believe that I was qualified but I also I felt like our kids needed to see someone that looked like

them in the role of an educational leader. I believe the one determinant in a kid's success is if they see opportunity linked to who they are. Therefore, seeing role models that look like them is vital to a student's success. I see myself as a person that is painting a picture of opportunity for our kids. My story is a story of where you are and where you could be. Opportunity is what motivates people. Many kids fail to see a Black administrator throughout their years in school, so they may not know it is possible.

Co-inquirer 5 shared: "There is always the issue of race especially in rural East Texas. I feel that I am a role model especially for the young administrator coming behind me. My success is their success."

Discrimination. Each participant also expressed that discrimination had been a factor as they transitioned into the role of an educational leader. Co-inquirer 1 shared:

I feel in one form or another I face discrimination on a daily basis. As a coach, as well as an administrator, I felt that many people had a problem taking directives from an African-American male. I often would find that individuals would try to skip me in the chain of command and talk to my boss. Luckily, I had very supportive bosses that directed them back to me.

Co-inquirer 2 noted:

I have found that many teachers would try to go around me and go straight to the superintendent and circumvent the chain of command. If a parent disagreed with what I assigned their child as far as disciplinary placement, many would call the superintendent and try to overturn my decision without ever calling me. Teachers

as well would sometimes try to skip the chain of command and go straight to the superintendent.

Co-inquirer 3 shared: “I have faced discrimination at every level and refuse to let that become a deterrent to me of achieving my goals of impacting student lives through educational leadership.” Co-inquirer 5 stated, “There is always the issue of race especially in rural East Texas.”

Co-inquirer 4 explained:

I do believe that discrimination does exist in rural East Texas. I believe that there have times that I have been passed up on for jobs because of my race. I believe that we have to also be careful with using the word racist or discrimination. I believe many people are not educated or not use to having an African-American administrator, so they just don't know how to react to it. We have to be careful as Black administrators not to overreact, thinking someone is racist, when in all actuality they have just not been exposed to it before, so they are learning to adapt.

Stereotypes. Co-inquirer 1 shared his experience: “Many times as an administrator being a Black male, I would find that teachers would see me as coming across in a threatening and intimidating fashion.” Co-inquirer 2 explained his experience:

Many times I have to watch how I interact with teachers especially women. I have found that many women teachers feel intimidated by a Black male and may be threatened if I use a strong tone or raise my voice.

Co-inquirer 4 noted:

The biggest challenge for me as an educational leader is overcoming stereotypes that people have tried to place on the African-American male. As a big African-American male, I have to guard against people trying to place me in a box. I am evolving as an administrator. I try to break a lot of the stereotypes that have been placed against me. African-American males are often stigmatized as being angry and oppositional. Because I am a big African-American male in a predominantly white school, I have to make sure I watch my tone and body language, so I want come across as angry.

Co-inquirer 5, in reflecting on his experience, shared:

I must always be mindful of who I am and how I am coming across, especially as a big Black male. I have learned to choose my words carefully and never lose my temper because I don't want to come across as that big angry Black man.

Learning how to communicate in such a way that I was not coming across as angry or disgruntled. You may be saying the right things, but if you say it wrong you may miss the opportunity to communicate effectively.

Step 4: synthesis (essences).

The four major emergent themes were presented and discussed as the five participants perceived them. They were (a) transformational leadership, (b) relationships, (c) missing coaching, and (d) race. In addition to the major themes, sub themes emerged from the interviews as well. Emergent sub themes included (a) work-family balance,

(b)mentorship, (c) impact on students, (d) dealing with adults, (e) discrimination, and (f) stereotypes.

Summary

In Chapter V the findings from the analyzed interviews conducted with five African-American males in rural East Texas that transitioned from coaching into educational leadership was reported. Participants gave testimonies based on their personal experiences about their transition into educational leadership in rural schools in East Texas. The transcripts from the recorded interviews were utilized to group participant's statements into themes.

Chapter VI presents a summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research. The information from this study provides insight into the experiences and perspectives of rural school coaches that transitioned from a position as coach into a position in educational leadership in various roles serving in East Texas. Moreover, Chapter VI includes an analysis of the findings to demonstrate areas that validate theory and confirm information discovered in the review of the literature.

CHAPTER VI

Summary, Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological inquiry was to examine the essence of the lived experience of African-American males living in rural East Texas that have transitioned from a career in athletic coaching into a career in educational leadership. This study fills a gap in existing research pertaining to the underrepresented African-American males in educational leadership positions. All the co-inquirers in this transcendental phenomenological identified as Black men. It was clear that each participant as co-inquirer had a unique personal narrative, which distinguished their lived experiences from others, including my own.

This concluding chapter consists of a summary of the study, discussions drawn from the study, the implications of the study, and a set of recommendations for future studies, as well as final reflections. This transcendental phenomenological approach was utilized to collect data on the participants' perspectives of the experience of having transitioned from coaching and the challenges they faced in the role of educational leadership. Data were collected in face-to-face interviews from five participants, who

currently serve in rural East Texas schools in the role of, school principals, assistant principals, or superintendent of schools.

As an African-American male who has made the same transition from coaching into educational leadership, the phenomenologist had a personal interest in exploring the perceptions of other African-American males who have experienced the same phenomenon. The study highlights the experience of the African-American male experiences in rural East Texas and provides a platform for them to tell their stories. In bringing forth the stories of African-American male in educational leadership, the results from this research will assist district administrators, and African-American males aspiring to become school administrator. These men offer an important lens into the educational leadership experience of the African-American males. By studying their experiences in terms of background, barriers, support, and strategies used in their leadership, the phenomenologist hopes to enhance the current body of knowledge regarding effects of the intersectionality of race on African-American male administrators.

Participants in the study answered candidly and openly, which in turn answered the research question: “What is the lived experience of the African-American male who has transitioned from a coaching career to a position in educational leadership?” The stories provided by these five African-American males that transitioned into educational leadership from a career in coaching contributed data that was analyzed by the phenomenologist. This data aided the phenomenologist in expanding his knowledge of this unique phenomenon and providing a voice of the underrepresented African-

American male in educational leadership. The narratives provided by these five participants were very rich and deepened the phenomenologist's understanding of the phenomena.

Discussion of the Findings in Relation to Existing Literature

The findings of this study were reached utilizing Moustakas's (1994) methodology for a transcendental phenomenological study. Detailed findings can be found in Chapter V of this manuscript; however, the following sections delineate a brief summary of the findings according to the themes that emerged following data analysis, as well as answers to the research question that this study intended to answer.

Themes.

The following four themes emerged as significant during the data analysis process of this transcendental phenomenological inquiry:

- Transformational leadership
- Relationships
- Missing Coaching
- Race

The following subthemes emerged as significant during the data analysis process of this transcendental phenomenological inquiry:

- Work-Family Balance
- Mentorship
- Impact on Students
- Dealing with Adults

- Discrimination
- Stereotypes

Schlossberg 4S system.

The phenomenologist in this transcendental inquiry, in order to gain a clearer understanding of the experience of African-American males in rural East Texas that have transitioned from coaching to educational leadership, integrated the Schlossberg (2011) 4S (situation, self, support, and strategies) transition theory with the themes from this inquiry. Each of the themes and sub-themes were placed into one of the four factors Schlossberg (2011) identifies as significant in order for an individual to cope with the transitional process.

The situation. The situation refers to the contextual factors surrounding the coaches' transition from coaching to educational leadership (age, education, opportunities). In other words, what caused the transition (Evans et al., 2009). All co-inquirers in this transcendental phenomenological inquiry were between the ages of 45 and 59. They all have had at least three years' experience as a coach before having transitioned to a career into educational leadership. Each of the co-inquirers has earned a master's in educational leadership and one is currently seeking to obtain a doctoral degree in educational leadership.

Each of the co-inquirers expressed that coaching has provided them the most beneficial opportunities and experiences to transition into educational leadership almost seamlessly. Co-inquirer 5 added:

I use coaching analogies all the time. I have to know my data like I knew my teams shooting percentage. I have to know my teachers and staff tendencies like I knew my opponents I played. You have to know your schools' weaknesses and turn them into strengths. What I miss the most is the halftime speeches and game day speeches. I now find that I have replaced those with assemblies and programs, in which I find just as fulfilling. As an administrator you still are coaching, only now there is no ball involved.

Co-inquirer 1 added:

Coaching and educational leadership has basically the same goals in getting a group of individuals to work together for common goals. Coaching taught me how to adjust on the fly so I was able to adjust and adapt well into educational leadership.

The self. The self focuses on the participant themselves. The self refers to personal and demographic attributes that affect how the one in transition views life. This includes assets, liabilities, resources, and deficits, which aid or detract from an effective transition (Goodman, Schlossberg & Anderson, 2006). Specifically of interest, are personal characteristics and psychological resources relative to the person in transition (Goodman, Schlossberg & Anderson, 2006). Items such as socioeconomic status, age, gender, stage of life, state of health, and ethnicity are all factors to consider when self-coping. Psychological factors such as ego development, outlook, commitment, and values are also items to consider with this coping strategy (Goodman, Schlossberg & Anderson, 2006).

Each of the co-inquirers in this transcendental phenomenological study was born and raised in rural East Texas. Each of them has lived and worked the majority of their adult lives in rural East Texas. Each co-inquirer was in seemingly good health and had a great support system. They all felt educational leadership was their purpose in life. Co-inquirer 3 stated:

I realize that educational leadership is my calling and purpose in life. I know that I am fulfilling God's purpose in my life. I believe that's why I don't think I had a hard time transitioning into educational leadership from coaching because I knew I was serving my purpose. I feel God prepared me and equipped me to be an educational leader.

Relative to the study, personal characteristics of African-American coaches that transitioned into educational leadership position is essential information in order to capture the essence of the lived experience for this transcendental phenomenological study.

Transformational leadership.

Each of the co-inquirers in this inquiry expressed the need to be a transformational leader. One of the prevailing transformational traits expressed throughout the study by the co-inquirers was the need to motivate. Transformational leaders lead with a strong sense of values and morals, they motivate people to do things for the greater good rather than their own self-interest (Kuhnert, 1994). Transformational leaders motivate, inspire, and elevate their followers to greater success (Bass, 1985). Bass (1985) concluded that transformational leaders are often viewed as coaches and

mentors and are extremely effective. Burns (1978) stated that the genius of leadership lies in their ability to motivate. Transformational leaders motivate their followers by providing vision, meaning and challenge in their work (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Co-inquirer 5 explained:

You must be able to motivate the unmotivated. Whether that motivation comes from respect or from fear, the bottom line is people must respond. People must respond to your influence. If they don't respond to your influence than you are not a leader. Whether they respond out of fear or out of the relationship you have with them, but the fact remains they must respond.

Another trait of a transformational leader that emerged from the co-inquirers in this study was the desire to grow and empower the individuals in which they led. Transformational leaders support the individual development of followers by encouraging them to look for opportunities where they can take on additional responsibility (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Co-inquirer 3 stated:

Finding a way to have inclusive, collaborative leadership is important. Inclusive does not exempt you from the ultimate responsibility, as leader I realize the responsibility is ultimately mine, but inclusive leadership allows you to grow the people around you.

Finally, integrity and leading with a strong sense of morality was expressed by each of the co-inquirers in this study. Transformational leaders are “‘burdened’ with a principled necessity to take action morally” (Burns, 1978, p. 202). In transformational leadership, leaders and followers interact willingly and voluntarily to accomplish

common goals while raising “one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (Burns, 1978, p. 20). Co-inquirer 3 shared:

Honesty and integrity is the most important characteristic a leader can possess. Knowledge and competency is very important, but the foundation to any good leaders’ success is that they lead with a strong sense of morals and integrity.

The support.

Support in Schlossberg transition theory, includes support through one’s family unit, friendships, and professional network (Goodman, Schlossberg & Anderson, 2006). Relationships with significant others, one’s family, friends, institutions, and communities all impact one’s transition (Evans et al., 2009). Forming intimate relationships, ones that involve trust, support, understanding, and sharing confidences are crucial during transitions (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Several of the emerging themes in this transcendental phenomenological inquiry were consistent with Schlossberg’s transition theory, in the fact that each of the co-inquirers expressed that support in the form of relationships was an instrumental factor to their success after their transition from coaching into educational leadership. Within the major theme of relationship in this inquiry, the three subthemes of work-family balance, mentorship, and dealing with adults each emerged to be significant aspects of relationships identified by these five African-American males that have transitioned from coaching into educational leadership.

Relationships.

Work-family balance.

Balancing work and family was the most important relationship that was expressed by each of the co-inquirers. Although definitions vary in the literature, work life balance in its broadest sense is defined as a satisfactory level of participation in the multiple aspects of life and individual's perception of how well multiple life roles are balanced (Clarke, Koch, & Hill, 2004; Frone, 2003). Work life balance is generally thought to be when a person maintains an overall sense of equilibrium in their life (Clarke et al., 2004).

Although three of the five co-inquirers expressed a desire to do better in this area, each of them stated that it was one of their top, if not the top priority that they currently have. Co-inquirer 4 stated:

I must say I haven't done a very good job of that. I am getting better, but I would confess that I am somewhat a workaholic. My wife is amazing and she shoulders a lot of the family responsibilities as far as getting our kids to events and things around the house.

Co-inquirer 5 reiterated those thoughts as well:

I am doing better with balancing my work and my family responsibilities. My wife has been very supportive. She understands that the job of the superintendent is 365 days a year 24 hours and 7 days a week.

Co-inquirer 2 shared:

The way I balance it is simple, when I am at work I'm at work, and when I am with the family, I'm with the family. I try not to blur that line. I keep them both separated. You have to understand what is important. Family is very important to me and I cherish my time with my family.

Mentorship.

Mentorship was a very important relationship expressed by each the co-inquirers in this study. Mentoring is a process “where one person provides individual support and challenge to another professional” (Bush, 2009, p. 379). Pocklington and Weindling (1996) argued that “. . . mentoring offers a way of speeding up the process of transition to headship” (p.189). Co-inquirer 5 stated: Mentors are extremely important in administration. Something that sounds great to you may sound like nonsense to your mentor. So find someone you trust that you can bounce off ideas to. Co-inquirer 4 shared

Mentorship is huge. I am thankful that each and every step of my life I had someone that I could turn to for advice. I believe your mentors should come from a variety of places outside of education. I believe that is the error that many leaders make is that only have mentors in their specific areas of expertise. I will look within the community and may go to the local top performing car salesman and ask him for advice. In administration when you arrive each day you never know what you will encounter that day, so having someone to ask for advice that has been there is very important.

Dealing with adults.

Each of the co-inquirers in this study stated that one of the biggest adjustments that they had to make after they transitioned into educational leadership was their new found relationship with adults. This is consistent with Beam, Claxton, and Smith's (2016) conclusion that novice school leaders struggle more with seasoned teachers that may be reluctant to accept criticism or advice from less experienced administrators. In order to gain confidence and credibility, and avoid feelings of self-doubt, these educational leaders expressed the importance of building relationships with staff members, students, parents, and the community. Pate (2015) stated that relationships with all stakeholders are key when learning in a new administrative position. Co-inquirer 3, the lone superintendent in this study, stated:

Leading adults was the biggest challenge. When you are leading a crowd of educators I know I must be on my toes. Students are easy they respond. Adults, not so much, they are sometimes a little more resistant. I have learned that when people resist, I must insist. When you meet resistance you better step up or people will laugh at your position. The thing that helps me to be really prepared is knowing that I must face some tough crowds. All in which don't believe in you.

Co-inquirer 1 shared very similar experiences:

I had to adjust to speaking in front of large crowds, and talking mainly to students and now having to talk mostly to adults. Motivating students is different than motivating teachers. The same way in coaching where you have to learn your

players, their strengths and weaknesses, the same way you have to learn your teachers and staff. You have to learn what motivates them and who you can push and who you can't push as hard. Coaching and educational leadership has basically the same goals in getting a group of individuals to work together for a common goal. Coaching taught me how to adjust on the fly so I was able to adjust and adapt well into educational leadership.

The strategies.

Strategies, also known as coping, focuses on responses that modify the situation, and responses that aid in managing the stress in the aftermath (Evans et al., 2009). Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) suggested that individuals in transition often resort to strategies such as information seeking, direct action, or inhibition of action when coping with change. The co-inquirers in this transcendental phenomenological inquiry expressed several strategies throughout the study that they used to help them in this transition. Mentorship and relationships were the strategy expressed by each of the co-inquirers. Co-inquirer 5 stated that one of the key strategies he uses is to get connected. He said:

One of the best advice that I would recommend is get involved and in Texas Alliance of Black School Administrator. Become a member and get connected with other professional and administrators that are in the field of education. It has been instrumental to my success.

Missing coaching.

Another prevailing theme that emerged throughout the study was the fact that each one of the co-inquirers expressed that he has missed coaching since their transition into educational leadership. According to Coakley (2009), a main challenge facing individuals transitioning out of athletics is the task of reconstructing their identities in terms of something other than sports. Each of the co-inquirers has spent their entire lives involved in sports, in some form or fashion. Now, that they have transitioned from sports, there is a need to discover a new identity and transition out of the identity that athletics has provided them. Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993) describe athletic identity as the “degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role” (p. 237). As athletic retirement approaches, some individuals are overcome with a sense of “uncertainty about a future without sport” (Wilson, 2007, p. 163). Co-inquirer 3 stated, when asked if he missed coaching,

Oh yes, especially when I attend games. My boys, who were not born while I was coaching, sometimes tell me that they wish I was still a coach, because they are very involved in athletics now.

All of the co-inquirers stated that they had to find something to fill that void that coaching left. Co-inquirer 2, when asked if he missed coaching, and what he does to fill the void, shared:

All the time. Coaching was a lot of fun. I can see things in the stands that others don't see because of my coaching background. To compensate I spend a lot of time volunteering on youth sport boards and occasionally will coach a team to get

that itch out of my system. I also sometimes just go watch practice and hang in the coach's office.

Race and racism.

The fourth and final theme that emerged from this transcendental phenomenological inquiry was the effects that race and racism have played throughout these five African-American males educational careers. Critical race theory acknowledges that in American culture racism exists and is deeply rooted in the fiber of our society (Chapman, 2013). This study of African-American male coaches that have transitioned into educational leadership deserves an application of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in that it activates the voices of African-American educational leaders, validates their struggles, and injects critical counter-narratives into the records of American education, whom historically, views of leadership have been excluded from research studies and the literature (Bell, 1989; Gooden, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Co-inquirer 5 shared:

There is always the issue of race especially in rural East Texas. I must always be mindful of who I am and how I am coming across, especially as a big Black male. I have learned to choose my word carefully and never lose my temper because I don't want to come across as that big angry Black man. I feel that I am a role model especially for the young administrator coming behind me. My success is their success.

Co-inquirer 4 added:

I do believe that discrimination does exist. I feel that there were times that I have been passed up on jobs because of my race. I believe that many times people are just not used to an African-American administrator, so they just don't know how to react to it. Not necessarily that they are racist, but it is a new thing for them and they have to adjust to seeing it. We have to be careful as Black administrators to not overreact to thinking that someone is racist when in all actuality they just have not been exposed to it before.

Implications

This transcendental phenomenological study by focusing only on African-American male educational leaders that have transitioned from athletic coaching in rural East Texas schools had the potential to benefit other schools located in the same geographic region, as well as aspiring educators seeking to lead rural schools. Additionally, by gaining better understanding of the complexities of rural East Texas schools, future aspiring educational leaders can be better prepared and encouraged to specialize in rural education (Stockard, 2011). The results of this study could also improve the success of rural schools by helping educational leaders gain better understanding of the underlying challenges and necessary competencies for effective management of school systems located in rural East Texas.

Empirical implications.

This study focused on the experiences of African-American males in rural East Texas that have transitioned from athletic coaching into educational leadership, and the results have empirical implications for African-American male athletic coaches

considering transitioning into educational leadership. The participants of this study were all coaches in rural East Texas with at least 3 years of athletic coaching experience who successfully transitioned into a career in educational leadership. The study revealed the challenges they faced, and their ability to overcome those challenges, which may provide valuable insight to individuals that are seeking to make a similar transition into educational leadership.

Practical implications.

The findings of this transcendental phenomenological inquiry were consistent with similar research regarding African-American males entering careers in leadership positions. Some enter the profession to help others (Williams, 2012), to be role models (Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017), to dispel African-American stereotypes (Walker, 2016), to increase the achievement of African-American students (Bireda & Chait, 2011), and to address and combat oppression and racism (Su, 1997).

Recommendations for Future African-American Male Leaders

Each of the participants offered advice to aspiring coaches that was looking to make the transition into educational leadership. Co-inquirer 1 gave this advice: “Learn your staff, learn your kids, learn how to motivate, and learn how to turn a negative into a positive. Co-inquirer 2 advised:

Being flexible in your decision making is also important. I may have a philosophy or idea about something, but after talking to my staff leaders find their view may be better. As a leader you must be flexible and willing to change when

necessary. You have to decide is their philosophy or idea better or more effective in that particular situation, and not be to set in your own way.

Co-inquirer 3 reflected: “Make sure educational leadership is really what you want to do. You have coaching out of your system. It is important that you give your best each and everyday just as when you were coaching.” Co-inquirer 4 shared:

Always be professional. As an administrator you are constantly watched and under a magnifying glass. So always want to remain professional. Always make decisions that are in the best interest of the student. Don't get into administration or take a job because of the money. If that is your primary reason for getting in administration you will not last. The money is nice but it should not be your primary reason for choosing the profession.

Co-inquirer 5 shared:

One of the best advice that I would recommend is get involved and in Texas Alliance of Black School Administrator. Become a member and get connected with other professional and administrators that are in the field of education. It has been instrumental to my success. Don't expect to be appreciated. If you go into administration thinking you will be loved your heart is going to be broken. Just do what is best for students. And finally, any good coach can be a good administrator, and any average coach can become an average administrator, and finally, any great coach can become a great administrator.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the information revealed through this phenomenological inquiry of five African-American males in rural East Texas that have transitioned into educational leadership from a career in athletic coaching, the phenomenologist made the following recommendations for future research. These recommendations may prove useful for continuing the investigation of the experiences and perspectives of rural East Texas educational leaders:

1. Expand the geographical boundaries of the study. Researchers conducting future studies could interview other African-American males in educational leadership positions that have transitioned from coaching serving in rural Texas public schools as well as rural schools outside the State of Texas.
2. Future researchers could investigate the perspectives of rural and urban African-American males in educational leadership positions that have transitioned from coaching to delineate the differences in the conflicts, challenges, and effective practices used while serving their districts. Such a study may produce findings that illuminate disparities and inequities that could exist between rural and urban schools. Moreover, future researchers could identify effective rural and urban leadership practices.
3. Further research is recommended using a mixed methods approach, which would allow the different types of data to complement one another. Triangulation of statistical and qualitative data could provide a deeper insight and analysis into the phenomenon; thus, further increasing the credibility and validity of the study.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to the perceptions and lived experiences of five African-American males in rural East Texas that have transitioned into educational leadership from a career in athletic coaching. Because of geographical restrictions, the results of this study may not be applicable to other schools of similar size or geographical locations. Moreover, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to all rural schools or other schools in the State of Texas. Rural East Texas schools are very different from other regions because a deep culture factors into the decisions, processes, and expectations that exist in the region. The method of the study presented another limitation. Because the phenomenologist employed a transcendental phenomenological inquiry approach, five rural East Texas educational leaders were interviewed. Examining statistical data could strengthen the results of this study. A quantitative approach might be useful in an effort to reveal statistical significance that exists related to the role of the rural school educational leaders. Finally, researcher bias could also add to the limitations of this study. Because the researcher employed a phenomenological approach, prior knowledge and held beliefs of serving as a rural East Texas coach that transitioned into a position of educational leadership were bracketed to reduce possibility of bias. Member check and peer review were used to prevent personal bias. Avoiding bias is a necessary process that allows the researcher to take him or herself out of the study.

Final Reflections

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of African-American male coaches in rural East Texas that have transitioned

into educational leadership. Although the essence of any phenomenon will never be completely exhausted or transferable, the combination of the textural and structural descriptions and themes were a representation of the experiences of African-American male coaches in rural East Texas that have transitioned into educational leadership. This study has helped to fill that gap through providing African-American males in educational leadership with a voice while incorporating Schlossberg's 4S system (the situation, self, support, and strategies) throughout the entire process of the transition. I am in hopes that by providing this platform for each participant to speak, other phenomenologists will expand on examination of this unique phenomenon and continue to provide a voice for the underrepresented African-American male in educational leadership.

One of the most significant statements I felt that emerged in this study was made by co-inquirer 5, the lone superintendent in the study as he stated as an educational leader it is imperative that you "don't just look, see." That statement resonated with me as a phenomenologist because in transcendental phenomenology one must not just look at the surface level of a phenomena, but he must also examine the underlying themes that can truly unpack the essence of the phenomenon.

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APPENDIX A

Invitation to Participate

Date:

Dear:

My name is Andre Emmons and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Stephen F. Austin State University. I am currently working on my dissertation research. For my dissertation I am examining the transitioning of African-American coaches, from the role of athletic coach to the role educational leadership, such as a principal. The purpose of the study is to understand the lived experience of African-Americans living in rural East Texas that have transitioned from a career in athletic coaching into a career in educational leadership.

Each participant will be interviewed three times. An initial interview, with previously scripted questions, will be conducted at the location of the participants choosing. The interviews will be recorded and the researcher will take notes. The recording will then be transcribed and the subsequent transcription along with a copy of respective interview notes will be distributed to the participant for review and verification. The second interview, again at a location chosen by the participant, will focus on topics requiring clarification or elaboration from the first interview. The same procedures will follow for the third interviews. The entire process should take approximately 3 hours for each participant.

Participant names and affiliation will remain confidential and no information shared in the study that would reveal the participant.

I believe the detection of potential commonalities between participants will provide African-American coaches seeking to make the transition educational leader an understanding of what the experience of transitioning from one role to the other would be and what the experience involves. Your experience as an African-American coach that has made the transition to educational leader would provide invaluable insight and your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated.

Questions or concerns regarding this research may be directed to my Dissertation Chair Dr. Patrick Jenlink at (936) 468-1756 or e-mail him at pjenlink@sfasu.edu. Any concerns with this research may be directed to the office of Research and Sponsored Programs at (936) 468-6606.

Sincerely,

Andre Emmons

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APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

Date:

Dear Participant,

My name is Andre Emmons and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Stephen F. Austin State University. I am currently working on my dissertation research. For my dissertation I am examining the transitioning of African-American coaches, from the role of athletic coach to the role educational leadership, such as a principal. The purpose of the study is to understand the lived experience of African-Americans living in rural East Texas that have transitioned from a career in athletic coaching into a career in educational leadership.

I am asking for your voluntary participation in the study. The interviews will address your perception of your personal experience of transitioning from the role of athletic coach to educational leader.

All information pertaining to participants and all interview data will be kept confidential. The study will use pseudonyms to protect your name and identity. At any time during the study that you choose to withdraw, you may do so with consequence. Upon withdrawing from the study, any/all data collected related to your participation will be removed from the study.

If you have any questions, please contact me or you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Patrick Jenlink at 936.468.1756.

Any concerns with this research may be addressed to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Stephen F. Austin State University at 936.468.6606.

Thank you in advanced for your participation in my study.

I hereby give consent to be interviewed and to complete the survey for this study by the above named doctoral student. I understand that my responses will be kept confidential and that the intent of the interview is to assist with the study of teacher/administrator perception of my district's electronic communication policy.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

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APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

Level 1 Interview:

Level one interviews will begin with introductions between the participant and the researcher. The researcher will briefly explain his role, why this study is being done, and provide a brief summary of his background. The researcher will create a trust relationship with each participant, on a personal level, through casual conversation, to create a comfortable and trusting setting.

Once any questions the participant has have been answered and the participant is comfortable with the process, the interview will begin. The following questions will then be posed:

1. What experience do you have as a coach?
2. Describe your journey from coach to principal.
3. What is your leadership philosophy?
4. What motivated you to move into school administration?
5. What do you think are the most important characteristics for a leader to have?
6. Do you have any mentors or people you look to for advice? If so how important is that?
7. How do you balance work and family?
8. Do you miss coaching?
9. Has your transition been a fulfilling one? Do you have any regrets of your decision to leave coaching?
10. What was the biggest adjustment that you had to make in regards to the transition?
11. What advice would you give a coach looking to make the transition into administration?
12. Was race a factor in your decision?

13. What is the most difficult challenge that you have encountered as a coach and as a principal?

Level Two Interview:

Level two interviews will begin with a review of the member check provided in the interim between level one and two. Based on the analysis of the data collected in the level one interviews, questions will be derived for further investigation or clarification.

Level Three Interview:

As required for saturation of data, questions will be formulated based on analysis of interview responses for level two. Level three interviews will begin with a review of the member check provided in the interim between level two and three. Again, based on the analysis of the data collected in the level two interviews, questions will be derived for further investigation or clarification.

VITA

Andre Emmons is from Dallas, Texas. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from The University of North Texas. He earned his Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from Stephen F. Austin University. Andre has been an educator and coach for the past fourteen years. He currently holds the position as Assistant Principal/Coach in a school in rural East Texas. Andre intends to use his education and leadership experience to inspire and educate future leaders of tomorrow. He completed his doctorate May 2019.

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Style manual designation: *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition*

Typist: Andre Emmons