

IDENTITY, BELONGING, AND MOTIVATION  
IN AN AFRICAN-CENTERED SCHOOL

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of

School Psychology-Doctor of Philosophy

2017

## ABSTRACT

### IDENTITY, BELONGING, AND MOTIVATION IN AN AFRICAN-CENTERED SCHOOL

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This study examined the racial identity, cultural values and sense of belonging of third through eighth grade students attending an African-Centered school. The study also explored how belonging and motivational goals predicted student learning. The research was based on the racial identity-context congruence perspective (Byrd & Chavous, 2012) and used a mixed methods design. Data were collected using questionnaires, participant observation, and interviews to explore the meaning and practices of an African-centered school. The observations revealed that most of the Nguzo Saba principals, foundational tenants to African-centered learning (Karenga, 1980), were represented in the African-centered school context. Interviews with eighth grade students indicated that they experienced the school as cultivating an African American racial identity, cultural values, and sense of belongingness. Student responses on questionnaires, however, revealed individual differences across all grades, in how students experienced and responded to an African-centered school. Some students indicated patterns of stronger racial identity, mastery orientation, and performance approach orientation while others indicated stronger endorsement of cultural values and belongingness. In comparison to previous research, the students in this study reported higher levels of ethnic identity, cultural values, belongingness, and motivation, suggesting that an African-centered school can improve the schooling experiences of African American students. The existence of disproportional representation of males in school discipline practices and low academic proficiency of most students in the school were unexpected and suggest that improvements are needed. The results of

this research have the potential to create supportive learning environments for African American students, particularly for African American males, by expanding the scope of teacher-student relationships, implementing culturally relevant pedagogy, and adopting a holistic school model that fosters ethnic identity, cultural values, and sense of belonging.

To my husband and children who inspire me to be my best.  
To my parents Cicero and Alfreda, for supporting and encouraging me and providing a  
childhood that prepared me for great things.  
To my mother-in-law, Lynn, for making this all possible, your support for our family has been  
immeasurable.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to God for keeping me in sound mind and helping me to persist through completing this dissertation. I would like to thank my advisor, Evelyn Oka, for her gracious guidance and encouragement. I would not have been able to continue onward without her dedicated time and words of support. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Dorinda Carter, Dr. John Kosciulek, and Dr. Connie Sung for sharing your expertise and helping me through the dissertation process. The Center for Statistical Training and Consultation provided very generous consultation and expert knowledge to help me complete the necessary statistical analyses within this project. I thank the department and staff for their assistance.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Many African American students continue to experience disparities in educational outcomes despite overall increases in high school completion and the pursuit of post-secondary education (Aud, Fox, & Kewal-Remani, 2010). Although the achievement gap between Caucasian and African American students has consistently decreased since the early 1990s, there continues to be a disparity in achievement (NAEP; National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Furthermore, while African American students are improving in their educational outcomes, their overall gains from year-to-year are still not comparable to their Caucasian peers.

Not only are there disparities in achievement outcomes, but also in disciplinary practices. For example, as early as preschool, African American students represented 18% of preschool enrollment, but 42% of these students were suspended once, and 48% were suspended more than once (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Students who are suspended are more likely to be suspended again, drop out, and become involved in the juvenile justice system, contributing to the “school-to-prison pipeline,” an outcome that particularly affects African American males (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

#### **The Social Context of School**

The social context and interpersonal experiences within the school environment can also be problematic for African American students. The social context in schools provides opportunities to experience social and emotional well-being and contribute to positive student outcomes (Iruka, Burchinal, & Cai, 2010). The social context of schools is important for students, but there is evidence that the experiences of African American students at school have not supported student success. Specific features of the school context, such as a positive racial

climate, a healthy racial identity within a positive school racial climate, and a student's sense of belonging, can also be important in the development of African American students' educational competencies.

**School Racial Climate.** A school's norms and values around race, commonly referred to as the racial climate, can also play a role in African American students' educational success (Byrd & Chavous, 2012). When African American students are in a school setting that matches and supports their own values and beliefs around race, they are more likely to be motivated to achieve academically (Byrd & Chavous, 2011; 2012; Mattison & Aber, 2007). This kind of empirical evidence supports efforts to investigate whether African American students perform better in schools that foster positive beliefs about the values and norms of being African American. However, most research around racial climate and African American students has been in schools where the values, beliefs, and meaning of being African American are not central to the school's pedagogy (Bacon, Schwartz, & Rothfarb, 1991; Green, Adams, & Turner, 1998; Pellebon, 2000). Moreover, this same research has also been conducted in schools where the student racial composition of students and teachers is not solely African American. Previous research in multicultural schools has demonstrated that when the school racial climate matches the students' own values and beliefs around race, they demonstrate higher intrinsic motivation (Byrd & Chavous, 2011; 2012; Mattison & Aber, 2007). An empirical investigation that explores the social context supporting African American students' motivation to learn, within a school that emphasizes a positive racial climate, would add to the current literature. One important factor supporting African American students' academic outcomes could be the positive racial identity that can be cultivated in a school context with a positive racial climate for African American students.

**Racial Identity: Beliefs and Values.** The relation between a student's values and beliefs about being African American and educational outcomes has been widely studied (Elmore, 2012). The research has not examined, however, how racial identity relates to African American students' educational experiences in an environment where the racial climate and the pedagogy are aligned to affirm the cultural experiences of African American students. Additionally, integrated conceptualizations of racial identity have been offered as important for student outcomes (Thomas et al., 2003) as one's observable racial features and associating with one's racial group are only a part of one's identity development (Thomas et al., 2003). An integrated conceptualization acknowledges these aspects as well as culture and values associated with one's racial identity (Thomas et al., 2003). Pride in racial group membership, along with having certain cultural beliefs and values have been found to better explain educational outcomes for African American students than those students who lack these beliefs (Thomas et al., 2003). Moreover, how this integrated identity (Thomas et al., 2003) predicts student belonging in an environment that shares the same values and beliefs around race and culture is missing from the literature. An exploration of such a relationship would highlight the kinds of contexts that support school competency in African American students.

**Belongingness.** Some researchers investigating the link between racial identity and academic outcomes for African American students have found students' sense of belonging to be an important mediating factor when students are in a school with a positive racial climate (Byrd & Chavous, 2011; 2012). African American student's belongingness, or "the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by the school environment" (Goodenow, 2003, pg. 80), can be a conduit for academic success when student racial identity and school racial climate are well matched. For example, when students' values and beliefs

around race are congruent with those of the school context, African American high school and college students have shown greater intrinsic motivation because students experience a greater sense of belonging (Byrd & Chavous, 2012). Support and acceptance in a positive racial climate have been shown to be important for students to be self-initiating and engaged in the activity of the school. Similar results have been found for African American college students (Byrd & Chavous, 2012), but research with younger students is missing. Furthermore, examining school belonging when students' racial identity and cultural values are congruent with those of a pro-African American school setting, would add to the current understanding of how and where belongingness is important for African American students.

### **African-Centered Schools**

The school context and its racial climate have been investigated in relationship to African American student outcomes, and the empirical evidence suggests that racial identity, cultural values, and belongingness can be important for these students' school experiences. African-centered schools may be the type of school that provides a confluence of these elements, but no research has explored such influences on African American student outcomes in this type of school. In response to African American parents' and community leaders' desire to create better educational experiences and outcomes for African American students, the African-centered school was created (Durden, 2007; Pollard, Ajirotutu, & Epps, 2000). Rooted in an Afrocentric worldview, the purpose of such an approach to schooling is to encourage confidence through infusion of African American culture and history throughout the curriculum, and to increase motivation to engage in the educational process (Asante, 1991; Pollard et al., 2000). Within such a school context, values and beliefs about being African American are explicitly discussed and celebrated.



Qualitative researchers have examined the role and meaning of an African-centered approach in shaping the racial identity of African American students, and they have noted that schools that use this approach aim to cultivate a positive view of being African American (Chatman, 2013; Tengella, 2002). Some researchers have found that students who experience the African-centered approach experience higher self-esteem and motivation (Asante, 1991; Lomotey, 1992), but others have noted that the evidence connecting such a pedagogy to student achievement lacks robustness (Irvine, 2000). Some researchers have found positive academic outcomes (Sanders & Reed, 1995; Teicher, 2006), while others have found no effects on achievement (Lake, 1996; Marks, 2005). Thus, empirical investigations of African-centered schools and its influence on student experiences and outcomes are mixed. An investigation that also explores the meaning and purpose of such schools through the voices of students, teachers, and administrators would enhance current understandings of the experience of African American students within an African-centered school context.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The school context matters for student outcomes. The racial identity-context congruence perspective (Byrd & Chavous, 2012) proposes that the match between the racial identity beliefs of the individual and the school's racial climate (e.g., perceived norms and values around race) (Chavous, 2005) are important for promoting autonomous motivation (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). According to this perspective, motivation for learning is a function of the match between the student's racial identity and the meanings associated with race within the student's everyday settings (e.g., school). Two domains of the racial identity-context congruence perspective include congruence in significance and in affect. Congruence in significance occurs when both others in the school and the individual student see racial group membership as a

defining personal feature (e.g. centrality). In such settings, racial group membership is celebrated. Congruence occurs in affect when students' sense of pride in group membership (e.g. private regard) matches their perception of the schools' norms and value of the student's racial group. This occurs when students and teachers like and have positive feelings about a student's racial group. Incongruence in affect might occur when students have pride in their group membership, but experiences unequal treatment or negative messages from others related to their race or racial group membership. Moreover, research has demonstrated that student's sense of belonging is an important mechanism through which racial identity-context congruence affects academic motivation (Byrd & Chavous, 2012). Byrd and Chavous (2012) explain that such congruence can increase belonging because students feel accepted by their peers and teachers, may feel similar to those around them, and may feel included in the school community. Several theoretical frameworks and perspectives inform the racial identity-context congruence perspective. Each emphasizes the importance of how students experience their school environment in relation to their academic outcomes.

The racial identity-context congruence perspective draws from self-determination theory (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991) organizational theory (Chrobot, Mason, & Thomas, 2002), and the person-environment fit perspective (Rappaport, 1977). From self-determination theory, the racial identity-context congruence perspective suggests that when students develop secure and satisfying connections with others in their social context, the valued outcomes of a context are desired because their need for relatedness is being met. Accordingly, students adopt an internal motivation for learning in such a context. The racial identity-context congruence perspective also draws from organizational theory in highlighting the way that the individual's and the organization's ideas about race can interact. According to Chrobot-Mason and Thomas

(2002), the interactive model of individual and organizational racial identity development suggests that both an organization and the minorities whom they employ are at varying levels of racial identity development. They differ in the extent to which they have grappled with exploring and gaining a deeper understanding of racial issues and have conflicts about facilitating change to support diversity. Chrobot-Mason and Thomas (2002) saw the organization as engaging in behaviors and practices that affirm or deny an employee's race and identity; employees respond to these practices based on their level of racial identity development. This interaction can set the stage for a context that supports, rejects, explores, or ignores issues of identity and race. Subsequently, minority individuals respond to this with growth or acceptance in the organization or frustration and disconnection. Likewise, the racial identity-context congruence perspective suggests the importance (i.e., for motivation and learning) of a school creating a racial climate that values the racial identity of the student and sees the values and norms of various racial groups positively in concert with students' own positive racial identity.

Lastly, the racial identity-context congruence perspective draws from a person-environment fit theory (Rappaport, 1977). The person-environment fit perspective suggests that people will thrive in an environment when their values and other individual characteristics are comparable to that environment. The match between persons and their social and physical environment are important because this alignment can lead to positive outcomes (i.e. satisfaction, performance, and well being) (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007). These three foundational theories under the racial identity-context congruence perspective and collectively suggest that students can experience relatedness in an environment that fits with how they see themselves and that demonstrates affirming behaviors and values surrounding their identity. When these are present, students can feel a sense of belonging and be internally motivated to learn.

In their study of 359 African American adolescents, Byrd and Chavous (2011) found that the racial climate of multicultural school contexts predicted students' intrinsic motivation when teachers showed equal respect for students regardless of the racial affiliation of different races, and when the frequency of racial tension between staff and students was low. In their study, belonging was an important mediator between teacher/staff racial climate and intrinsic motivation, but this mediating effect was moderated by the student's level of racial identity. Thus, a positive and supportive school racial climate predicted intrinsic motivation through belongingness, but only among those African American students who had a high sense of racial identity. For African American adolescents with low racial identity, being in a school setting where others valued their racial group membership did not increase their sense of belonging and their intrinsic motivation.

The use of the racial identity-context congruence perspective is limited within the extant literature. Research has highlighted the relation between belonging and academic achievement through motivation, but has not specifically examined the role of the match between the student's racial identity and the context's values and beliefs around the student's race. Wentzel (1998) found that a form of belonging, perceived social support (Goodenow, 1993), was related to student grades by way of student motivation. Adolescent sixth grade students who perceived support from their teachers had better grades as a function of the student's interest, effort, and attention in class activities. However, the student sample mostly included Caucasian students (e.g., 92%) in a suburban, middle class community. The person-environment fit was not a focus of this particular study either, limiting the applicability of this study to other groups of students in other school contexts. This highlights the need to understand better how motivation can explain the relation between belonging and learning in an African-centered school with a racially

homogenous group of children and adolescent students. In a school where the student racial identity-context congruence may matter for student outcomes, further research into the relation among belonging, learning, and motivation is needed.

Recent qualitative research has examined how student personal identity and school values and beliefs influence student motivation. Khalifa's (2013) research demonstrated that when a school finds a way to merge the cultural identities of students along with the academic values of the school, students feel that they belong, and are motivated to achieve. In an effort to create a broader school climate that reflects a merger between an acceptance of the student's hip-hop cultural identity and the academic identity common in schools, Khalifa's (2013) ethnographic study demonstrated how student identity and context congruence encouraged a sense of belonging and academic achievement. In this study, the principal of a school adopted a leadership style that encouraged school personnel to avoid making students have to choose between the two identities. Student language, fashion, and hip-hop affinity were allowed and family dynamics that influenced students' behavior were recognized, at the same time that the adoption of adaptive behaviors and values, such as graduating and avoiding drugs, was also emphasized. In this school context, students remarked that they felt more welcome and comfortable, and they adopted the school's academic identities as a result of these connections. Students who had previously experienced suspensions, expulsions, and failing grades changed their academic identities within a space that affirmed their cultural values and beliefs. Students' drug use significantly declined and graduation rates significantly increased.

Conversely, when students experience incongruity between their identity as an ethnic minority and the settings' values and beliefs around those students' race, research has shown that this is associated with lower motivation and can have a damaging effect on students' connections

to the school and to learning. In a literature review of the current research regarding school belonging among African American adolescents, Booker (2006) found that African American students can have a heightened awareness of impersonal and uncaring schools when they are in the minority, even though they might identify with the purpose of schooling. Viewing schools as unwelcoming and unaccepting could lead to an “identification-connection divide”, in which students inherently value school, but the school environment is not conducive to developing a sense of belonging. Booker (2006) suggested that this identity incongruence could result in lower academic achievement for adolescents. These results point to the need to understand better how racial identity-context congruence might promote African American middle childhood and adolescent students’ sense of belonging and academic outcomes, particularly if this congruence is achieved in a school designed with African American identity, culture, and history as an emphasis.

In this study, the racial identity-congruence perspective is a useful framework for understanding how an African-centered school, which emphasizes cultural knowledge and pride in African and African Americans, might foster students’ sense of belonging and academic outcomes. This investigation expanded upon prior research using this perspective, by examining how racial identity predicted students’ belonging through the students’ African American cultural values in a school that nurtures a positive racial climate. Additionally, this study expanded upon this research by examining how belonging in this context might be related to student learning because students may experience greater motivation to learn. Exploring how they are motivated through an examination of achievement goals also adds to the current literature.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The current study was designed to understand how the racial and cultural identity of African American students in an African-centered school, which cultivates positive perceptions of African American norms and values, is related to students' belonging. The study also explored how students' sense of belonging in this environment was related to student learning and motivation, (e.g. achievement goal orientation). This study also explored how adults and students describe and understand racial identity and cultural values development, belonging, motivation, and learning for students in an African-centered school through participant observation, interviews with students and educators in the school, and the examination of school documents and artifacts. This study used mixed methods to examine these questions.

Quantitative data were collected to assess African American students' racial and cultural identity, belongingness, motivation, and learning, and how these varied across grade and gender in an African-centered school. Additionally, quantitative data were used to examine whether student racial identity and cultural values predicted students' sense of belonging. Also, the study examined whether students' sense of belonging and motivation to learn predicted students' learning. Given African American students' negative experiences in conventional schools, the incidence of disciplinary actions will be explored as well to further understand the African American students' school experiences and whether students' sense of belonging is related to disciplinary outcomes. Qualitative methods will be used to explore the principal's, teachers', and students' experiences and understandings of student identity, values, and belonging, motivation, learning, and behavior in an African-centered school.

## **Research Questions**

### **Part I- Descriptive Data**

1. How is an African-centered approach reflected in an African-centered school?
2. What is the level of racial identity, cultural values, sense of belonging, and achievement goal orientation for boys and girls in each grade at this school?
3. What percentage of girls and boys in each grade are meeting literacy learning benchmarks? Are there differences?
4. What is the level of disciplinary outcomes (e.g. office disciplinary referrals; suspensions; expulsions) for boys and girls in each grade? Are there differences?

### **Part II- Analyses of Patterns**

5. How are racial identity, cultural values, and belongingness related?
6. How are belongingness and achievement goals (mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidant) related to learning?
7. Is belongingness related to disciplinary outcomes?

### **Part III-Perspectives on an African-Centered School**

8. How do adults and students describe and understand racial identity, cultural values, belonging, achievement goals, learning, and behavior in an African-centered school?
  - a. How are racial identity and cultural values reflected in students' experiences?
  - b. What is the role of the school in promoting African American racial identity and cultural values?
  - c. What is the nature of students' experience of belongingness?
  - d. How is students' sense of belongingness related to motivation, learning, and behavior?



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This review focuses on racial identity-context congruence which previous research has shown to be important for African American students' motivation and learning. The review first examines research on African American students' experience of the school context and how their experiences and academic outcomes might vary depending on the degree of congruence. Negative educational experiences in the form of school disciplinary disproportionality, teacher bias, student-teacher cultural mismatch, and student-perceived racial discrimination, and their relation to students' educational environment are discussed. Next, an alternative school context, the African-Centered School, and the current evidence regarding its effectiveness on student outcomes, is discussed as a potential setting where racial identity-context congruence might occur. The research on African American student racial identity and its association to academic outcomes is reviewed and the combined contributions of both racial identity and cultural values on student outcomes is discussed. Finally, students' sense of belonging in the school environment where racial identity and context congruence exist is discussed, along with how this belonging can promote academic motivation and learning.

#### **The School Context and African American Students**

In many traditional public schools, the context in which African American students learn can engender negative educational experiences. These negative experiences may be a function of the lack of congruence between the racial climate and the student's strong racial identification about his or her own racial group membership. Whether through differential disciplinary practices, teacher bias, cultural mismatch between school professionals and students, or perceived discrimination, these experiences can ultimately affect how students connect to the schooling

process (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Green, et al., 2006; Neal, et al., 2003; Skiba et al., 2006; Skiba et al., 2011).

### **Discipline Disproportionality**

African American students are more likely to be disciplined and that disciplinary action is likely to be more severe than for other students (Skiba et al., 2011). Disproportionality in school disciplinary outcomes occurs when the proportion of African American students who receive office disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and/or expulsions is greater than the proportion of African American students in the school enrollment (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Skiba et al., 2011). This has been reported among African American children across grade levels (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). For younger children in elementary and middle school, Skiba and colleagues (2011) found that African American students were almost four times as likely to be referred to the office for problem behaviors than were Caucasian students. This disproportionality has persisted for several decades. In a national survey of U.S. schools, the Children's Defense Fund (1975) reported that African American students were suspended at twice the rate of other ethnic groups. Although comprising 27% of the student population, they made up 42% of the suspensions. Research conducted during the four decades following this report demonstrates the persistent problem of these disparities in disciplinary practices (Donovan & Cross, 2002; McCarty & Hodge, 1987).

The behaviors for which African American students are disciplined suggest that unique contextual factors may contribute to these disproportional outcomes. In an examination of administrative decisions by school infractions, Skiba and colleagues (2011) found that African American elementary school students were 3.75 times more likely to be suspended for minor misbehavior, and less likely to receive in-school suspension or detention, more moderate

consequences, for subjective infractions (i.e. noncompliance) than their Caucasian peers. The allocation of less serious consequences to Caucasian students was more pronounced for sixth through ninth graders. Suspension and expulsion were the primary administrative disciplinary actions for African American students regardless of the infraction committed by the student.

Rocque (2010) examined the potential disciplinary disproportionality in 45 elementary schools and found that even after controlling for teacher ratings of student misbehavior, higher odds ratios for African American student office disciplinary referrals were found. McCarty and Hodge (1987) demonstrated that past punishment, not current behavior was the strongest predictor of sanctions, followed by the teacher's perceptions of the student's level of good behavior. Thus, although causation was not substantiated in this body of work, the factors that have been found to predict disciplinary differences between African American students and their majority counterparts suggests potential bias within the school context. This suggests that how African American students are perceived in school may influence what happens to them in school, and that this perception may be different in comparison to other students. Furthermore, how these students are perceived in school could influence the racial climate of the school, and thus ultimately diminish racial identity-context congruence for students.

### **Racial Bias and Discrimination**

Bias in traditional schools has been suggested as a potential reason for why African American students experience the school context differently from majority students. Bias can occur in schools when teachers make judgments about ethnic minority student behavior based on students' ethnicity or race (Chang & Stanley, 2003), or when they have expectations for student learning based upon students' racial make-up (Demery, 2001). Chang and Demyan (2007) reported that teachers do make automatic stereotypic trait associations with their students along

racial lines. In an investigation of possible contributors to racial disparities in educational outcomes, Chang and Demyan (2007) examined the specific content of teacher's race related stereotypes. The results revealed a significant main effect of race for the overall favorableness of the traits teachers associate with students. Even though the authors found that the traits most commonly associated with African American students were sociable and friendly, post hoc tests indicated that traits attributed to Asian students were significantly more favorable than those for African American and Caucasian students. Using a diagnostic ratio obtained by dividing teachers' ratings of the prevalence of a trait within each ethnic group by the estimated prevalence of the trait among "people in general" (McCauley & Stitt, 1978), African American students were viewed as 31% more aggressive and 23% more stubborn than Caucasians and Asians. Teachers also rated African American students as being more aggressive and as achieving at lower rates academically when the students demonstrated a posture common to African Americans (e.g., "stroll") (Neal, McCray, Webb, Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003).

Bias can also be found in teachers' behavioral ratings. In an extensive longitudinal study of more than 6,000 multiethnic students, African American student behavior was viewed as more problematic in comparison to their Caucasian counterparts in teacher ratings (Zimmerman, Khoury, Vega, Gil, & Warheit, 1995). Conclusions that African American students receive more negative ratings because they demonstrate more problematic behavior have not been supported by research (McCarthy & Hodge, 1987; Skiba et al., 2011). Skiba and colleagues (2000) examined whether higher rates of misbehavior, socioeconomic status, and gender accounted for discipline disproportionality in African American students as well as socioeconomic status. Findings indicated that African American males were more likely to be disciplined at a higher rate than girls, but African American students in general were disciplined for less serious and

more subjective interpretations of their behavior. They concluded that in the absence of the common plausible alternative explanations, racial disproportionality in school discipline was an indicator of systematic racial discrimination. Such systemic racial discrimination would be expected to negatively affect students' views on how the school perceives African American students, foster a hostile school climate, and may influence their racial identity as well.

### **Cultural Mismatch**

Cultural mismatch has also been suggested as an explanation for the negative school experiences of African American students (Downey & Pribesh, 2004, Ladson-Billings, 2014) and ethnic minority school disciplinary disproportionality in particular (Skiba et al., 2006; Skiba et al., 2011). Researchers have found that African American students can be negatively affected when teachers and students do not share the same cultural background within the school context. One way in which this can occur is by teachers misunderstanding the cultural norms of students. This can be problematic for African American students if the teacher sees a conflict between the student's behavior and the school (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). Skiba and colleagues (2006) conducted interviews of teachers regarding their perceptions of explanations for disproportionate ethnic minority special education referrals. They found that African American students' behaviors were often seen as acting out or threatening behavior rather than as a classroom management or training issue, ultimately resulting in higher incidences of special education referrals for the behavior.

When African American students' social and cultural expressions are viewed as contrary to the dominant culture in traditional schools or their behavior stereotyped as impassioned, combative, or argumentative, they are more likely to be seen as discipline problems (Khalifa, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011). Other research has shown that perceived discrimination could also

have negative influences on student academic success and well-being. Students can feel less support in achieving academically from their teachers when they perceive discrimination (Thomas, Caldwell, Faison, & Jackson, 2009). Students' academic success can be compromised when students develop externalizing and/or internalizing behaviors or lower self-concept because of negative interactions with teachers of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. (Chang & Demyan, 2007; Neal, McCray, Webb, Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003; McCarthy & Hodge, 1987; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Green, Way, & Pahl, 2006). McGrady and Reynolds' (2013) investigation of Asian, African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian 10<sup>th</sup> graders in the 2002 Education Longitudinal Study demonstrated that cultural mismatch can have a negative or positive impact on teachers' perceptions, but often these perceptions are negative for African American students. Relative to how Caucasian teachers evaluated Caucasian students, African American students had significantly lower odds ratios of being rated attentive by Caucasian English (.83) and math (.82) teachers. African American students had 23% lower odds (.77) of being rated by their Caucasian English teacher as using good grammar relative to Caucasian students. Similar differences existed with Caucasian teachers' views of African American students' ability to clearly organize ideas in English class (.78) and difficulties with math classes (.76). Non-Caucasian teachers' assessments almost never significantly varied from those of Caucasian teachers' perceptions of Caucasian students, but Caucasian teachers had sometimes significantly more negative views of African American students. Asian students had a net advantage in Caucasian and non-Caucasian teachers' perceptions, with odds greater than 1 for most of the student-teacher racial matching behavior and ability categories, indicating that they were perceived more favorably. At the very least, such findings encourage further exploration of

African American students' educational experiences in a context where student-teacher racial match, a healthy racial climate, and positive racial identity may exist and is important.

Other research highlights the value to the student when the classroom and teacher envelops the culture of the student and uses the cultural experience of the student to enhance learning. Ladson-Billings' (1995) qualitative research examined the role of the culturally relevant pedagogy within the classroom, a classroom where African American students were able to thrive in an environment that embraces their cultural experience. Eight teachers in a low-income, predominately low-income school district displayed instruction and intentional teacher practices that encouraged three key ideas for student success. These included teacher practices that encouraged student academic success, reflected cultural competence by being able to integrate student culture into the learning objectives and products, and cultivated student sociopolitical consciousness that encouraged questioning the situated injustices within the students' every day lives (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This work demonstrated how students were able to do well academically, accept and affirm their cultural identity, and develop perspectives that challenged inequities in their environment. Ladson-Billings (1995) work is an example of how when students' learning environment reflects a cultural match with their lived experiences, students can overcome the common negative experiences associated with school.

### **Perceived Discrimination**

Perceived discrimination and racism have been studied for their effects on African American students' well-being and academic outcomes, and they further illustrate the effect that a supportive or unsupportive racial school climate can have on students (Choi, Harachi, Gillmore, & Catalano, 2006; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006). In a sample of over 2,000 Asian American, African American, multiracial, Caucasian, Native American, and Hispanic

adolescents, Choi and colleagues (2006) found that the perceived discrimination reported by minority youth in school was significantly related to negative stereotypes as well as to the pressure to speak more than one language, depressive symptoms, and risk behaviors such as violence and substance use. Longitudinal links between perceived discrimination and increases in conduct problems and depressive symptoms have been found in samples of adolescent African Americans as well (Brody, et al., 2006). Using structural equation modeling, Brody and colleagues (2006) found that increases in perceived discrimination were linked positively with the development of conduct problems and depressive symptoms across late childhood through early adolescence. Although developmental influences, such as parenting styles and school efficacy, moderated this relationship, increases in perceived discrimination in late childhood through early adolescence were linked with poorer well being in these students.

Other researchers have found that perceived everyday experiences of racism, or perceived discrimination by peers and teachers, have been related to problem behaviors and adolescents' motivation and self-esteem (Clark, Coleman, & Novak, 2004; Green, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). In a sample of 120 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade African American students, Clark and colleagues found that perceived racism in everyday life was positively related to both externalizing and internalizing symptoms. For participants who had ever experienced racism, compared to those who reported never experiencing racism, these problem behaviors were higher. In a longitudinal study of 225 African American, Latino, and Asian American high school students over six waves of data collection, African American adolescents experienced steeper increases in depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem than their Puerto Rican peers in response to perceived discrimination from peers and teachers (Green et al., 2006). According to Wong and colleagues (2003), research using a data set of 629 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade



African American students indicated that perceived discrimination by peers and perceived discrimination by teachers were negatively related to adolescents' reports of achievement motivation, self-esteem, and grades, but were positively related to problem behaviors (e.g., damaged property for fun, being sent to the principal's office, cheating on exams, etc.). Taken together, this research suggests that negative experiences in how both teachers and peers treat ethnic minority students, including African American students, in the school context, can have negative effects on mental health, motivation, and learning.

### **The African-Centered School**

The African-centered school is a particular context designed to create positive experiences for African American students and to counter the cultural mismatch, bias, and discrimination they encounter in their school experiences in traditional schools. The educational disparities that African Americans experience have been a subject of research for many years (Holmes, 1993; Ratteray, 1994), and the African-centered school was originally designed to create a school environment that contributed to positive experiences and outcomes in African American students. Schools established by independent Black institutions (IBIs) in the late 1780's were the first such efforts to create schools that addressed the inaccessible educational, social, and political opportunities of African Americans. These schools ranged in their orientations and philosophies, such that some reflected a more Afrocentric focus, while others were similar in nature to the Eurocentric school model, but were exclusively for African Americans (Hoover, 1992; Ratteray, 1992). African American philosophers, educators, and activists, such as Carter G. Woodson, W.E.B. DuBois, and Martin Delaney in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries argued that African Americans needed to control the education of African American children through the infusion of culture and relevant content that reflected the cultural

experience of African Americans (Pollard, Ajirotutu, & Epps, 2000). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the rise of the Black Power Movement, the Black Panthers, Black Nationalism, and the Pan Africanist movements, in which leaders and organizers disagreed with the assimilationist efforts of the earlier Civil Rights Movement, sought control of the African American community and its institutions by African Americans (Holmes, 1993). A primary tenet of these movements was the notion that Eurocentric culture and schooling were inadequate in providing the type of education needed for African American children (Allen & Jewell, 1995), because it did not emphasize developing the cultural knowledge and ultimately, the self-esteem of African American students that would encourage academic success or political and social empowerment for African Americans (Pollard, Ajirotutu, & Epps, 2000). Thus, the African-centered school was a byproduct of these social forces and movements.

Further economic and political influences in the 1980's and 1990s contributed to contemporary perspectives on African-centered education and schools (Pollard et al., 2000). School desegregation did not provide the equitable education opportunities sought by many African American supporters of this legislation, because of the demographic shifts created by "white flight" to suburban areas in the North, and by Caucasian families sending their children to private schools in the South (Narine, 1992). The combination of decreased social services and the decline of economic infrastructure in urban areas created neighborhoods and schools that were under-resourced and underfunded. Additionally, many African American school professionals were moved out of their jobs within these urban schools, and the additional decline of African Americans in the teaching profession left African American students without the role models and community support that was found in segregated schools (King, 1993). The combination of poorer neighborhoods and inadequately resourced schools with an increasing

teaching workforce that did not provide the culturally relevant pedagogical strategies, increased the desire of the African American community to pursue African-centered schools (Pollard et al., 2000). In the early 1990s, philosophical leaders and some academicians made Afrocentrism and its implementation within African-centered schools a central focus of philosophical response to the continued troubling educational experiences of African American students. Independent Black Institutions began sprouting across the country in the early 1990s, including in Detroit, Chicago, New Jersey, Washington, D.C., and California.

Asante (1991) was a leader in articulating the Afrocentric worldview and explained this as a paradigm where African and African American history and the worldviews of African people of Africa and the African Diaspora are centered within the African American student's experience within the schooling process. From this paradigm, African-centered education includes "a systematic expression of African people's will to recover, recreate, and perpetuate their cultural heritage" (Pollard et al., 2000, p. 24). According to Eyo (1991), this approach to education is derived from the Afrocentric worldview by revisiting and refocusing the ways in which African culture and people of African ancestry have contributed to the world (as cited in Pollard et al., 2000). A key perspective on why African-centered education is appropriate for African American students is that being taught within the context of their own culture and history allows students to identify and see themselves within the learning process. Furthermore, Asante (1991) asserted that when African American students can use referents from their own cultural and historical background, they become empowered in the classroom, confident about their school experiences, and more highly motivated to engage in the learning process (as cited in Pollard et al., 2000).

Brookins' (1984) descriptive analysis identified the common philosophical foci of 10 Independent Black Institutions, and these were summarily identified as the major tenets and philosophical principles of Independent Black Institutions (Lomotey, 1992), and African-centered education (Kifano, 1996). These can be understood as guiding posts upon which schools and programs with an Afrocentric focus are developed (Marks, 2005; Tengella, 2012). The three major components of the IBI philosophy, as described by Lomotey (1992) include *familyhood* (Lomotey, 1992, p. 457), the Nguzo Saba values, and prescribing an ideological worldview termed Revolutionary Pan-African Nationalism (RPN).

*Familyhood* includes an emphasis on creating a family-like atmosphere. In this kind of environment teachers treat students as if they were their own children and students are encouraged to extend the same love and respect to the teachers that they would to their parents. Additionally, parents are integrated into the familyhood by participating as teachers, teacher aids, field trip chaperones, and curriculum developers.

Second, many IBIs adopted the cultural values called *Nguzo Saba* developed by Karenga (1980). These principles are typically celebrated during the African American holiday of Kwanza. Nguzo Saba is Kiswahili for "The Seven Principles of Blackness", and each principal was designed to introduce values that contribute to building and strengthening African American culture, community, and family. These principles include Umoja (Unity); Kujichagulia (Self-Determination); Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility); Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics); Nia (Purpose); Kuumba (Creativity); and Imani (Faith). Teachers and staff are expected to intentionally incorporate these values into the teaching and learning of students' experiences at an African-centered school (Shockley, 2010). These values are transmitted through curricular methods and activities such as holiday celebrations, rituals, dress codes, community events, and

the use of African proverbs and stories, administrative rules and practices, the physical space of the school, and the social interactions between students, teachers, and staff (Shockley, 2010).

Third, many IBIs subscribe to the ideological worldview referred to as Revolutionary Pan-African Nationalism (Lomotey, 1992). This worldview is similar to that which is commonly associated with the Black Panther and Black Nationalist movements. According to this ideology, the assimilation efforts of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s are rejected. African American political and cultural control of their communities is a goal and the validity of European American culture with respect to its meaning for African American students is questioned (Holmes, 1993; Pollard et al., 2000). From this perspective, IBIs are intended to (1) replace existing “mainstream” educational systems that have been deemed inappropriate for meeting the needs of African American students; (2) create a means for African Americans to identify with peoples from the African Diaspora; and (3) acknowledge the viewpoint that African Americans make up a nation within a nation (Lomotey, 1992).

### **Implementation of African-Centered Models**

The Nguzo Saba principles have been commonly described throughout the literature as a philosophical and value-driven foundation upon which African-centered schools and programs have been implemented (Durden, 2007; Kifano, 1996; Lee, 1992; Mark, 2005; Napp, 2008; Rayford, 2012; Shockley, 2007; Tengella, 2012). They are used as a means to emphasize the importance of these values and for students to internalize them (Durden, 2007; Shockley, 2007) and used as philosophical tools and a frame of reference for students (Kifano, 1996; Lee, 1992).

Tengella (2012) conducted a mixed-methods study of how the African-centered school reflected the Nguzo Saba principles within its curricula, pedagogy, and practices, and how these principles were transmitted to African American students within three African-centered schools.

Through the interviews and a culturally oriented assessment of self-esteem and identity (i.e., the Optimal Extended Self Esteem Survey (OESES; Hamilton, 1983), results revealed the adoption and reflection of Nguzo Saba principles in students' values, interactions with teachers, parent involvement and perceptions, as well as the descriptions of the school environment. For example, the principle of Umoja (Unity) contained the highest positive responses, through which students seemed to respect, admire, and wanted to emulate their parents; 100% indicated respect for their mother, and 92% described their families as "good families." Parents also confirmed the family-like atmosphere in one of the schools by describing the school as "like home." Students also valued the principle of having "good" moral character (Kujichagulia); 85% of students positively responded to moral value and character questions. The principle of Imani (Faith) was represented in cultural traditions such as the "pouring of libations", a spiritual and reverential ceremony where ancestors and their contributions to the current generation are acknowledged (Holiday Kwanzaa Celebration, 2012). The research also noted that the African-centered curriculum was used to supplement and extend the learning of the traditional school curriculum through the use of African-centered textbooks and research, and through school ancillary activities such as African drumming, and African languages. Students in this research connected with the pedagogy, subject matter, and cultural emphases in the learning environment, as well as with the Nguzo Saba values emphasized within the school.

Napp (2008) explored the African-centered educational approach through the voices and descriptions of parents. Her research highlighted how parents chose an African-centered school over a traditional school for a number of reasons (Napp, 2008). Examples of what parents sought within the African-centered school included:

1. culturally affirmative/culturally relevant classrooms;

2. instruction designed to guide student's self-reflection;
3. self-knowledge and discovery of authentic self is gained;
4. academically rigorous programs scaffolded onto students' prior understanding, knowledge of the world, and cultural identity;
5. fostered interpersonal relationships, emphasis on creating learning communities, with de-emphasis on individual competition;
6. ability to read critically and evaluate dominant social institutions;
7. purposeful dialogue about strategies to influence popular and intellectual culture through social and economic justice activities.

Napp, (2008) also used qualitative methods to examine how these factors were present within the African-centered school context. Some of these findings included parents' observations that classrooms were places to explore African American and African history and make it relevant to the present day while also celebrating the accomplishments of African Americans. Instruction was designed to guide student self-reflection, self-knowledge, and one's "authentic self" as described by parents who discussed the school's message to instill self-pride and dignity and how they school community is positive and appreciative of each other. Teachers, administrators, and parents noted that interpersonal relationships were fostered and learning communities were created while de-emphasizing the individual and competition by stating that there is a "feeling of one accord" in the school community and students learn to teach one another. Another parent explained that the Nguzo Saba principles helped students, teachers, and administrators build strong relationships within the school community and with the surrounding neighborhood and community. Other researchers also highlight similar African-centered education principles through their investigations of schools that infuse this approach.

Rayford (2012) also conducted a case study of an African-centered school for male students through an examination of how the Nguzo Saba principles were implemented through the schools classroom, curriculum, and administrative practices (i.e. school expectations, rules, and motto). This research examined how these principles influenced student self-concept, self-esteem, and racial identity. Student interviews indicated that signs in the school that reinforce expectations such as tucking in school uniform shirts and wearing a belt to prevent sagging of pants implied Ujima (e.g. collective work and responsibility). One male student noted that his decision to abide by these rules and acceptance to conform to these expectations was evidence of self-determination or the Nguzo Saba principal of Kujichagulia. Within the classroom, instruction about the Holocaust provided opportunities for students to relate the experiences of a young survivor with slavery in the United States by connecting the oppression of Jews with the plight of African American slaves.

Each of these examples highlight an African-centered educational approach to schooling that reflect early conceptualizations articulated with Independent Black Institutions. The Nguzo Saba principles are often quoted as foundational to the schools, which can be understood as encapsulating many of the other foundational constructs such as familyhood, Revolutionary Pan Africanism, identity, African culture and values, and community building and control that are reviewed in the literature (Lomotey, 1992; Shockley, 2012). Using the Nguzo Saba as a framework would be a useful tool for understanding what characterizes a school as having an African-centered approach. It is important consider the degree to which African-Centered schools are able to put these ideals into practice and whether this is effective in promoting educational outcomes.



### **Effectiveness of African-Centered Model**

Research that has examined the African-centered school and student educational outcomes is limited especially with regard to academic achievement (Irvine, 2000; Tengella, 2012). Studies have yielded inconsistent results regarding whether this approach addresses the academic achievement inequity of African American students (Irvine, 2000), but there is research evidence that it improves upon the interpersonal experiences that can be found in more traditional schools (Kifano, 1996; Napp, 2008; Tengella, 2012). Some research indicates that in comparison to experiences in traditional school settings where students had experienced prejudice and uncaring school environments, the African-centered school provided positive teacher-student interactions and a loving, caring community (Napp, 2008; Tengella, 2012). An assistant principal attributed the low number of behavioral problems, suspensions, and expulsions to sharing and reinforcing the Nguzo Saba principles at formal parent meetings and with parents and students throughout the school year (Tengella, 2012). Other research has noted the effectiveness of an African-centered school in meeting the needs of parents who were motivated to place their children in an African-centered school because of negative interactions and bias from teachers and administrators at traditional schools (Kifano, 1996; Napp 2008). Much of the research highlights the positive social context and interpersonal interactions at African-centered schools, however, these studies did not examine academic achievement.

There has been limited evidence of how such an approach is related to African American students' school achievement (Irvine, 2000). Some research has indicated positive effects on African American students' academic achievement on state standardized tests (Gordon, Iwamoto, Potts, & Boyd, 2009; Teicher, 2006). In 2005, an African-centered school, Chick Elementary, was a top performing school, with 48% of its African American students scoring at

the Proficient Level, in comparison to 24% of African American and 36% of Caucasian students on the fourth grade math test of the Missouri Assessment Program. Using Chick Elementary school as a model, a low performing school adopted an African-centered approach and improved from being the lowest performing school in the state to being the most improved school and a top ten highest performing school in Missouri (Teicher, 2006).

While some research positively links African-Centered approaches to improvements in high stakes testing, other research has examined self-concept beliefs and academic behaviors that might be conducive to academic success (Sanders & Reed, 1995). In a comparison of male African American third, fourth, and fifth grade students in a traditional public school ( $N=90$ ) and in an African-centered school ( $N= 63$ ), Sanders and Reed (1995) found significant differences in students' beliefs with respect to whether they, rather than others, are responsible for their intellectual and academic success and failure. The results suggested that the African-centered school might have been more effective at fostering a sense of personal responsibility for school success in fifth grade African American students. However, the study did not demonstrate any differences in students' self-esteem, beliefs, or attitudes toward school or measure achievement.

The emphasis on racial identity and self-esteem (Asante, 1991; Lomotey, 1992) may be worthy efforts of the African-centered approach to education. Some qualitative and quantitative research has examined how racial identity, self-concept, and/or self-esteem relates to academic achievement within African-centered schools and found positive results. Nyameke (2010) explored African American students' identities as mathematical learners and their racial identity as students within an African-centered school. Students demonstrated positive identity construction as exhibited by students saying they enjoyed mathematics and were interested in

pursuing mathematical careers while at the same time self-identifying as African American positively (e.g. expressing good feelings about having African ancestry).

Rayford (2012) found similar ways in which a positive racial identity and self-esteem was fostered within an African-centered approach to education. He noted that the African-centered approach provided and emphasized positive African American role models in the students' lives and that one theme concerning self-concept that emerged was students reported having a "mirror image or seeing self and future aspirations" in these mentors. One student noted, "My dad is my role model, because he is a successful Black man and he shows me that even though I am Black, I can make something of myself." These data suggest that students' beliefs about themselves were affected by the African-centered curriculum. When participants learned about Ancient Egypt from an African-centered perspective, a student noted, "I have to do my part as an African American male to rebuild African history and what they have already become in Ancient Egypt society" (Rayford, 2012). When asked if students wanted to be Caucasian, students affirmed a strong commitment to being African American: "...I love Black history" and "No, I'm proud to be Black, I get to make my own path". This suggests the development of a positive racial identity among students at the African-centered school. One teacher explained that the school uses the Nguzo Saba principles to relate to the students and help them go through whatever they are facing in life. Although the results of the study suggested that students developed positive self-concept, self-esteem, and racial identity in an African-centered school, this research did not examine its effects on academic achievement.

Additional research demonstrated that an African-centered approach in supplementary or enrichment programs has the potential to positively influence racial identity and academic achievement, but the results are inconclusive. Gordon and colleagues (2009) reported findings

from an Afrocentric curriculum infused within a mentoring program at an all-boys African American male academy. Although not an African-centered school, racial identities were significantly and positively associated with standardized achievement tests and GPA. Racial identity was also related to greater increases in academic performance in comparison to non-mentored peers.

Other research has shown negative or no effects. Of 65 African American inner-city middle school students who participated in an African-centered supplementary curriculum, there was no significant difference between intervention and control group students on measures of racial identity and those in the intervention group actually declined in the racial identity scores over the school year (Lee et al., 2011). In Manley's (1994) study of over 300 teachers in the Atlanta Public School system where an Afrocentric immersion curriculum was implemented, teachers reported no change in standardized test scores or classroom tests of their students. Other research on how this approach relates to grades is inconclusive. Marks (2005) reported descriptive data demonstrating some above average grades of African-centered middle school students in a study comparing the approach to a traditional school, but the data did not indicate which type of school was better for African American students' grades. Descriptive analysis of student self-reported grades that ranged from all As to mostly or all Es and Fs on a 12-point scale indicated that African-centered schools had more students reporting mostly or all As, mostly or all Bs, and grades in the B- to C+ range compared to students attending a traditional school who reported more grades in the ranges of A- to B+; B to B+; C to C+; mostly or all Cs; and grades in the C- to D+ range. Further conclusions about whether participating in an African-centered school resulted in better grades, could not be determined given the research design. Irvine (2000) noted that Afrocentric education must move beyond addressing African American students' self-

esteem and produce positive achievement outcomes in order to maintain any credibility and viability. While several researchers highlight positive experiences of students, teachers, and parents, few researchers explicitly examined the influence of an African-centered school and its philosophical and social context on students' achievement in order to provide substantial empirical evidence to settle this question.

Other researchers have examined whether participation in an African-centered school, in comparison to a traditional school, results in higher achievement motivation. Marks (2005) also compared African American middle school students from a traditional public school (N=119), with those from an African-centered school (N= 131) that offered an Afrocentric curriculum. The findings did not demonstrate that the students at the African-centered school were more motivated, but other aspects of the school were not investigated to explain these findings, such as how the school implemented its Afrocentric curriculum.

Additional research has demonstrated limited effects on students' achievement motivation and self-concept. Lake (1996) compared high school African American students in grades 9-12 who did or did not participate in a culturally relevant curriculum via an African American cultural studies class that stressed the history, culture, and positive contributions and achievements of African Americans. The purpose was to examine if participation in such a course would affect the self-concept and achievement motivation of the experimental group who received instruction in the course. There were no statistical differences between the experimental and control group on post self-concept scores or achievement motivation, although there were slight improvements in achievement motivation scores in the experimental group. These findings suggest that when African-centered content was limited to one course that was offered for only 12 weeks, the dosage may be insufficient compared to schools that are African-centered

or systematically adopt the central principles of such an approach. The African-centered school, where these concepts are implemented throughout the school on a long-term basis, may provide a sustaining context in which African American students can experience school success, but the literature base requires more evidence to understand what works and how it works.

In summary, the African-centered school fosters an educational environment that African American students can identify with and see themselves in the learning process by connecting it to their culture. There is limited research however, on the effects of an African-centered approach on African American students' achievement, motivation, and racial identity. Although the curriculum of African-centered schools may intentionally promote a positive racial identity, there is much to learn about how African American students see themselves within an African-centered school context. Student racial identity within an African-centered school might be one lens through which we can understand how this kind of school environment might be beneficial to African American students, particularly if this identity is congruent with the school's view on being African American.

### **Racial Identity and African American Student Academic Outcomes**

African American racial identity has been commonly conceptualized by researchers in terms of five dimensions: racial pride, racial exploration, cultural mismatch, race salience, and humanistic identity (Elmore, 2012). *Racial pride* is concerned with positive feelings about one's racial group membership. *Racial exploration* is concerned with seeking a deeper understanding of one's heritage and racial group or enacting specific culturally based behaviors. When an individual has negative or wary feelings related to other races, especially towards Caucasians or the dominant/majority group, this is referred to as *cultural mistrust*. The level of importance one associates with one's racial group membership is referred to as *race salience*. *Humanistic*

*identity* represents mature racial identity, where one embraces Blackness as well as other social identities. The following research examines many of these dimensions in studying how African Americans students' racial identity is related to their academic experiences.

Racial identity can be viewed as a protective or risk factor for African American students' academic achievement and many researchers have attempted to investigate the link between racial identity and academic outcomes (Elmore, 2012). Byrd and Chavous (2012) described these two perspectives as, *racial-identity-as promotive*, and *racial-identity-as-risk*. The *racial-identity-as-promotive* view considers racial identity to be a buffer against the challenges faced by some African American students, such as poverty, racism, perceived discrimination, or a hostile racial climate in the school setting (Byrd & Chavous, 2012; Whaley & Noel, 2012). A positive racial identity has been shown to moderate the effects of the circumstances of poverty (such as living in low-income neighborhoods or communities) on educational outcomes. Hughes, Manns, and Ford (2009) examined a small sample (N= 29) of high at-risk African American adolescents in ninth grade who attended schools in impoverished neighborhoods and who were either pregnant, parenting, or both. The mean grade point averages were at the C grade level, and most students had generally low racial identity attitudes. Students who had negative stereotypes about being African American were more likely to have extremely low grade point averages. The authors pointed out that living in poorly resourced schools and neighborhoods, might have negatively influenced students' racial identity and contributed to their negative stereotypes about being African American.

Perceived discrimination has also been viewed as a risk factor for African American students, but a strong racial identity has been found to be protective against its negative effects on academic achievement (Chavous, Bernat, Schmelck-Cone, Caldwell, Kohn, & Wood, 2003;

Chavous, Rivas, Small, Griffin, Cogburn, 2008; Elmore, 2012; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2013). Wong and colleagues (2003) found that as seventh and eighth grade African American students experienced more perceived discrimination they displayed lower levels of achievement motivation, self-competency beliefs, and a number of other psychosocial variables. The findings also indicated that as the attachment to their ethnic group (i.e. racial salience) increased along with increasing perceived discrimination, there were smaller declines in school achievement.

In general, when the relation between racial identity and academic outcomes has been examined, there is strong evidence that high racial identity is associated with higher achievement among African American students. In a meta-analysis of thirty-eight studies, Elmore (2012) found that racial identity in African American youth and young adults, as measured by a sense of pride in racial group membership, had the most consistent and the strongest relation with academic outcomes in comparison to other measures of racial identity, with a Cohen's *d* effect size of 1.0. Other research has positively linked African American high regard for racial group membership to academic goals (Chavous, Bernat, Schmelck-Cone, Caldwell, & Kohn-Wood, 2003) and academic achievement (Chavous, Rivas, Small, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008). While this research, did not examine racial identity as a promotive factor per se, it did provide evidence that a positive racial identity could be helpful for some African American students and their academic success.

The racial-identity-as-risk perspective suggests that stronger racial identity negatively affects student outcomes because of the racial groups' stigmatized status (Byrd & Chavous, 2012). The work of Ogbu (1991) theorized that some African Americans will identify with group racial membership as a means to oppose what is considered mainstream, or Caucasian culture. In the example of academic achievement, this can include deviant behaviors from the perspective of



Caucasians that would suggest non-attempts at academic achievement, or at crossing cultural boundaries with values that are associated with being Caucasian (i.e. “acting white) (Ogbu, 1991, pg. 442). Worrell (2007) examined the predictive value of ethnic identity of a multiethnic sample of gifted and talented students and found that the African American students were the only group to demonstrate a negative predictive relationship between ethnic identity and academic achievement, accounting for 20% of the variance in students’ GPA along with students’ willingness to interact with other ethnic minorities. In a sample of African American high school males, Cokley (2011) found that when race was seen as a central feature of the student’s identity (e.g. high racial centrality), there was a negative relationship when predicting student grades, and also a negative relationship between racial identity and valuing academic school success, which included disengagement from school.

These findings highlight the role of context in how racial identity might influence African American student outcomes. On the one hand, racial identity might buffer against the effects of negative contextual factors in schools such as racism and discrimination or in general be related to positive student outcomes, while on the other hand, because of negative contextual factors in schools, strongly identifying and embracing one’s racial group membership can be a way to oppose the majority context and what it values. Some researchers have theorized that African Americans can be heterogeneous in the meaning and significance they place on race (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). This corresponds to empirical findings that have suggested variability in the racial identity of African American students and in how this identity relates to their academic and adjustment outcomes. Such variability in the nature and degree of racial identity may explain the differing association with academic outcomes because it depends upon the context in which this identity exists (Byrd & Chavous, 2012). Researchers who have

found racial identity to be a promotive or risk factor for African American students have examined such phenomena in environments in which these students are marginalized or ostracized due to their race. If the environment is more amenable and void of stigma, given a student's race, and aligns with a student's positive racial identity, student academic outcomes may benefit. Thus, the school context might be a worthwhile factor to consider in the relation between racial identity and academic outcomes.

Age is also relevant to investigations of African American student racial identity. Racial identity is considered to be highly salient to adolescents who are naturally going through a period of identity formation (Erickson, 1968). During this developmental stage, adolescents are reexamining and reevaluating their identities formed in childhood, examining their current interests and abilities, and similarly examining and questioning their attitudes and assumptions about their ethnicity (Phinney, 1996). Much of the research on racial identity has focused on individuals who are 12 years and older highlighting this critical time period as one in which African American students grapple with their construction of identity (Byrd, 2012; Choi, et al., 2007; Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyen, 2008; Seaton, Yip, & Sellers, 2009; Sellers, Copland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006). However, younger children have also been the focus of research on racial identity and "there appears to be a developmental sequence in which children gradually increase in the complexity of their awareness of the racial differences" (Byrd, 2012, p. 8). Research with children as early as preschool can be conducted if they are screened for their ability to identify race differentially and can demonstrate awareness of racial differences. Changing beliefs from early childhood to preadolescence (e.g. age 12) can progress from awareness of physical differences to knowledge that race is stable, that it will not change, and that there are social characteristics associated with race (Byrd, 2012). Thus any investigation of

racial identity with children of multiple age groups must take into account the role that development plays in racial identity formation. Adolescence is an opportune time to study racial identity in the context of social settings that aim to explicitly support racial identity development. Experiences around racism and discrimination can be especially salient for these students as well (Byrd, 2012; Erickson, 1968; Seaton, Yip, & Sellers, 2009). Thus, research with a particular focus on how adolescents in an African-centered school experience racial identity and the racial climate of the school could be helpful in understanding how context influences African American student belongingness, motivation, and learning.

Racial identity has also been found to vary between males and females. For example, African American adolescent females have been found to report higher racial identity in some studies in comparison to boys (Fine & Bowers, 1984; Martinez & Dukes, 1997). In a sample of young children between 4 and 6 attending an African-centered school, using Clark and Clark's (1939) "doll study" technique, which requires children to identify their preference for one of two or more African American and Caucasian dolls, African American males preferred and identified more with the Caucasian dolls in comparison to their female peers (Fine & Bowers, 1984). Furthermore, this finding appears to uniquely characterize African American youth (Martinez & Dukes, 1997). For most ethnic groups in a multiethnic adolescent sample, males and females had similar levels of ethnic identity (Martinez & Dukes, 1997). African American females, however, scored significantly higher than African American males on ethnic identity. One's own group racial preferences have been found to increase with age (Smith et al., 2009), but different patterns based on child gender also emerged. While boys initially maintained higher levels of own group preferences than girls in Kindergarten, girls' rates of change as they grew older surpassed those of boys. Given these findings, African American girls may be likely to have

stronger racial identity than boys particularly as they grow older. Considering gender across grades when examining racial identity for African American students could address gaps in the literature and add to current knowledge.

### **An Integrated Identity**

Afrocentric values are a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that reflect basic African values found among persons of African descent including African Americans (Belgrave, Townsend, Cherry, & Cunningham, 1997), and they have been suggested to be related to African American students' racial identity (Thomas, Townsend, & Belgrave, 2003). Some researchers believe that empirical investigations of racial identity and adjustment might be more comprehensive with an integrated conceptualization of identity that includes both racial identity and cultural values (Phinney, 1992; Sellers, 1993; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). The idea behind such an assertion is that students may think about themselves in relation to a racial group in much broader ways than their phenotypic characteristics (e.g., skin color), and thus cultural values should be considered within investigations of racial influences (Coll, Akerman, & Cicchetti, 2000; Townsend & Belgrave, 2000). Researchers have found that culture is linked with racial identity development and can affect psychosocial well-being in African American students, and that cultural values might promote the development of behaviors that are conducive to social interactions (Thomas et al., 2003). Combining racial identity and Afrocentric values within a single model of ethnic identification has positively predicted African American students' behavior ratings as well as teacher's ratings of these student's behavior problems and strengths (Thomas et al., 2003). Other research demonstrates the positive value of Afrocentric values in African American children and youth's risky behaviors and academic outcomes. Afrocentric values have been linked to attitudes about drug use in African American

fourth and fifth graders and young adults. These results indicated that Afrocentric values such as collective responsibility (e.g. Ujimaa) and cooperative economics (e.m. Ujimaa) were associated with attitudes intolerant of drug use, explaining 26% of the variance in drug attitudes (Belgrave, Townsend, Cherry, & Cunningham, 1997). In other research, *Familism*, explained as a facet of an Afrocentric orientation, was also a protective factor that moderated the relation between rebelliousness and drug use in African American young adults (Brook & Pahl, 2005). Youth who had high endorsement of *Familism*, reported lower drug usage.. Likewise, Afrocentric values have also been found as a significant and positive predictor of academic self-efficacy in African American third grade students (Shin, 2011). With limited data on how both racial identity and Afrocentric values together may influence student outcomes an opportunity exists to further investigate this question. No studies have used this conceptualization of integrated identity to examine how African American students might feel connected within a school context that shares values and beliefs around being African American. The proposed research study will address this gap in the literature by examining how an integrated identity influences students' connections to such a context.

While prior research has examined how boys and girls differ in their racial identity, combining racial identity and cultural values in this study provided an opportunity to explore gender differences in students' cultural values as well. Research has shown that girls are more likely to report higher racial identity in comparison to boys (Fhagen-Smith, Vandiver, Worrell, & Cross, 2010; Fine & Bowers, 1984; Hughes, Hagelskamp, Way, & Foust, 2009; Smith et al., 2009). As cultural values have been linked to racial identity, it could be that boys and girls might have different levels of cultural values in comparison to boys.

### **Belonging with Identity-Context Congruence**

Based upon research and the theoretical perspectives of self-determination theory (Deci, et al., 1991), organizational theory (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002), and person-environment fit theory (Rappaport, 1977), the racial identity-context congruence perspective (Byrd & Chavous, 2012) that will guide the current study suggested that if there was a match between students' own racial identity and their school contexts' values and beliefs around race, then motivation for learning would be promoted. Belongingness can be an important mechanism for fostering this motivation (Byrd & Chavous, 2012), because the relatedness that students experience in their environment can be instrumental in developing internal motivation (i.e. self-determination theory) (Deci et al., 1991). This perspective also acknowledges that students' experiences at school around race and their racial group membership are a function of the interaction between the student and the school organization's ability to affirm their race and group membership (i.e. organizational theory) (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002). Additionally, this perspective suggests that an environment that fits with how students see themselves can affect interpersonal relationships in context and lead to positive outcomes (i.e. person-environment fit perspective) (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007). According to research using the racial identity-context congruence perspective, in an environment such as this, African American students are likely to experience a sense of belongingness and connection to this setting.

Belongingness within the school environment for African American and other minority students has been discussed widely throughout the research literature, particularly in relation to the racial climate of the educational context and how students perceive their racial group membership while in this context. A school context where African American students have limited interpersonal connections can negatively affect their sense of belonging. In a literature

review of the current research regarding school belonging among African American adolescents, Booker (2006) suggested that African American students might have heightened awareness of impersonal and uncaring schools, due to their minority status and negative interpersonal interactions. Furthermore, that such an unwelcoming and unaccepting school culture might lead to an “identification-connection divide,” through which students might inherently value school and identify with its purpose, but neither develop a sense of belonging nor establish a connection with a particular school. Researchers have pointed out the educational value of belongingness for African American students in a school climate that values their racial group membership. The racial climate can influence students’ sense of connection, satisfaction, and perseverance given its hostile or supportive nature toward their racial group membership (Byrd & Chavous, 2011). Particular negative experiences around race in the school environment have been shown to affect belonging. For example, Newman (2005) interviewed African American students in a predominantly Caucasian high school and found that their negative experiences around race in the school had dampened their initial feelings of belonging within the school context. In a sample of community college students, Shammass (2009) also found that in a climate where Arab American students perceived discrimination within a college campus environment, sense of belonging declined. Additionally, although there was no interaction between ethnic identity and perceived discrimination on sense of belonging; students who had a high ethnic identity also had a high sense of belonging. This suggests that both ethnic identity and the racial climate (i.e., perceived discrimination) may have some influence on students’ feelings of connection to the educational context. Other research with African American students has highlighted the fact that a positive climate, along with positive student racial identity, can be helpful in creating a sense of belonging. Byrd and Chavous (2011) found that the effect of

teachers' respect for students' of different races within a school (e.g. racial climate) on students' feelings of belonging was mediated by the level of racial identity of the students. This means that when students perceived the school context to be fair and equitable towards students of all races, this positively predicted their feelings of support and acceptance through their feelings about their racial group membership. Moreover, this identity-context congruence also predicted students' motivation through their sense of belonging. Thus, a positive racial climate can engender feelings of belonging, particularly when students have favorable affective and evaluative judgments about their own racial group membership.

Research using the racial identity-context congruence perspective highlights how belongingness is an important factor in how the school's racial climate is related to students' racial identity and motivation (Byrd & Chavous, 2012). There is substantial empirical evidence that students' sense of belonging plays an important role in minority student academic motivation. Goodenow and Grady (2003) examined how African American, Latino, and Caucasian students' sense of belonging was related to students' feelings about the importance of school, effort and persistence in schoolwork, expectancy of schoolwork success, and intrinsic value toward schoolwork, and they found that students who had a high sense of belonging were more likely to be motivated. Some students who discussed barriers to their ability to engage in school-related behaviors identified the lack of connection and not feeling as if they belonged as reasons for this disengagement (Nichols, 2006). Furrer and Skinner (2003) also found that students' sense of relatedness was a factor in predicting teachers' perceptions of students' effort, attention, and persistence during the initiation and execution of learning activities, as well as their perceptions of students' emotional involvement during learning. Moreover, these same perceptions of students' motivation mediated the effect of students' sense of relatedness on



students' academic achievement. Gillen-O'Neel, Ruble, and Fuligni (2011) demonstrated that supportive school environments can be important sources of intrinsic motivation for middle childhood ethnic minority students, even if students perceive ethnic group stigmatization within the school. In school contexts where some ethnic minority students reported negative evaluations of their ethnic group, this stigmatization was partially compensated for by the students' sense of belonging in contributing to students' higher intrinsic motivation. Thus, students' sense of belonging in a school setting can play a key role in both student motivation and achievement.

Belongingness can play an important role in students' school experiences, but some studies report gender differences finding that boys did not experience the support, connection, and respect that girls reported and that girls experienced a greater sense of belonging than their male counterparts (Anderman, 2002; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009; Voelkl, 1997; Wang, Willett, & Eccles, 2011). Research with diverse geographical and racial samples, girls have reported higher levels of identification with school and of belonging in comparison to males (Anderman, 2002; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009; Voelkl, 1997; Wang, Willett, & Eccles, 2011). African American students represented an equal or majority representation in the samples, but the schools from which this empirical data originates did not specifically examine African-centered schools. Thus, we know little about whether gender differences in students' sense of belonging would also be observed given a racial climate that explicitly promotes African American culture, identity and values in the African-centered school environment.

It should be noted that the link between a student's sense of belonging and academic achievement is also apparent within the literature. Declines in student grades corresponded with decreases in students' sense of belonging in transitioning from elementary to middle school

(Midgely, 2000). Roeser, Migdley, and Urdan (1996) also found that sense of belonging was positively and significantly related to end-of-year grades in sixth and eighth graders above and beyond prior year academic achievement. Research has demonstrated that students' sense of belonging is related to both academic motivation and academic achievement. What is missing in the literature is an investigation of how belonging is related to student learning when students are motivated to learn in a school environment that is more likely to share positive values and beliefs around their culture and racial group membership.

While the link between students' sense of belonging and motivation is useful in understanding how to support their academic success, understanding how they are motivated could provide a fuller picture of the role of belonging in their school experiences. Examining how students are motivated through achievement goal theory allows exploration of the kinds of orientations students have in connection to their school outcomes. Students' achievement goals are their purposes or reasons for achievement behavior (Midgley et al., 1998). When students have achievement goals that are mastery oriented, students focus on learning the task, developing competency, and gaining insight and understanding, whereas a performance goal orientation is associated with self-focus and how one's ability and how one performs is relative to others (Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001). Research has demonstrated that mastery goals are related to perceptions of belonging and belonging has predicted students' mastery goal adoption (Walker & Green, 2009).

African-centered schools may foster a mastery orientation for African American students because its features are similar to what is found in mastery oriented school environments. Through a focus on principles such as cooperative economics, unity, and self-determination, it may be that an African-centered school creates both a racial climate and a school environment

that supports this motivation orientation. For example, African and African American values are central to the pedagogy and family-like atmosphere in an African-centered school via the Nguzo Saba principles. These African American values may be more similar to a mastery rather than performance goal orientation (Gutman, 2006) . In her review of relevant literature, Gutman (2006) laid out several African American cultural values that align with a mastery orientation, including instilling the value of hard work, family values related to education including learning, knowledge, and skill development, and emphasizing seeking assistance from and providing assistance to others. The African American values of kin support, communalism, collaborative work, and effort which Gutman (2006) ascribed to being mastery oriented, would be germane to an African-centered schools' focus on a family-like atmosphere and the Nguzo Saba cultural values (Karenga, 1980; Lomotey (1992) such as collective work and responsibility (e.g. Ujima), and unity (e.g. Umoja). One might expect a positive racial climate for African Americans at an African-centered school, which focuses on developing values similar to a mastery oriented school environment.

There is empirical evidence that features associated with a mastery oriented school environment can positively affect school performance, particularly for African American students (Lowe, 2006). With opportunities for peer interaction and cooperation, an emphasis on choice and collaborative work, learning from mistakes, and perseverance, these characteristics of a mastery school environment have been shown to be related to African American students' experiencing lower stereotype threat (i.e., lower risk of confirming a negative stereotype about being African American) within the school setting. On the other hand, Lowe (2006) found that a performance goal oriented school environment is a significant predictor of self-handicapping academic strategies (i.e., not studying) for African-American students (Lowe, 2006).

Research is limited in examining the role of the African-centered school and the achievement goals of its African American students. However, some research examining African American parent goal orientations could be an indication of some of the cultural influences on achievement goals one might expect in an African-centered school, given the family-like atmosphere and relationships encouraged between teachers and students. In a study of 50 African American adolescents and their parents as part of a larger longitudinal study, parents espoused more mastery goals for their adolescents than performance goals (Gutman, 2006). In this research, parents focused on the importance of learning and education, and on mastering necessary skills and their significance for the students' future (i.e. "I want them to be able to go through school and when they get out they have skills enough to be able to take care of themselves" and "Motivating himself to the point that he has confidence in what he can do and accomplish") (Gutman, 2006, pg. 59). Parents who endorsed mastery goals had adolescents with higher mathematics GPAs than their peers whose parents did not endorse mastery goals. Moreover, nearly half of the African American parents who mentioned performance goals discussed the use of mastery goals as a means to achieve such goals. For example, one parent explained, "She's an A and B student, but I think she needs to get all A's. She does not have good study habits. If she could apply herself even better she could go farther" (Gutman, 2006, pg. 59). This data suggests that mastery goals may be a part of how African American parents support their children, even if they are used as a means to achieve performance goals. It may be that in an African-centered school, where teachers and school staff take on the role of parent-like relationships with students, a mastery orientation is a part of the school environment.

Few studies have examined achievement goal orientation and gender differences (Gherasim, Butnaru, & Mairean, 2013). In a review of the literature on achievement goal orientation and

gender, Gherasim and colleagues (2013) found that girls were often more mastery goal oriented, boys were more performance goal oriented, and also found that some research reported no gender differences in achievement goal orientation. Most research that has been conducted has been with urban, international, mixed race, Caucasian, and/or low to middle socioeconomic demographic samples. No study to date has examined gender differences in achievement goal orientation in predominately African-American, African-centered schools. The current study is an effort to add to this literature for a particular subgroup of African American students who attend African-centered schools.

If African American students have a racial identity that aligns with the values and beliefs around being African American that are promoted in an African-centered school, this could foster students' sense of belonging. Such belonging could facilitate academic achievement because students have internalized the values, which align with mastery-oriented goals for learning.

### **Summary**

African American students can experience school in a variety of negative ways. The African-centered approach to schooling was created to counter this phenomenon and provide positive connections and culturally relevant school experiences through which African and African American history and culture are central to students' educational experiences. Although research has demonstrated that parents and staff view the African-centered approach positively, evidence of the link between this approach and academic success is scarce within the literature. In particular, student racial identity development is a cornerstone to the tenets of an African-centered education, but research is also sparse in examining how racial identity is related to learning outcomes among African American students. The current study seized on an

opportunity to examine how African American students' identity and cultural beliefs about being African American in a school that emphasized racial group pride was related to motivation and achievement. Positive perceptions of race in a context in which students also have racial pride have been shown to promote student motivation through belonging. Because belonging is important for both motivation and student learning, examining these constructs in an African-centered school could contribute to current efforts to address African American educational inequities. The African-centered school may provide the type of context in which students develop racial pride about being African American by focusing on the positive values and beliefs around African American group membership. Because of this congruence, this context may also nurture students' sense of belonging and facilitate their learning by influencing students' intrinsic motivation via their achievement goals, and desire to learn.

### **The Current Study**

The current study is needed to better understand the role of identity, values, belonging, and achievement goal orientation in student's experiences and academic success in an African-centered school. These individual constructs have been associated with the academic outcomes and generic educational experiences of African American students within the literature, but questions remain as to how students experience these constructs when learning in an environment specifically designed to promote their cultural identification and knowledge. We also do not know enough about how achievement is related to these constructs in an African-centered school. Although much of the literature highlights the added benefit of this environment to the well-being of African American students, specifically examining the role of belonging and achievement goal orientation in student learning outcomes can add to the understanding of how students learn in this type of school context. Moreover, examining the

nature of disciplinary outcomes in this type of environment can add to the development of environments where African American students may thrive.

## **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

### **Part I- Descriptive Data**

1. How is an African-centered approach reflected in an African-centered school?
  - e. Hypothesis: It is hypothesized that the seven components of the Nguzo Saba principles that are foundational to African-centered education will be reflected in the instructional, administrative, physical, and social context of the African-centered school.
2. What is the level of racial identity, cultural values, sense of belonging, and achievement goal orientation for boys and girls in each grade at this school?
  - a. Hypotheses: It is hypothesized that girls will have a higher racial identity than boys and this difference will be larger among older students.
  - b. Hypotheses: In comparison to previous research, cultural values are expected to be stronger in this study and to increase with age.
  - c. Hypotheses: In comparison to previous research, belongingness is expected to be higher for all students. Gender differences are exploratory.
  - d. Hypotheses: In comparison to previous research, students are expected to exhibit higher mastery goal orientation and lower performance goal orientation. Gender differences are exploratory.
3. What percentage of girls and boys in each grade are meeting literacy learning benchmarks? Are there differences?

- a. Hypothesis: It is hypothesized that a majority of girls are meeting literacy learning benchmarks and are more likely to meet benchmark, while less than a majority of boys are meeting literacy learning benchmarks.
- 4. What is the level of disciplinary outcomes (e.g. office disciplinary referrals; suspensions; expulsions) for boys and girls in each grade? Are there differences?  
Hypothesis: It is hypothesized that, in comparison to the literature, there will be lower incidences of disciplinary outcomes by gender and grade.

## **Part II- Analyses of Patterns**

- 5. How are racial identity, cultural values, and belongingness related?
  - a. Hypotheses: It is hypothesized that racial identity and cultural values will positively predict students' sense of belonging.
- 6. How are belongingness and achievement goals (mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidant) related to learning?
  - a. Hypotheses: It is hypothesized that belongingness, mastery and performance-approach achievement goal orientations will positively predict student learning. Performance-avoidant achievement goals will negatively predict student learning.
- 7. Is belongingness related to disciplinary outcomes?
  - a. Hypothesis: It is hypothesized that students' sense of belonging will negatively predict office disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions.



### Part III-Perspectives on an African-Centered School

8. How do adults and students describe and understand racial identity, cultural values, belonging, achievement goals, learning, and behavior in an African-centered school?
  - a. How are racial identity and cultural values reflected in students' experiences?
    - i. Hypotheses: It is expected that students, teachers, and the principal will describe students having identities and values reflecting African American racial identity and cultural values. Girls are expected to demonstrate stronger racial identity than boys.
  - b. What is the role of the school in promoting African American racial identity and cultural values?
    - i. Hypothesis: It is expected that students, teachers, and the principal will view the school as intentionally promoting African American racial identity and cultural values through teacher/school practices and teacher-student interactions.
  - c. What is the nature of students' experience of belongingness?
    - i. Hypothesis: It is expected that students, teachers, and the principal will report experiencing a sense of belongingness that reflects the African-value of *familyhood* and that the school's practices that explicitly cultivate community will engender student belongingness with each other as well as with teachers and staff members.
  - d. How is students' sense of belongingness related to motivation, learning, and behavior?

- i. Hypothesis: It is expected that students, teachers, and the principal will view students' sense of belongingness as being positively related to a mastery goal orientation and negatively related to a performance goal orientation.
- ii. Hypothesis: Students, teachers, and the principal will view students' sense of belongingness is positively related to their learning.
- iii. Hypothesis: Students, teachers, and the principal will view students' sense of belongingness as related to their behavior and negatively related to incidences of disciplinary outcomes.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### Participants

The quantitative phase of the study included 120 third through eighth grade students (70 female, 50 male) and 120 parents (see Tables 9 and 10 for breakdown of students by grade, class, and gender). After parents completed the consent forms and demographic questionnaires as part of the recruitment process, only 110 students completed questionnaires due to attrition. The first part of the qualitative phase of the study included observations of four middle school eighth grade classrooms with one middle school teacher in each class. After students completed the questionnaires, four middle school teachers, the principal, and ten eighth grade middle school students were interviewed to complete the qualitative phase.

Prior to the study, the researcher volunteered in the school for a year and was a familiar presence in the school. During the previous year, the researcher helped in the middle school language arts class by helping students complete assignments, grading papers, and passing out materials during class time. The recruitment process included meeting with the staff and on-site recruitment of parents. The researcher attended a staff meeting and was introduced as a researcher to make the staff aware of the researcher's role in the school and to discuss the research study and its purposes. The eighth grade teachers were approached individually and invited to participate in individual interviews and the participant observation phases of the study. The researcher also recruited parents by attending monthly parent meetings and parent-teacher conferences.

Classroom incentives were provided for the completion of consent forms as well as individual incentives for participating in the study. Three classrooms were awarded a pizza party

for returning the highest number of completed consent forms and demographic questionnaires, whether or not parents consented. The researcher provided bar graphs to each classroom to update classes on how many consent forms had been returned. In appreciation of their participation, parents received one \$5 dollar store gift card for returning the informed consent document and one \$5 dollar store gift card for completing the demographic questionnaire. Each student received one \$5 gift card for completing questionnaires. The principal and the four middle school teachers were each compensated with a \$10 coffee shop gift card for their participation in the interviews. The ten student interviewees from the eighth grade received one \$5 dollar store gift card for completing the interviews.

During recruitment, the researcher was available to talk about the study at an information table that was set up during drop-off and pick-up in the main hallway of the school near the entrance. Flyers about the study were distributed as well as complementary snacks at the table. At this time, parents were able to complete and return consent forms in-person or take them home for review and return to their child's teacher or in a box in the front office. Flyers and blank consent forms were posted on outside classrooms and on walls in main corridors of the school. The researcher also sent home with students, a flyer about the study, a brief description of the study, the informed consent document, and a short demographic questionnaire, along with a sealable envelope for return to the classroom teacher or the front office. The researcher was available to answer questions or concerns in person, by phone, and by email. Once forms were received, the researcher sent home a letter confirming receipt and notifying the parents when appreciation gift cards would be distributed. The researcher set up a table in the main hallway to distribute appreciation gift cards to parents and mailed cards to a small number of parents who were unable to pick them up.

The researcher sent home another flyer for the study one week after the consent forms had been sent home to remind parents of the incentives. The researcher continued to accept consent forms throughout the quantitative data collection phase. Parent demographic descriptive data is shown in Table 1 through 3. Each student in the study had a parent/guardian to complete a demographic questionnaire. Some parents did not complete each question on the questionnaire, which yielded a variable number of responses to questions about the mother's or father's race, the number of siblings who attended the school, the number of years the student had attended the school, and parent knowledge about Nguzo Saba principles.

Table 1

*Student Demographic Information (N = 110)*

Descriptive Data		N	%
Gender	Male	44	40%
	Female	66	60%
Race-Student	African American	103	94%
	Other	7	6%
Race-Mother	African American	104	96%
	Other	4	4%
Race-Father	African American	69	95%
	Other	4	5%

Table 2

*Student Grade and Classroom (N = 110)*

Grade/Classroom				Grade/Classroom			
3 <sup>rd</sup> (A)	Male	6	55%	5 <sup>th</sup> (B)	Male	4	33%
	Female	5	45%		Female	8	67%
	Total Sample	11	10%		Total Sample	12	10.0%
3 <sup>rd</sup> (B)	Male	2	29%	6 <sup>th</sup> (A)	Male	5	45%
	Female	5	71%		Female	6	55%
	Total Sample	7	6%		Total Sample	11	9.2%
4 <sup>th</sup> (A)	Male	7	58%	6 <sup>th</sup> (B)	Male	1	13%
	Female	5	42%		Female	7	87%
	Total Sample	12	11%		Total Sample	8	7%
4 <sup>th</sup> (B)	Male	7	54%	7 <sup>th</sup>	Male	3	20%
	Female	6	46%		Female	12	80%
	Total Sample	13	10.8%		Total Sample	15	14%
5 <sup>th</sup> (A)	Male	2	17%	8 <sup>th</sup>	Male	4	40%
	Female	10	83%		Female	6	60%
	Total Sample	12	11%		Total Sample	10	8.3%

Table 3

*Age Demographic Questionnaire Responses and Descriptive Data (N = 110)*

Age			
7	Male	0	0%
	Female	1	100%
	Total Sample	1	.8%
8	Male	7	44%
	Female	9	56%
	Total Sample	16	15%
9	Male	13	62%
	Female	8	38%
	Total Sample	21	19%
10	Male	3	18%
	Female	14	82%
	Total Sample	17	15%
11	Male	8	33%
	Female	16	67%
	Total Sample	24	22%
12	Male	7	54%
	Female	6	46%
	Total Sample	13	12%
13	Male	4	25%
	Female	12	75%
	Total Sample	16	15%
14	Male	2	100%
	Female	0	0%
	Total Sample	2	1.7%

**Setting**

The ABC African-centered School is a K-8 charter school founded in 1997 to provide African-centered education to children in an urban Midwest city. During data collection, the school had 218 students enrolled across Kindergarten through eighth grades. There were two

classrooms per grade with the exception of grades seven and eight where there was only one classroom in each grade. There were 21 teachers in the school, which included a special education resource room teacher and five ancillary teachers (e.g. art, computers, etc.). There were three paraprofessionals who supported student learning and a family service worker who supported student and family mental health needs as well as the administrative needs of the school. Other administrators included an academic facilitator who assisted with curriculum and instructional needs of the school and the principal. The school has an enrollment of 99% African-American students and other students identify as multi-racial with one parent being African-American. According to the principal, about 1/3 of students are neighborhood residents and attend the school primarily because it is in close proximity to their homes (Principal ABC School, personal communication, December 3, 2015). All students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Student enrollment by gender, classroom and age are reported in Tables 10 and 11. According to the school's materials, the school provides "a curriculum aligned with the state's Core Curriculum, infused with African and African-American History and culture through research," and it believes that "schools should educate and prepare children for social as well as academic achievements" and that "dedication, practice, and commitment will ensure educational and personal development." The mission of the school includes involving "the students, families, teachers, and community in designing a holistic approach to learning that provides the students with a firm academic, applied scientific, and moral educational experience." Marketing videos about the school explain that "the Nguzo Saba (Karenga, 2008) principles are practiced and lived by, and children take them home to their families; these principles are assumed to spread throughout the community. "



Within the school, students refer to their teachers and other staff members using the terms “Mama” and “Baba”, along with the staff members’ first names. These terms translate into the English words mother and father, respectively, and they further highlight the school’s efforts to create a family-type atmosphere for students. Within the school, pictures of African and African American children are on display, as well as African art in the form of statues and masks. Kinte and mud cloth adorn walls and tables. Inspirational quotations from notable African American leaders and celebrities are visible throughout the school on walls. There is also a mural of scientific and technological inventions created by African Americans on the main hallway wall. Within the classrooms there is a continuation of these kinds of images, pictures, and artifacts. Each day at the school, the teachers, students, and staff gather for Unity Circle. This is a time for affirmations of the Nguzo Saba principles, and celebrations of birthdays, classrooms, and individual achievements and celebrations.

## **Procedures**

### **Sampling**

A power analysis was conducted to determine the optimal sample size to detect significant effects for each of the variables of interest within the quantitative research questions. A minimum sample of 105 was required for the quantitative phase of the proposed study, in order to detect a medium effect with a power of .80. Because of the small size of the school and to allow for attrition and missing data, all third through eighth grade students at ABC African-centered School were invited to participate by completing questionnaires in the quantitative portion of the study. A total of 120 student demographic forms were completed by parents and returned with signed informed consent documents giving students permission to participate. From the 120 returned informed consent forms, there was some attrition in the sample. There

were 10 students with only demographic data available. Of these students, seven did not complete questionnaires because they left the school to attend a different school. Two students did not complete questionnaires due to frequent absences. One student did not assent to participate in the study. This left a final sample of 110 students who completed questionnaires.

In addition, the principal, 10 eighth grade students (4 female, 6 male) and four eighth grade teachers participated in individual interviews during the qualitative phase of the study. Convenience sampling was used for the interviews due to a low response rate from the returned informed consents in the eighth grade class. The eighth grade teachers taught Language Arts, Math, Science, or Social Studies and were selected as a representative sample of teachers within the school. Eighth grade students were selected for the interviews because adolescence is a time when identity is negotiated and solidified as cognitive skills develop (Byrd, 2012) and this developmental stage could yield meaningful reflections on the experiences, meanings, and thoughts of a student attending the selected African-centered school. It was important that this sample include male and female students based on studies showing that school experiences, including belonging, can differ by gender (Booker, 2006). The principal is an African American woman who had served in this role for six years.

## **Design**

This investigation used a convergent mixed-method approach to obtain complementary data (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The quantitative study used a correlational design to explore the associations between student racial identity and cultural values with student belonging, as well as the relations between belongingness and motivation and learning. These findings were compared to the qualitative data (researcher's participant observations and student, teacher, and administrator interviews) to explore any overlapping or discrepant patterns to provide a

multidimensional picture of African American students in an African-centered environment (Green, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). In this way, this mixed-method study provided a deeper understanding of the experience of African-centered schools and a way to corroborate findings across these quantitative and qualitative data (Green et al., 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Of the mixed methods research variants described by Creswell and Clark (2011), a parallel-databases variant was used, in which two parallel strands of data were collected and merged during interpretation. Through questionnaires, observations, and interviews, this study examined students' experience and understanding of racial identity, cultural values, belonging, achievement motivation goals, learning, and behavior within an African-centered school, school and how these varied by grade and gender. The study also explored how student African American identity and cultural values were related to belongingness, and how belongingness related to learning and disciplinary outcomes.

## **Quantitative Methods**

**Measures.** Parents completed demographic and Nguzo Saba surveys. Students completed 4 questionnaires that assessed, racial/ethnic identity, cultural values, belongingness, and achievement goal orientation (e.g. motivation). These questionnaires (see Appendix B) were designed to provide a measure of how students view their racial group membership, to assess whether students adopted the values associated with an African-centered school context, to measure their sense of school belonging, and to determine their achievement goal orientation. In addition, reading benchmark testing scores and school disciplinary data that were collected by the school were obtained.

**Demographic Questionnaire.** A questionnaire was developed to gather data about student demographics including student age, gender, parents' race, number of siblings attending the school, years of attendance at the school, grade, and potential special education disability and services.

**Nguzo Saba Survey.** Additionally, the researcher developed a scale that allowed parents to self-report their level of knowledge about each Nguzo Saba principle. No previous scale assessing knowledge of the principles existed before the current study. The scale includes one question for each of the seven Nguzo Saba principles: Umoja (Unity); Kujichagulia (Self-Determination); Ujima (Collective Work & Responsibility); Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics); Nia (Purpose); Kuumba (Creativity); Imani (Faith) (See Appendix B). For each principle, parents rated their knowledge of the principle using a 4-point Likert scale: 1= *I don't know anything about this principle* to 4 = *I know a lot about this principle*). Obtaining a summed total across all items derived a total Nguzo Saba knowledge score. Scores on the measure had a range of .71. Mean scores on the measure were 23.71 (SD = 7.51). Cronbach alpha for the measure was .70.

**Racial Identity.** Students' racial identity was measured using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity- Teen (MIBI-T; Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyễn, 2008). The MIBI-T is an adaptation of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Chelton, Smith, 1997). The MIBI-T consists of seven subscales of three items each. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with items, using a 5-point Likert scale:: 1= *Strongly Disagree*; 2= *Disagree*; 3= *Neutral*; 4= *Agree*; 5= *Strongly Agree* ). Respondents' scores for each subscale were averaged across the three items to generate a composite score for each subscale. The seven subscales included Centrality, Private Regard,

Public Regard, and four ideology subscales: Nationalist, Minority, Assimilationist, and Humanist.

*Centrality* ( $\alpha = .55$ ) assesses the extent to which race is an important part of an individual's identity. A higher score indicates that the individual feels that race is a more central identity. The *Private Regard* subscale ( $\alpha = .76$ ) measures the extent to which an individual feels positive toward other African Americans and towards being African American. The *Public Regard* ( $\alpha = .66$ ) subscale taps into the extent to which the individual feels other groups feel positively or negatively toward African Americans. Higher scores on either of the Regard subscales indicate more positive feelings toward African Americans. The *Ideology* subscales assess how individuals think African Americans should act, and higher scores represent greater endorsement of the ideology. The *Nationalist* ( $\alpha = .70$ ) ideology emphasizes the uniqueness of being African American; it is characterized by the support of African American organizations and the preference for African American social environments. The *Minority* ( $\alpha = .57$ ) ideology emphasizes the similarities between African Americans' experiences and those of other oppressed minority groups. *Assimilationist* ( $\alpha = .70$ ) ideology emphasizes the similarities between African American and mainstream American society. *Humanist* ( $\alpha = .50$ ) deals with the similarities among all people, regardless of race.

For the current study, only the Private Regard and Centrality subscales were used. The *Private Regard* subscale, an examination of racial pride, was used because this is the most widely studied aspect of racial identity, with the most consistent effects on mental health and academic outcomes in African American students (Byrd, 2012). The *Centrality* subscale was used as well, because of the African-centered school's emphasis on being African American and celebrating African and African-American culture. Respondents' scores for each subscale were

averaged across the three items to generate a composite score for each subscale. Scores can range between 1 and 3. Higher average scores indicate stronger endorsement of the subscale.

The original MIBI-T was developed using a sample of seventh through eleventh graders. However, a different revised version of the original MIBI was used with a sample of third and fifth graders (Rowley, Burchinal, Roberts, & Zeisel, 2008). In this study, each scale demonstrated moderate reliability: Centrality scale = .80; Private Regard scale = .74; and Public Regard = .53. Concurrent validity ranged from .14 to .33, established by correlating subscale scores with maternal MIBI ratings, proportion of friends who are African American, and measures of ethnic socialization. Given the adequate psychometric properties of the MIBI on younger children and the developmental modifications exhibited in the MIBI-T for younger adolescents, the MIBI-T is the most appropriate version to use with the third through eighth grade sample in the current study.

**Cultural Values.** The Children's Africentric Value Scale (CAVS; Belgrave et al, 1997), consists of nine items corresponding to the seven principles of Nguzo Saba (Karenga, 1977) and has been validated to measure constructs representing Africentric cultural values (Belgrave et al., 1997). Respondents completed items using a 3-point Likert-type scale (1 = agree, 2 = not sure, and 3 = disagree), and negative items were reverse scored. The measure includes three subscales representing Africentric Cultural values with a total of nine items. The *Collective Work and Responsibility* sub-scale includes five items and refers to working together to improve family and community, representing the idea that individuals are responsible for each other. Items include "Decisions should be based on what will benefit everyone and not just a few people" and "When there is a problem in a community, everyone who lives there should participate in some way to help correct the problem." The *Cooperative Economics* sub-scale

assesses the belief that the African American community should share and maintain resources within the community, using items such as, “When possible, Black people should start their own business and employ their own people to work in them” and includes two items. The third sub-scale is *Self-Determination*, which assesses the belief that African Americans should decide what is best for themselves, their families, and their communities with two items (e.g., African Americans should be able to make decisions for their own people). Scores are averaged to obtain a composite score for each sub-scale, which can range from 1 to 3 for the Cooperative Economics and Self-Determination subscales or 1 to 5 for the Collective Works & Responsibility subscale. Low scores represent strong endorsement of Afrocentric values. The CAVS has been used with African American samples of elementary students in third grade (Shinn, 1991) and in fourth and fifth grade (Belgrave et al., 1997), and in samples of adolescents and young adults (Brook & Pahl, 2005). Cronbach’s alphas have ranged from .60 to .76 (Belgrave et al., 1997; Thomas et al., 2003) and have been estimated at .78 (Shin, 2011). Cronbach’s alpha for the current study included .72 (Collective Works & Responsibility); .68 (Cooperative Economics); .70 (Self-Determination). The scale has also demonstrated a high interrater reliability of .89 regarding the cultural values tapped by the scale’s items (Belgrave et al., 1997).

***Belongingness.*** The Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) (Goodenow, 1993) was used to assess students’ sense of belonging to the school and the extent to which students felt personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school environment (Goodenow, 1993). The 18-item scale measured three specific aspects of school membership: belonging (e.g. “I am included in a lot of activities at this school”), rejection (e.g., “It is hard for people like me to be accepted here”), and acceptance (e.g., “I can really be myself at this school”) (Hagborg, 1994). The total PSSM score is the average item response (using a 5-

point response scale: 1 = *not at all* true to 5 = *completely* true) across all items. The measure has high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .81 with urban students. Cronbach's alphas between .78 and .95 have been reported across African American and other multiethnic elementary and secondary school student samples (You, Ritchey, Furlong, Schochet, & Bowman, 2011). In this sample, a Cronbach's alpha of .82 was obtained. Hagborg (1994) reported high test-retest reliability (.78) across 4 weeks. Construct validity has been confirmed by contrasting group comparisons between suburban and urban students, with the belongingness factor accounting for a majority of the shared variance and nine items with loadings above .40 (Hagborg, 1994).

***Achievement Goals.*** Patterns of Adaptive Learning Skills (PALS; Midgley et al., 2000) is a self-report inventory "examining the relation between the learning environment and students' motivation, affect, and behavior" (Midgley et al., 2000, p. 2). Student scales assess personal achievement goal orientations; perceptions of teacher's goals; perceptions of the goal structures in the classroom; achievement-related beliefs, attitudes, and strategies; and perceptions of parents and home life. The different PALS scales can be used together or individually. For the current study, the Personal Achievement Goal Orientations Scales were used to examine the extent to which students demonstrated a mastery goal orientation, performance-approach goal orientation, or a performance-avoid goal orientation. Items are on a 5-point Likert-type scale and are anchored at 1 = "Not at all true," 3 = "Somewhat true," and 5 = "Very true." The mastery goals orientation scale ( $\alpha = .86$ ) is designed to assess a students' desire to develop his or her competence in an achievement situation. The performance-approach goals scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ) focuses on demonstrating ability and outperforming others. The performance-avoidance goals



scale ( $\alpha = .78$ ) assesses the extent to which students focus on avoiding appearing incompetent. High scores on each scale indicate the presence of higher levels of the construct measured.

The measure was created using samples of elementary and middle school students in grades 5<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grades. These samples included participants from various racial and ethnic groups including 43%-80% Caucasian, 15%-45% African American, 8% Hispanic, 2% Asian American, and 1% American Indian (Midgley et al., 1998). Cronbach alphas ranging from .79 to .81 for the task- approach (e.g. mastery), performance-approach, and performance-avoid goal orientation scales have been reported in a sample of 378 fourth grade students (Ross, Shannon, Salisbury-Glennon, & Guarino, 2002). The current sample yielded .80 (mastery); .77 (performance-approach); and .73 (performance-avoid) Cronbach alphas. The racial and ethnic demographics of this sample included 45% Hispanic, 25% African American, 10.5% Caucasian, 5% Multi-Ethnic, 4.2% Native American, 1.5% Asian, and 7.7% Other. Among these students 64.5% received free or reduced lunch.

***Learning.*** Student learning was measured using existing school assessments. The Measures of Academic Progress<sup>®</sup> (MAP), developed by Northwest Evaluations Association<sup>™</sup> (NWEA), is an interim assessment of reading given to students three times a year. The school in this study used this tool for their progress monitoring program for third through eighth grade students. The Measures of Academic Progress<sup>®</sup> is a norm-referenced, computer adaptive skills assessment that is marketed as a tool for the diagnosis of instructional needs across reporting periods. The reading assessment was used for the proposed study because reading is a foundational skill that can affect learning in all subject areas (McIntosh, Sadler, & Brown, 2012). In third grade, students transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn,” and thus reading skills are an important marker for how students will generally perform academically (Foorman,

Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider, & Mehta, 1998; Heath, 1980; National Institute for Literacy, 2009). The student's skills are determined by using a RIT (i.e. Rausch Unit) score determined based on national normative data and represents the level of test item complexity at which a student is capable of answering correctly about 50% of the time. Based upon normative data student scores are assigned a descriptor of Low, Low Average, Average, High Average, or High. The researcher appointed a point value to each descriptor (e.g. Low = 1 and High =5). The school identified students who are at-risk based on scores in the Low or Low Average range.

***Disciplinary Outcomes.*** Disciplinary outcomes were assessed using school data from disciplinary referral forms that are managed by the school's counselor. This data is entered into the school's information system database used for discipline management and reporting. School-wide data on the incidence of office disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions for students were used. Student enrollment numbers were obtained from the principal. The number of students referred, number of disciplinary office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions were obtained from these forms. The school provided data for students whose parents provided consent.

## **Qualitative Methods**

**Role of the researcher.** Prior to the study, the researcher volunteered in the school once a week during the previous school year before the study began to become familiar with the setting, staff, and students and to become a "trusted person" (Glesne, 2011). The researcher helped in the middle school language arts class by helping students complete assignments, grading papers, and passing out materials during class time. As an African-American native and current resident of the city in which the school is located, this afforded some familiarity with the context in which the families, students, and school resided. This helped to strengthen the

authenticity and trustworthiness of the data collection and interpretation. The researcher's background and relationship with the school were helpful in creating relationships and feelings of trust, but it also presented a challenge in maintaining a research role. The researcher felt obligated to relate to parents, staff, and students as a member of the school community rather than as a researcher. This looked like having conversations absent of the research with these stakeholders in order to build a trusting relationship. While attending events and conducting observations, the researcher often reflected on whether there was enough care and concern shown for the overall school community while also conducting the research so that the researcher would not be seen as only taking from the school, but rather contributing in some way. The researcher's identity as a resident in the city of the school and as an African-American spurred interest in how the school supported the children of the city. This work was important because it indirectly affected the researcher's city and the culture with which the researcher identifies.

**Observations.** Once the study began, the researcher also had an "Observer as Participant" role (Glesne, 2011). In this role, the researcher was primarily an observer, but had opportunities for interaction with students and staff that helped to minimize feelings of detachment from the researcher (Glesne, 2011). The researcher spent approximately one month in the school as a participant-observer before the collection of any student or teacher data. During this time the researcher spent one full day a week in the school and was a volunteer within the eighth grade language arts and social studies classrooms for a total of three days to collect observational data that would be used to triangulate the data. This included assisting students in class with assignments. The language arts class was selected because student learning was measured by the reading seasonal benchmark school data. Observations in the eighth grade social studies class were conducted because this class provided an opportunity to observe

potential integration or infusion of an African-centered approach not only in the instructional context through an integration of African and African-American history and culture, but also the social context through discussions and interactions as well as any specific visual references that reflected the African-centered approach in the physical environment. Other participant-observations of third through eighth grade students and teachers occurred in the hallways, office, and lunchroom, as well as during the morning, school-wide “Unity Circle”, school-wide events and gatherings, parent meetings, as well as a school community gathering for Thanksgiving (e.g. Umojaa Karamu). Some observations continued and occurred concurrently with the collection of the quantitative data due to school scheduling issues. The researcher recorded field notes during these observations.

**Field notes.** The field notes included condensed accounts of observations that included words, phrases, and unconnected sentences, collected during or directly after the observations. Because it can be difficult to capture all that is observed, this method allowed the researcher to capture important occurrences quickly in a vivid and detailed manner (Spradley, 1980). The condensed accounts method can vividly enhance observations through the use of the verbatim principle (Spradley, 1980), and it can be used to recall events and conversations from the observations. For the verbatim principle, the researcher makes a verbatim record of what participants actually say, and avoids translation into the researcher’s language. Such a method allows the researcher to discover the inner meaning of a culture, and it can provide a clearer and more complete picture of the culture being studied.

**Interviews.** The study included semi-structured interviews with 4 eighth grade teachers and 10 eighth grade students that were conducted after the questionnaires were completed. The researcher met with interviewees individually in a designated room at the school to provide a

convenient location for participants and a space for participants to talk freely. Interviews were scheduled at the teachers' convenience, for themselves and for the students, taking into consideration required school activities in which the students were required to participate. The interviews ranged between ½ hour to 1 hour and were audio recorded.

The researcher explained the roles of the researcher and the participant, the purpose of the interview, and answered any questions about the interview before getting started. Participants were notified that the interviews were going to be recorded; the risks and benefits of participating were reviewed; and the participant was notified that the interview could cease at any point at which the participant felt a need to stop the interview. Interview recordings were kept in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's home. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim for each interview.

The interviews provided an opportunity for respondents to make meaning and to express their thoughts and feelings about their experiences in being a part of an African-centered school. The interviews with multiple informants (students, teachers, administrator) also afforded a way to understand how the school developed student competencies. This "broad-scale approach is designed to help understanding phenomena in its fullest possible complexity" (Glesne, 2011, pg. 134).

***Interview Protocol.*** Originally used in focus group research, Krueger and Casey's (2009) questioning route informed the structure of the interview questions for the research study. This format was used to foster a natural conversational flow to the interview, in which general questions were used at the beginning of the interview, and then the questions narrowed to more specific and important questions. Dolbeare and Schuman's (Schuman, 1982) model of the three interview series was used within the questioning route structure as key questions (Krueger and

Casey, 2009). The opening question is an easy question, designed to help the interviewee begin talking. The introductory question describes the topic and prompts thinking about their connection to the topic. The transition question moves the conversation into the key questions of the study. Using Dolbeare and Schuman's model (Schuman, 1982), the first key question was used to establish the context of the participant's experience; the second provided details associated with this experience; and the third, allowed participants to reflect on the meaning of their experience. The goal of the three question series is to provide an opportunity to explore the context and meaningfulness of the participants' experience (Seidman, 2013). Last, ending questions are used to bring closure to the discussion and allow reflection on previous comments (Kreuger and Casey, 2009). The "all things considered question" was used to determine the final position of the participant and allowed him or her to reflect on previous comments. As suggested by Kreuger and Casey (2009), the techniques of pause and probe were used during the interview. The 5-second pause was used after a participant provided a comment and its purpose was to prompt additional points of view. The probe was used to draw out additional information and included statements such as "Would you explain further?" or "Can you give me an example?"

## CHAPTER IV

### QUANTITATIVE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following chapter presents the quantitative results of this study. Descriptive data for both independent and dependent variables are reported and are followed by a discussion about the handling of missing data, assumptions associated with inferential statistics, and the results of the analyses.

#### **Descriptive Data**

Participants were assigned an ID code and identifying information was removed from their data. These data were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. SPSS Version 23 was used for both descriptive and inferential statistics in this research study. Each questionnaire was checked for missing item level data. There were no missing item level data on any of the 110 student-completed questionnaires.

Demographic data for the study are presented in Tables 1 through 3. The sample size for the all of the measures for the quantitative analysis was 110. Reviewing completed surveys while students were present prevented missing items from each scale on the survey. When applicable, students were asked to complete any items they overlooked on the survey. As part of the directions, students were told that they had the choice of whether to answer a question or not. No students indicated that they wanted to leave an item blank. Descriptive statistics for measured variables are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE	Minimum	Maximum
Belongingness	110	3.51	.52	-.36	.23	-.32	.46	2.11	4.78
Performance-Avoid Goal Orientation	110	3.67	1.74	-.40	.23	-.67	.46	1.00	5.00
Performance-Approach Goal Orientation	110	3.75	1.08	-.69	.23	-.70	.46	1.00	5.00
Mastery Goal Orientation	110	4.58	.68	-2.09	.23	-.44	.46	1.60	5.00
Racial Identity-Centrality	110	4.11	.90	-.94	.23	.13	.46	1.67	5.00
Racial Identity-Private Regard	110	4.62	.84	-2.67	.23	8.78	.46	1.00	5.00
Cultural Values-Collective Works & Responsibility	110	1.35	.45	2.06	.23	5.76	.46	1.00	3.50
Cultural Values-Cooperative Economics	110	1.63	.63	.71	.23	-.36	.46	1.00	3.00
Cultural Values-Self-Determination	110	1.27	.49	1.78	.23	2.64	.46	1.00	3.00

Possible scores for students' sense of belongingness ranged between 1 to 5. An average score above 4.0 indicated students agreed or strongly agreed with experiencing a sense of belonging in school, a score of 3 indicated a neutral attitude toward feeling belongingness in school, and an average score below 3.0 indicated that students disagreed or strongly disagreed



with this idea. The mean score on the Belongingness scale ( $M = 3.51$ ;  $SD = .52$ ) was higher than the 3.0 scale midpoint, ranging from 2.11 to 4.78. Most students, 63%, reported neutral feelings

The achievement goal orientation subscales included possible scores that ranged from 1 to 5 for the Mastery and Performance-Approach subscales and actual scores from respondents ranged from 1.00 to 5.00 on both the Performance-Avoid and Performance-Approach subscales and 1.60 to 5.00 on the Mastery subscale. Students' average scores below 3.00 indicated that descriptors were not true about their achievement goal orientation and scores above 3.00 indicated that items were at least somewhat true for students. On average, students reported having a higher Mastery Goal Orientation ( $M = 4.58$ ;  $SD = .68$ ) in comparison to Performance-Approach ( $M = 3.75$ ;  $SD = 1.08$ ) and Performance-Avoid ( $M = 3.67$ ;  $SD = 1.74$ ) Goal Orientations. A paired-samples t-test demonstrated a statistically significant difference between Mastery Goal Orientation and Performance-Approach Orientation,  $t(109) = 7.40$ ,  $p < .05$  (two-tailed) as well as Mastery Goal Orientation and Performance-Avoid Orientation,  $t(109) = 7.72$ ,  $p < .05$  (two-tailed). The mean difference in student's Mastery Goal Orientation and Performance-Approach Orientation was .83 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .60 to 1.05. The eta squared statistic .33 indicated a small effect size. The eta squared statistic .33 indicated a large effect size when compared with guidelines used for Cohen's  $d$  effect sizes (Pallant, 2007). When converted to Cohen's  $d$ , the effect size was 1.3, a large effect size. The mean difference in student's Mastery Goal Orientation and Performance-Avoid Orientation was .91 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .67 to 1.14. The eta squared statistic (.35) indicated a large effect size when compared with guidelines used for Cohen's  $d$  (Pallant, 2007). When converted to Cohen's  $d$ , the effect size was 1.5. Even though the mean scores on all subscales was higher than the 3.0 scale midpoint, on average, students rated themselves higher

on developing ability (e.g. mastery goal orientation) than goals to demonstrate ability (e.g. performance approach orientation) or avoid demonstration of lack of ability (e.g. performance avoid orientation). On the Mastery Goal Orientation subscale, most students (86.7%) had average scores that were greater than the scale midpoint, which reflected a mastery goal orientation that was described as “stronger than somewhat true” on the Likert-scale. Scores on this subscale were negatively skewed.

Possible scores on the racial identity measure ranged from 1 to 5. Actual scores reported by students ranged from 1.67 to 5.00 on the Centrality subscale with a mean of 4.11 ( $SD = .90$ ) indicating that they agreed or strongly agreed with these items. Scores on the Private Regard subscale ranged from 1.00 to 5.00 with an average score of 4.62 ( $SD = .84$ ). Average scores below 3 indicated students disagreed or strongly disagreed with an item and average scores above 4 indicated students agreed or strongly agreed with an item. On average, students felt positively toward other African Americans and being African American and they perceived race as an important part of their individual identity.

Responses on the Cultural Values measure indicated that on average, students tended to strongly endorse each cultural value. Low scores for each subscale represent high agreement with the value. Possible scores on the measure ranged from 1 to 3 on the Cooperative Economics and Self-Determination subscales and actual scores ranged from 1.00 to 3.00. The Collective Works and Responsibility subscale had a possible range of 1 to 5 and actual responses ranged from 1.00 to 3.50. Amongst the three subscales, there were statistically significant weaker scores for Cooperative Economics. Paired samples t-test indicated statistically significant weaker scores for Cooperative Economics ( $M = 1.63$ ;  $SD = .63$ ) in comparison to Collective Works & Responsibility ( $M = 1.35$ ;  $SD = .45$ ),  $t(109) = 3.90$ ,  $p < .05$  (two-tailed). The mean difference was

.27 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .13 to .41. The eta squared statistic was .12 indicating a large effect size when compared with guidelines used for Cohen's  $d$  (Pallant, 2007). When converted to Cohen's  $d$  the effect size was .7, indicating a moderate effect size. There were also weaker scores between Cooperative Economics and Self-Determination ( $M = 1.27$ ;  $SD = .49$ ),  $t(109) = 4.98$ ,  $p < .05$  (two-tailed). The mean difference was .35 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .21 to .49. The eta squared statistic was .19 indicating a large effect size when compared with guidelines used for Cohen's  $d$  (Pallant, 2007). When converted to Cohen's  $d$  the effect size was 1.0, indicating a large effect size. Each subscale, on average, had scores below 2.00 indicating that most students agreed with and had appreciation for the represented cultural values. Scores on each subscale were skewed negatively.

Parents completed a demographic questionnaire for the study. A scale was included in this questionnaire that measured parents' knowledge of the Nguzo Saba principles. Scores on the scale were summed and then averaged for a final score. While each parent completed demographic questionnaires for all participants, some parents did not complete the Nguzo Saba scale, limiting the total number of completed Nguzo Saba scales to 103. Possible scores and actual scores on the scale ranged from 1 to 4. An average score of 3 or higher reflected some knowledge about the principles. The mean score on the Nguzo Saba scale ( $M = 3.30$ ;  $SD = .89$ ) indicated that on average, parents reported having some knowledge about each principle.

## **Research Question Two**

**What is the level of racial identity, cultural values, sense of belonging, and achievement goal orientation for boys and girls in each grade at this school?** Question two examined the level of racial identity, cultural values, sense of belonging, and achievement goal orientation in the school for boys and girls in each grade. The hypotheses that girls would have

higher racial identity and that the difference would be larger among older students, that in comparison to previous research, cultural values would be stronger in this study and increase with age, that in comparison to previous research, belongingness would be higher for all students, and, that in comparison to previous research, students would exhibit higher mastery goal orientation and lower performance goal orientation were partially supported.

**Quantitative data analysis.** Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine the level of racial identity, cultural values, belongingness, and motivation (e.g. achievement goal orientation) for students in the school. The data were split into elementary (grades 3-5) and middle school (grades 6-8) groups. The variables were then compared between male and female students at the middle school and elementary level as well as the class and grade level. Inferential statistics to compare the means was not feasible due to a low sample size resulting in insufficient power to detect meaningful differences. The means and standard deviation for males and females in elementary and middle school were examined first. The means and standard deviation for males and females in each individual class and grade were also disaggregated and reviewed. This data is reviewed and examined below.

***Racial Identity.*** Hypothesis 2a: Girls will have higher racial identity and the difference will be larger among older students.

***Racial identity-centrality.*** As shown in Table 5, elementary ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = .82$ ) and middle school ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = .69$ ) girls had higher racial identity-centrality mean scores than elementary ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ) and middle school ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = .87$ ) boys respectively. Table 6 shows that most elementary classrooms, except one, had mean scores where females scored higher than males. Half of the middle school classrooms had females who scored higher than males on this measure. Meaningful differences between boys and girls were not detectable

due to low sample size. These results partially support the hypothesis. Although the findings indicated that both girls and boys view being African American as central to their identity, girls reported stronger racial identity-centrality than boys, especially in the elementary years.

Table 5

*Racial Identity-Centrality Elementary and Middle School Disaggregated Descriptive Data*

			N	Mean (SD)				N	Mean (SD)
Elem					Middle				
	Male	28		3.85 (1.16)		Male	16		4.04 (.87)
	Female	39		4.19 (.82)		Female	27		4.32 (.69)
	Total	67		4.04 (.98)		Total	43		4.22 (.76)

Table 6

*Racial Identity- Centrality All Grades Disaggregated Data*

		N	Mean (SD)			N	Mean (SD)
Elem	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (A)			Middle	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)		
	Male	6	4.06 (.74)		Male	6	3.94 (.65)
	Female	5	4.33 (.62)		Female	5	4.53 (.30)
	Total	11	4.18 (.67)		Total	11	4.21 (.58)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (B)				6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)		
	Male	2	5.00 (0.00)		Male	1	5.00 (0.00)
	Female	5	5.00 (0.00)		Female	7	4.14 (.74)
	Total	7	5.00 (0.00)		Total	8	4.25 (.75)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)				7 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	3.33 (1.25)		Male	5	3.73 (1.19)
	Female	5	3.80 (1.22)		Female	9	4.52 (.60)
	Total	12	3.53 (1.20)		Total	14	4.24 (.90)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)				8 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	3.81 (1.40)		Male	4	4.33 (.77)
	Female	6	4.22 (.66)		Female	6	4.06 (.95)
	Total	13	4.00 (1.10)		Total	10	4.17 (.85)
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)						
	Male	2	4.67 (.47)				
	Female	10	3.67 (.83)				
	Total	12	3.83 (.86)				
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)						
	Male	4	3.50 (1.40)				
	Female	8	4.46 (.53)				
	Total	12	4.14 (.97)				

*Racial identity- private regard.* As displayed in Table 7, elementary ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = .1.20$ ) and middle school girls ( $M = 4.80$ ,  $SD = .37$ ), in comparison to elementary ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = .84$ ) and middle school boys ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = .57$ ), reported higher racial identity-private regard mean scores. Table 8 shows that four out of six elementary classrooms had females who scored higher than males. Half of the middle school classrooms had females who scored higher

than males on this measure. Meaningful differences between boys and girls were not detectable due to low sample size. These results support the hypothesis that girls will have higher racial identity, suggesting that elementary and middle school girls felt more positively than males toward other African Americans and being African American.

Table 7

*Racial Identity-Private Regard Elementary and Middle School Disaggregated Descriptive Data*

			N	Mean (SD)				N	Mean (SD)
Elem					Middle				
	Male	28		4.45 (1.20)		Male	16		4.50 (.57)
	Female	39		4.68 (.84)		Female	27		4.80 (.37)
	Total	67		4.50		Total	43		4.69 (.47)

Table 8

*Racial Identity- Private Regard All Grades Disaggregated Data*

		N	Mean (SD)			N	Mean (SD)
Elem	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (A)			Middle	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)		
	Male	6	4.33 (1.12)		Male	6	4.11 (.66)
	Female	5	4.93 (.15)		Female	5	4.60 (.55)
	Total	11	4.61 (.85)		Total	11	4.33 (.63)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (B)				6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)		
	Male	2	5.00 (.00)		Male	1	5.00 (0.00)
	Female	5	5.00 (.00)		Female	7	4.90 (.25)
	Total	7	5.00 (.00)		Total	8	4.92 (.24)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)				7 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	4.52 (1.74)		Male	5	4.67 (.47)
	Female	5	4.73 (.37)		Female	9	4.93 (.15)
	Total	12	4.26 (1.33)		Total	14	4.83 (.31)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)				8 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	4.24 (1.42)		Male	4	4.75 (.32)
	Female	6	4.28 (1.34)		Female	6	4.68 (.52)
	Total	13	4.26 (1.33)		Total	10	4.70 (.43)
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)						
	Male	2	5.00 (.00)				
	Female	10	4.33 (1.21)				
	Total	12	4.44 (1.12)				
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)						
	Male	4	4.33 (.47)				
	Female	8	5.00 (.00)				
	Total	12	4.78 (.41)				

**Cultural Values.** Hypothesis 2b: In comparison to previous research cultural values are expected to be higher. Cultural values will increase with grade. Gender differences in cultural values will be exploratory

*Cultural values- collective works and responsibility.* Low scores on the cultural values subscales represent strong endorsement of Afrocentric values. In Table 9, Elementary girls (*M*



=1.26, SD = .40) in comparison to Elementary boys ( $M = 1.49$ , SD = .51) had mean scores indicating strong endorsement of cultural values of collective works and responsibility. However, middle school girls ( $M = 1.37$ , SD = .37) in comparison to Middle school boys ( $M = 1.29$  SD = .57) had weaker endorsement of these cultural values. Table 10 shows that all six elementary classrooms had females who reported a stronger endorsement of cultural values than males. Compared to elementary students, gender differences appear less clear in middle school. Meaningful differences between boys and girls were not detectable due to low sample size.

These results did not support the hypothesis for the cultural value of collective works and responsibility. In comparison to the normative sample (Belgrave et al., 1997), for collective works and responsibility, students in the normative sample endorsed this value more strongly ( $M = 1.26$ , SD = .32) than participants in the current study ( $M = 1.35$ , SD = .45). Furthermore, as low scores reflect endorsing the value, these data suggest on average, that elementary girls regard the Afrocentric values of responsibility for one another and working together to improve family and community as more important than their male counterparts. In contrast, the findings with middle school students were mixed, with boys in one 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom and in 7<sup>th</sup> grade endorsing these values at similar levels to girls; in one 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, endorsing them less than girls; and in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, showing stronger endorsement than girls.

Table 9

*Cultural Values Collective Works and Responsibility Elementary and Middle School*

*Disaggregated Descriptive Data*

	N	Mean (SD)		N	Mean (SD)
Elem			Middle		
Male	28	1.49 (.51)	Male	16	1.29 (.20)
Female	39	1.26 (.40)	Female	27	1.37 (.54)
Total	67	1.35 (.46)	Total	43	1.34 (.44)

Table 10

*Cultural Values Collective Works and Responsibility All Grades Disaggregated Data*

		N	Mean (SD)			N	Mean (SD)
Elem	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (A)			Middle	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)		
	Male	6	1.33 (.41)		Male	6	1.35 (.18)
	Female	5	1.18 (.25)		Female	5	1.16 (.36)
	Total	11	1.26 (.34)		Total	11	1.26 (.28)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (B)				6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)		
	Male	2	1.20 (.28)		Male	1	1.40 (0.00)
	Female	5	1.08 (.18)		Female	7	1.41 (.93)
	Total	7	1.11 (.20)		Total	8	1.41 (.86)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)				7 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	1.43 (.33)		Male	5	1.34 (.19)
	Female	5	1.18 (.25)		Female	9	1.36 (.24)
	Total	12	1.33 (.31)		Total	14	1.35 (.22)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)				8 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	1.61 (.79)		Male	4	1.10 (.20)
	Female	6	1.40 (.67)		Female	6	1.50 (.47)
	Total	13	1.52 (.71)		Total	10	1.34 (.42)
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)						
	Male	2	1.25 (.35)				
	Female	10	1.16 (.26)				
	Total	12	1.18 (.26)				
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)						
	Male	4	1.85 (.41)				
	Female	8	1.48 (.50)				
	Total	12	1.60 (.49)				

*Cultural values-cooperative economics.* Low scores represent strong endorsement of Afrocentric values. In Table 12, elementary boys ( $M = 1.55$ ,  $SD = .53$ ) in comparison to elementary girls ( $M = 1.65$ ,  $SD = .60$ ) endorsed cultural values of cooperative economics more strongly than girls. Middle school girls' ( $M = 1.61$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) reported similar endorsement in comparison to middle school boys ( $M = 1.66$ ,  $SD = .68$ ). Table 12 shows that in four out of six

elementary classrooms, boys scored lower than girls, indicating stronger endorsement of this value. Similarly, in half of the middle school classrooms, boys more strongly endorsed this value than girls. Meaningful differences between boys and girls were not detectable due to low sample size.

These findings support the hypothesis that cultural values (Cooperative Economics) would be stronger in comparison to previous research. In comparison to the normative sample (Belgrave et al., 1997) for cooperative economics, students in the current sample endorsed this value more strongly ( $M = 1.63$ ,  $SD = .63$ ) than participants in the normative sample ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SD = .71$ ). Furthermore, most elementary boys and half of middle school classrooms had girls with stronger endorsement of the value that resources should be shared and maintained within the African American community.

Table 11

*Cultural Values Cooperative Economics Elementary and Middle School Disaggregated*

*Descriptive Data*

			N	Mean (SD)				N	Mean (SD)
Elem					Middle				
	Male	28		1.55 (.53)		Male	16		1.66 (.68)
	Female	39		1.65 (.60)		Female	27		1.61 (.70)
	Total	67		1.61 (.57)		Total	43		1.63 (.68)

Table 12

*Cultural Values Cooperative Economics All Grades Disaggregated Data*

		N	Mean (SD)			N	Mean (SD)
Elem	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (A)			Middle	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)		
	Male	6	1.17 (.26)		Male	6	1.92 (.58)
	Female	5	1.40 (.55)		Female	5	2.10 (.82)
	Total	11	1.27 (.41)		Total	11	2.00 (.67)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (B)				6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)		
	Male	2	1.00 (.00)		Male	1	3.00 (.00)
	Female	5	1.30 (.45)		Female	7	1.71 (.76)
	Total	7	1.21 (.39)		Total	8	1.88 (.83)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)				7 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	1.86 (.38)		Male	5	1.60 (.54)
	Female	5	1.50 (.50)		Female	9	1.39 (.65)
	Total	12	1.71 (.45)		Total	14	1.47 (.60)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)				8 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	1.64 (.48)		Male	4	1.00 (.00)
	Female	6	1.58 (.80)		Female	6	1.42 (.49)
	Total	13	1.62 (.62)		Total	10	1.25 (.42)
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)						
	Male	2	1.25 (.35)				
	Female	10	1.60 (.46)				
	Total	12	1.54 (.45)				
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)						
	Male	4	1.88 (.85)				
	Female	8	2.25 (.46)				
	Total	12	2.13 (.61)				

*Cultural values-self-determination.* Low scores represent strong endorsement of Afrocentric values. In Table 13, elementary boys ( $M = 1.25$ ,  $SD = .52$ ) and middle school boys ( $M = 1.16$ ,  $SD = .35$ ) had a slightly stronger endorsement of cultural values of self-determination in comparison to elementary girls ( $M = 1.29$ ,  $SD = .56$ ) and middle school girls ( $M = 1.32$ ,  $SD = .42$ ), respectively. Table 14 indicates that four out of six elementary classrooms had boys who

more strongly endorsed this value than girls. Half of the middle school classrooms had boys who endorsed this value more strongly than girls. Meaningful differences between boys and girls were not detectable due to low sample size.

These data support the hypothesis that the cultural value of self-determination would be stronger relative to previous research. In comparison to the normative sample (Belgrave et al., 1997), for self-determination, students in the current sample endorsed this value more strongly ( $M = 1.27$ ,  $SD = .49$ ) than participants in the normative sample ( $M = 1.39$ ,  $SD = .50$ ). In addition, the results suggest that most elementary males and half of middle school classrooms had males who strongly endorsed the belief that African Americans should decide what is best for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Table 13

*Cultural Values Self-Determination Elementary and Middle School Disaggregated Descriptive Data*

			N	Mean (SD)				N	Mean (SD)
Elem					Middle				
	Male	28		1.25 (.52)		Male	16		1.16 (.35)
	Female	39		1.29 (.56)		Female	27		1.32 (.42)
	Total	67		1.28 (.54)		Total	43		1.26 (.40)

Table 14

*Cultural Values Self-Determination All Grades Disaggregated Data*

		N	Mean (SD)			N	Mean (SD)
Elem	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (A)			Middle	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)		
	Male	6	1.33 (.52)		Male	6	1.35 (.18)
	Female	5	1.20 (.45)		Female	5	1.16 (.36)
	Total	11	1.27 (.47)		Total	11	1.26 (.28)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (B)				6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)		
	Male	2	1.00 (.00)		Male	1	1.40 (0.00)
	Female	5	1.40 (.89)		Female	7	1.41 (.93)
	Total	7	1.29 (.76)		Total	8	1.41 (.86)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)				7 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	1.14 (.38)		Male	5	1.34 (.19)
	Female	5	1.20 (.45)		Female	9	1.36 (.24)
	Total	12	1.17 (.39)		Total	14	1.35 (.22)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)				8 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	1.29 (.76)		Male	4	1.10 (.20)
	Female	6	1.33 (.52)		Female	6	1.50 (.47)
	Total	13	1.31 (.63)		Total	10	1.34 (.42)
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)						
	Male	2	1.00 (.00)				
	Female	10	1.35 (.47)				
	Total	12	1.29 (.45)				
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)						
	Male	4	1.50 (.57)				
	Female	8	1.25 (.71)				
	Total	12	1.33 (.65)				

**Belongingness.** Hypothesis 2c: Belongingness is expected to be higher for all students in comparison to previous research. Gender differences were exploratory.

In Table 15, Elementary males ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = .62$ ) had mean belongingness scores that were comparable to Elementary females ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = .45$ ). Middle school girls ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = .52$ ) in comparison to Middle school boys ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = .51$ ) were higher. Table 16

shows that in four out of six elementary classrooms males reported higher school belonging than females. Half of the middle school classrooms had females who scored higher than males on this measure. Meaningful differences between boys and girls were not detectable due to low sample size. These results indicated that elementary boys reported feeling greater belongingness than girls and half of the middle school classrooms included boys who felt more belongingness than girls.

The hypothesis that students in the current study would have stronger sense of belonging in comparison to previous research was supported. In comparison to research conducted by Goodenow and Grady (1993), students in the current sample endorsed having a stronger sense of belonging ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = .52$ ) than participants in the comparative sample ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = .70$ ).

Table 15

*Belongingness Elementary and Middle School Disaggregated Descriptive Data*

			N	Mean (SD)				N	Mean (SD)
Elem					Middle				
Male	28			3.60 (.62)	Male	16			3.23 (.51)
Female	39			3.58 (.45)	Female	27			3.41 (.52)
Total	67			3.59 (.52)	Total	43			3.38 (.51)

Table 16

*Belongingness All Grades Disaggregated Data*

		N	Mean (SD)			N	Mean (SD)
Elem	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (A)			Middle	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)		
	Male	6	3.45 (.75)		Male	6	3.51 (.37)
	Female	5	3.73 (.16)		Female	5	3.63 (.74)
	Total	11	3.58 (.56)		Total	11	3.57 (.54)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (B)				6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)		
	Male	2	4.06 (.08)		Male	1	3.89 (0.00)
	Female	5	3.88 (.15)		Female	7	3.58 (.56)
	Total	7	3.93 (.15)		Total	8	3.62 (.53)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)				7 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	3.79 (.42)		Male	5	2.90 (.63)
	Female	5	3.60 (.58)		Female	9	3.13 (.42)
	Total	12	3.71 (.48)		Total	14	3.05 (.49)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)				8 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	3.64 (.74)		Male	4	3.46 (.23)
	Female	6	3.41 (.49)		Female	6	3.43 (.30)
	Total	13	3.53 (.62)		Total	10	3.44 (.26)
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)						
	Male	2	3.69 (.12)				
	Female	10	3.52 (.41)				
	Total	12	3.55 (.38)				
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)						
	Male	4	3.13 (.72)				
	Female	8	3.51 (.61)				
	Total	12	3.38 (.64)				

***Achievement Goal Orientation.*** Hypothesis 2d: Students are expected to exhibit higher mastery goal orientation, lower performance goal orientation in comparison to previous research. Gender differences in goal orientations were exploratory.

*Mastery goal orientation.* In Table 17, elementary girls' ( $M = 4.61$ ,  $SD = .57$ ) mastery goal orientation mean scores were higher in comparison to elementary boys' ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD =$



.95), but it was comparable among middle school girls' ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = .55$ ) and boys' ( $M = 4.64$ ,  $SD = .49$ ). Table 18 shows that four out of six elementary classrooms had females who scored higher than males. Three out of four middle school classrooms had males who scored higher than females on this measure. Meaningful differences between boys and girls were not detectable due to low sample size.

Students were expected to exhibit higher mastery goal orientation in comparison to previous research. This hypothesis was supported. In comparison to research conducted by Shannon, Gunnon, and Shores (2012), students in the current sample endorsed a higher desire to develop competence in an achievement situation ( $M = 4.58$ ,  $SD = .68$ ) than African American participants in the research conducted by Shannon and colleagues (2012) ( $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). Gender differences were exploratory and these results suggest that most girls at the elementary level scored higher than boys in their desire to develop competence in an achievement situation while more boys than girls endorsed this desire at the middle school level.

Table 17

*Mastery Goal Orientation Elementary and Middle School Disaggregated Descriptive Data*

			N	Mean (SD)				N	Mean (SD)
Elem					Middle				
	Male	28		4.41 (.95)		Male	16		4.64 (.49)
	Female	39		4.61 (.57)		Female	27		4.68 (.55)
	Total	67		4.52 (.75)		Total	43		4.67 (.53)

Table 18

*Mastery Goal Orientation All Grades Disaggregated Data*

		N	Mean (SD)			N	Mean (SD)
Elem	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (A)			Middle	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)		
	Male	6	4.53 (.63)		Male	6	3.51 (.37)
	Female	5	4.72 (.27)		Female	5	3.63 (.74)
	Total	11	4.62 (.49)		Total	11	3.57 (.54)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (B)				6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)		
	Male	2	3.90 (1.27)		Male	1	3.89 (0.00)
	Female	5	4.52 (.88)		Female	7	3.58 (.56)
	Total	7	4.34 (.93)		Total	8	3.62 (.53)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)				7 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	4.63 (.73)		Male	5	4.60 (.69)
	Female	5	4.84 (.36)		Female	9	4.49 (.65)
	Total	12	4.72 (.59)		Total	14	4.53 (.64)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)				8 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	4.74 (.51)		Male	4	4.90 (.20)
	Female	6	3.97 (.90)		Female	6	4.77 (.57)
	Total	13	4.39 (.79)		Total	10	4.82 (.45)
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)						
	Male	2	4.80 (.00)				
	Female	10	4.76 (.34)				
	Total	12	4.77 (.31)				
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)						
	Male	4	3.30 (1.75)				
	Female	8	4.73 (.24)				
	Total	12	4.25 (1.17)				

*Performance approach goal orientation.* In Table 19, elementary girls' performance approach goal orientation mean scores ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = .96$ ) were higher than elementary boys' scores ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). However, middle school boys had a higher performance approach goal orientation mean scores ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) than middle school girls ( $M = 3.32$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ). Table 20 shows that 3 of the elementary classrooms had males that scored higher than

females, 2 of the elementary classrooms had females who scored higher than males, and one classroom had no differences and half had males that scored higher than females. Two of four middle school classrooms had boys who scored higher than girls on this measure. Meaningful differences between boys and girls were not detectable due to low sample size. These results suggest that elementary girls and middle school boys scored higher on measures of their focus on demonstrating ability and outperforming others.

The hypothesis that students in this sample would have lower performance goals was not supported. Students in the current sample on average had higher mean scores ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) for performance approach goals than African American students in Shannon and colleagues (2012) study ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ).

Table 19

*Performance Approach Goal Orientation Elementary and Middle School Disaggregated Descriptive Data*

			N	Mean (SD)				N	Mean (SD)
Elem					Middle				
	Male	28		3.98 (1.01)		Male	16		3.41 (1.07)
	Female	39		4.03 (.96)		Female	27		3.32 (1.18)
	Total	67		4.01 (.97)		Total	43		3.35 (1.23)

Table 20

*Performance Approach Goal Orientation All Grades Disaggregated Data*

		N	Mean (SD)			N	Mean (SD)
Elem	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (A)			Middle	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)		
	Male	6	4.00 (1.04)		Male	6	3.43 (1.00)
	Female	5	4.04 (1.07)		Female	5	3.56 (.65)
	Total	11	4.02 (1.00)		Total	11	3.49 (.82)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (B)				6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)		
	Male	2	5.00 (.00)		Male	1	3.40 (.00)
	Female	5	4.68 (.33)		Female	7	3.69 (.97)
	Total	7	4.77 (.31)		Total	8	3.65 (.90)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)				7 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	4.29 (.77)		Male	5	3.64 (1.19)
	Female	5	4.40 (.49)		Female	9	3.20 (1.36)
	Total	12	4.33 (.65)		Total	14	3.36 (1.27)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)				8 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	4.14 (.96)		Male	4	3.10 (1.41)
	Female	6	3.77 (1.18)		Female	6	2.87 (1.51)
	Total	13	3.97 (1.04)		Total	10	2.96 (1.39)
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)						
	Male	2	3.90 (1.27)				
	Female	10	3.80 (1.08)				
	Total	12	3.82 (1.05)				
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)						
	Male	4	2.65 (.66)				
	Female	8	3.88 (1.04)				
	Total	12	3.47 (1.08)				

*Performance avoid goal orientation.* In Table 21, elementary boys performance avoid goal orientation mean scores ( $M = 3.88$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) were higher than elementary girls' scores ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ). However middle school girls had higher performance avoid goal orientation mean scores ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ) than middle school boys ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ). Table 22 shows that five out of six elementary classrooms had males who scored higher than

females on approach-avoid goals. Two of the four middle school classrooms had females who scored higher than males on this measure and vice versa. Meaningful differences between boys and girls were not detectable due to low sample size. These results suggest that elementary boys and middle school girls scored higher on measures of their focus on demonstrating ability and outperforming others. On average, there were more individual classrooms with boys whose achievement goal focuses on avoiding the demonstration of incompetence.

The hypothesis that students would have lower performance-avoidant goals was not supported. Students in the current sample on average had higher mean scores ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = 1.74$ ) for performance avoid goals than African American students in Shannon and colleagues (2012) study ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ).

Table 21

*Performance Avoid Goal Orientation Elementary and Middle School Disaggregated Descriptive Data*

			N	Mean (SD)				N	Mean (SD)
Elem					Middle				
	Male	28		3.88 (1.06)		Male	16		3.45 (1.21)
	Female	39		3.69 (1.22)		Female	27		3.56 (1.22)
	Total	67		3.77 (1.10)		Total	43		3.52 (1.20)

Table 22

*Performance Avoid Goal Orientation All Grades Disaggregated Data*

		N	Mean (SD)			N	Mean (SD)
Elem	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (A)			Middle	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)		
	Male	6	3.75 (.87)		Male	6	3.25 (1.06)
	Female	5	2.70 (1.22)		Female	5	3.80 (1.01)
	Total	11	3.27 (1.13)		Total	11	3.50 (1.02)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade (B)				6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)		
	Male	2	3.50 (.71)		Male	1	4.00 (.00)
	Female	5	3.00 (1.22)		Female	7	3.79 (1.29)
	Total	7	3.14 (1.07)		Total	8	3.81 (1.20)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)				7 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	3.79 (.99)		Male	5	3.70 (1.58)
	Female	5	2.90 (.89)		Female	9	3.75 (1.28)
	Total	12	3.42 (1.02)		Total	14	3.73 (1.33)
	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)				8 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
	Male	7	4.29 (1.21)		Male	4	3.31 (1.34)
	Female	6	4.00 (.57)		Female	6	2.79 (1.17)
	Total	13	4.15 (.94)		Total	10	3.00 (1.20)
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (A)						
	Male	2	4.75 (.35)				
	Female	10	4.08 (.94)				
	Total	12	4.19 (.89)				
	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (B)						
	Male	4	3.25 (1.50)				
	Female	8	4.53 (.89)				
	Total	12	4.10 (1.23)				

**Summary.** Overall, girls reported having a higher racial identity than boys supporting Hypothesis 2a. This was the case for viewing being African American as central to their identity as well as feeling positively toward African Americans and being African American. Elementary boys more strongly endorsed two out of three cultural values (e.g. Cooperative Economics; Self-Determination) in comparison to elementary girls and in most elementary classrooms boys

endorsed these two cultural values more so than their elementary female peers. Students in the current study did have a higher pattern of mean scores on measures of belongingness in comparison to previous research confirming Hypothesis 2c (Goodenow & Grady, 1993). Additionally, elementary boys also reported feeling a greater sense of belonging than girls and half of the middle school classrooms included boys who felt more belongingness than girls. In comparison to previous research (Shannon et al., 2012), the current study yielded higher mastery goal orientation scores supporting Hypothesis 2d, but higher overall performance approach and performance avoid mean scores, disconfirming Hypothesis 2d. In the current study gender patterns in motivational goals across elementary and middle school were mixed. Girls had higher mastery goal orientation at the elementary level, but middle school boys endorsed this orientation more so than middle school girls. Elementary girls and middle school males scored higher in having achievement goals that are focused on demonstrating ability and outperforming others. Elementary boys and middle school girls scored higher in having achievement goals of avoiding the demonstrating of incompetence.

### **Research Question Three**

**What percentage of girls and boys in each grade are meeting literacy learning benchmarks? Are there differences?** The hypotheses that a majority of girls would meet literacy learning benchmarks and would be more likely to meet benchmark, while less than a majority of boys would meet literacy learning benchmarks was not supported.

**Quantitative data analysis.** A chi square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) was used to explore if the proportion of girls or boys was different in meeting literacy learning benchmarks. A Yates' Correction is automatically done by SPSS for a 2X2 to compensate for an overestimate of the chi-square value when used with a 2X2 table (Pallant,

2007), An analysis was conducted for the entire sample and then four additional analyses were conducted with four separate data sets to determine if there were any differences. One of these data sets was created for middle school students (e.g. grades 6-8) and differences were explored in the proportion of middle school males and females who were proficient and non-proficient. A second data set was created for elementary school students (e.g. grades 3-5) to determine if there were any differences in the proportion of elementary school males and females who were proficient and non-proficient. A third data set was created of all female students and the grade variable was recoded in order to create a dichotomous variable that separated elementary and middle school students. This third data was used to explore any differences in female elementary and middle school students who were proficient and non-proficient. A fourth data set was created similar to the third data set, but for male students. The fourth data set was used to explore any differences in male elementary and middle school students who were proficient and non-proficient. All assumptions of random sampling, independent observations, and cell frequencies of 5 or more were met. Tables 23-25 indicate results from these analyses.

Table 23

*Chi-Square Test Reading Proficiency by Gender and Grade (Total Sample)*

	Reading Benchmark – Proficient		Reading Benchmark- Not Proficient		<i>P</i>
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
Gender					
Male	16	36%	28	64%	.86
Female	22	33%	45	67%	



Table 24

*Chi-Square Test for Reading Proficiency for Girls and Boys by School Level*

		Reading Benchmark – Proficient		Reading Benchmark- Not Proficient		<i>P</i>
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
Grade Level						
Girls	Middle School	19	67.9%	9	32.1%	1.0
	Elementary School	26	66.7%	13	33.3%	
Boys	Middle School	5	35.7%	9	64.3%	.02*
	Elementary School	23	76.7%	7	23.3%	

\* $p < .05$

Table 25

*Chi-Square Test for Reading Proficiency for Elementary School and Middle School Group by Gender*

		Reading Benchmark – Proficient		Reading Benchmark- Not Proficient		<i>P</i>
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
Gender						
Elem	Male	23	76.7%	7	23.3%	.52
	Female	26	66.7%	13	33.3%	
Middle	Male	5	35.7%	9	64.3%	.09
	Female	19	67.9%	9	32.1%	

For the analysis with the entire sample (see Table 24), results indicated no significant association between gender and literacy learning benchmark scores. There were no differences between boys and girls. The proportion of males who were proficient in meeting literacy learning benchmarks was not significantly different from the proportion of females meeting literacy

learning benchmarks. In the total sample only 36% (N= 16) of boys were proficient and similarly only 33% (N = 22) of girls were proficient.

When the data were disaggregated by school level (elementary, middle school) and gender, a different picture emerged for boys in elementary and middle school. As indicated in Table 24, there was a significant association between school level and proficiency status for boys with a small effect size,  $X^2(1, n = 44) = 5.26, p < .05, \phi = .01$ . According to this data, male students in elementary school were significantly more likely to be proficient on literacy learning benchmarks in comparison to their male peers in middle school. As described in Table 24 there was no significant association between school level and proficiency status for girls as almost an equal proportion of middle and elementary students were at the proficiency level.

As displayed in Table 25 there was no significant association between gender and proficiency status for elementary students or middle school students. At the elementary school level, there were a higher percentage of boys (76.7%, N= 23) than girls (66.7%, N = 26) who were proficient and at the middle school level and there were a higher percentage of girls (67.9%, N = 19) than boys (35.7%, N = 5) who were proficient, but neither analyses yielded significant differences.

#### **Research Question Four**

**What is the level of disciplinary outcomes (e.g. office disciplinary referrals, suspensions, expulsions) for boys and girls in each grade?** The hypothesis that in comparison to previous research, there would be lower incidences of disciplinary outcomes by gender and grade was not supported.

**Quantitative data analysis.** Descriptive statistics were used to determine the level of disciplinary outcomes for boys and girls in each grade in comparison to the entire enrollment for

the grade. The sample was disaggregated by grade and gender and the proportion of students with disciplinary outcomes was compared to the proportion of boys and girls in the sample. Disproportionality was determined if the percentage of students referred or suspended was larger than the percentage of enrollment representation. Table 26 and 27 show office referral and suspension data for boys and girls in each grade. Enrollment numbers represent total enrollment for the grade for the sample. There were no data for expulsions because no students had been expelled from the school.

Table 26

*Enrollment, Number of Students with Office Disciplinary Referrals, and Number of Office Disciplinary Referrals Disaggregated by Grade and Gender*

		Enrollment		Students Referred		Total Referrals	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	Male	9	45%	3	38%	7	33%
	Female	11	55%	5	63%	14	67%
	Total	20	100%	8	100%	21	100
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Male	16	55%	5	63%	10	71%
	Female	13	45%	3	38%	4	29%
	Total	29	100%	8	100%	14	100%
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Male	11	44%	2	28%	4	44%
	Female	14	56%	5	71%	5	56%
	Total	25	100%	7	100%	9	100%
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Male	8	40%	2	50%	2	50%
	Female	12	60%	2	50%	2	50%
	Total	20	100%	4	100%	4	100%
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Male	3	19%	2	40%	5	56%
	Female	13	81%	3	60%	4	44%
	Total	16	100%	5	100%	9	100%
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Male	4	40%	0	0%	0	0%
	Female	6	60%	1	100%	1	100%
	Total	10	100%	1	100%	1	100%
School	Male	51	45%	14	42%	28	48%
	Female	69	55%	19	58%	30	52%
	Total	120	100%	33	100%	58	100%

Table 27

*Enrollment, Number of Students Suspended, and Number of Suspensions Disaggregated by Grade and Gender*

Grade		Enrollment		Students Suspended		Total Suspensions	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	Male	9	45%	4	50%	7	54%
	Female	11	55%	4	50%	6	46%
	Total	20	100%	8	100%	15	100
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Male	16	55%	9	82%	14	88%
	Female	13	45%	2	18%	2	13%
	Total	29	100%	11	100%	16	100%
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Male	11	44%	2	25%	2	25%
	Female	14	56%	6	75%	6	75%
	Total	25	100%	8	100%	8	100%
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Male	8	40%	1	25%	1	17%
	Female	12	60%	3	75%	5	83%
	Total	20	100%	4	100%	6	100%
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Male	3	19%	2	25%	11	65%
	Female	13	81%	6	75%	6	35%
	Total	16	100%	8	100%	17	100%
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Male	4	40%	3	75%	4	57%
	Female	6	60%	1	25%	3	43%
	Total	10	100%	4	100%	7	100%
School	Male	51	45%	21	49%	39	58%
	Female	69	55%	22	51%	28	42%
	Total	120	100%	43	100%	67	100%

In comparison to the overall sample, office referral data indicated that individual girls (i.e., the number of different girls) (N = 19; 58%) were disproportionately referred to the office

in comparison to boys (N = 14; 42%), but individual boys received a disproportionate number of individual office referrals (i.e., the number of referrals for the same boys) (N = 28; 48%) in comparison to girls (N = 30; 52%). There were no clear patterns between grades that emerged. Suspension data reflected that overall, individual boys were disproportionately suspended (N= 21; 49%) in comparison to girls (N = 22; 51%) and individual suspensions were disproportionately given to boys (N = 39; 58%) in comparison to girls (N = 28; 48%).

Office referral data did not match suspension data. When comparing overall data for office referrals and suspensions for boys only, individual boys received a greater proportion of suspensions for boys (N = 21, 49%) than office referrals (N = 14, 42%) and a greater proportion of individual suspensions (N = 39; 58%) were given to boys than individual office referrals were given to boys (N = 28; 48%). Male students appeared to be suspended without an equal record of an office referral. Overall, individual office referrals and individual suspensions were disproportionately given to boys in comparison to their girl peers (Individual office referrals for girls: N = 30; 52%; boys: N = 28; 48%; Individual suspensions for girls: N = 28; 42%; boys: N = 39; 58%).

Similar to previous research (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997), this African-centered school, with 94% of students identifying as African American and another 6% having one parent who is African American, still had African American males who were disproportionately referred and suspended. Skiba and colleagues (1997) reported that out of over 11,000 students, African American and male students were disproportionately referred and suspended. Students in the current study disproportionately received individual office referrals and suspensions and individual males were disproportionately suspended. A corpus of work done in school disciplinary disproportionality has found African American males experiencing more referrals

and suspensions when compared to other ethnic groups, both male and female (Martinez, McMahon, & treger, 2016; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2000)

The current study differed from previous research as well. In the current study, the mean number of office referrals was .47, while the mean number of office referrals found in Skiba and colleagues (1997) research was 1.5. Data was not available for either study to indicate the length of time for each suspension, but the maximum number of suspensions given to individual students in Skiba and colleagues (1997) research was 22, while the current study had a maximum number of four suspensions. The current study also had a higher percentage of students who were not referred (73%) while previous research only had 58.9% of students who were not referred to the office.

### **Research Question Five**

**How are racial identity, cultural values, and belongingness related?** The hypothesis that racial identity and cultural values would positively predict student belongingness was not supported.

**Quantitative data analysis.** Stepwise Multiple Regression was used to assess how racial identity and cultural values were related to student's sense of belonging, after controlling for the influence of gender and grade. An analysis of the output data was used to explore any violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. Although only Grade and Collective Works and Responsibility-Cultural Values were significantly related to belongingness in the Pearson Correlation Matrix, a regression analysis was conducted to understand the amount of variance explained accounted for by these variables.

In order to check these assumptions, the Normal Probability Plot (P-P) of the Regression Standardised Residual and the Scatterplot were requested as part of the analysis. Points within

the P-P Plot were reasonably clustered in a straight diagonal line from bottom left to top right. This suggested no major deviations from normality. Within the Scatterplot of the standardized residuals, the residuals were roughly rectangularly distributed, with most of the scores concentrated in the center along the 0 point. This information also confirmed that the data demonstrated homoscedasticity and a linear relationship.

The presence of significant outliers was examined using the Scatterplot. There was one case that had a standardized residual of more than -3.3. This outlier was inspected using the Mahalanobis distance that was produced as a part of the analysis output. The critical chi-square value was determined using the number of independent variables as the degrees of freedom. A critical value of 11.07 was compared to the Mahalanobis distance maximum value in the output. The maximum value in the data file was 29.15, which did not exceed the critical value. Thus, the outlier was not significant and did not need to be removed from the analysis.

Examining the correlations amongst the independent variables checked multicollinearity (see Table 28). Independent variables showed mostly small correlations (e.g. below .3) and there were no correlations that were too high (e.g. above .7). Multicollinearity was also checked examining the Tolerance and VIF values within the output. The Tolerance value was larger than .10 and did not indicate that the multiple correlations between variables were high. The VIF values were not above 10 and thus did not indicate multicollinearity. Each assumption in the analysis was met.



Table 28

## Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Belonging	1.000							
2. Grade	.266*	1.000						
3. Gender	.009	-.119	1.000					
4. Centrality	.091	-.046	.176	1.000				
5. Private Regard	.056	-.067	.148	.492*	1.000			
6. Collective Work	-.261*	-.076	-.093	-.021	.021	1.000		
7. Cooperative Economics	-.070	-.033	.008	-.060	.057	.116	1.000	
8. Self-Determination	-.050	.012	.090	-.056	.028	.387*	.155	1.000

Note. \* $p < .01$

Gender and grade were entered in Step 1 explaining 7 % of the variance in belongingness. After entry of each subscale of both racial identity and cultural values at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 14%,  $F(7, 692) = 16.55, p < .001$ . The two measures explained an additional 7% of the variance in belongingness, after controlling for gender and grade,  $R^2 \text{ change} = .07, F \text{ change}(5, 692) = 11.50, p = < .001$ .

In the final model, only grade and cooperative works were statistically significant with grade recording a higher standardized beta value ( $\beta = .25, p < .05$ ) than the Cultural Values-Collective Work and Responsibility Subscale ( $\beta = -.26, p < .05$ ), with a small effect size  $r = .17$ . While grade level positively predicted increasing sense of belongingness, belongingness scores decreased as students endorsed higher ratings on the Collective Work and Responsibility Subscale.

Table 29

*Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Racial Identity, Cultural Values Predicting Belongingness*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Predictors			
Gender	-.01	.04	-.01
Grade	.05	.01	.25*
Racial Identity	.02	.01	.08
Racial Identity- Private Regard	.01	.01	.04
Cultural Values- Collective Work & Responsibility	-.30	.04	-.26*
Cultural Values- Cooperative Economics	-.03	.03	-.04
Cultural Values- Self-Determination	.06	.04	.06
$R^2$		.14	
$F$		16.55	

Note: \* $p < .05$ .

### Research Question Six

**How are belongingness and achievement goals (mastery, performance approach, and performance avoid) related to learning?** The hypotheses that belongingness, mastery achievement goal orientation, and performance approach goal orientation would positively predict student learning and that performance avoid goal orientation would negatively predict student learning was not supported.

**Quantitative data analysis.** Student questionnaire data were analyzed to explore the predictive value of belongingness, mastery, performance approach, and performance avoid goals on students' reading benchmark data scores. Reading benchmark data scores were nominal variables indicating student's level of performance on the benchmark testing (e.g. Low, Low Average, Average, High Average, and High). Assumptions testing for conducting a multinomial regression analysis were completed. This included verifying a nominal dependent variable,

continuous and categorical independent variables, independence of observations and mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories, no multicollinearity, and a linear relationship between any continuous independent variables and the logit transformation of the independent variable, as well as no outliers. There were two outliers for one independent variable and this case was removed from the final analysis. A multinomial logistic regression was then performed. The full model containing all predictors was not statistically significant  $\chi^2(352, N = 110) = 203.14, p = 1.0$ . None of the independent variables made a unique statistically significant contribution to the model. The results of the statistical analyses are reported below.

Table 30

*Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Learning*

Learning Score Category	Predictors	B	SE	Wald	df	P	Odds Ratio	95.0% C.I. for Odds Ratio	
								Lower	Upper
Low	Belongingness	1.43	1.90	.56	1	.45	4.16	.10	171.09
	Mastery	-3.69	3.94	.88	1	.35	.03	1.118E-5	56.22
	Performance	1.99	1.03	3.78	1	.052	7.38	.99	55.31
	Approach Performance Avoid	-1.22	.92	1.76	1	.19	.30	.05	1.79
Low Avg	Belongingness	.82	1.97	.17	1	.68	2.27	.05	108.36
	Mastery	-2.97	3.97	.56	1	.45	.05	2.150E-5	122.54
	Performance	1.72	1.07	2.60	1	.11	5.60	.69	45.54
	Approach Performance Avoid	-.74	.96	.58	1	.45	.48	.07	3.17
Avg	Belongingness	.83	1.90	.19	1	.66	2.30	.06	94.18
	Mastery	-2.23	3.95	.39	1	.57	.11	4.740E-5	246.44
	Performance	1.64	1.03	2.57	1	.11	5.18	.69	38.69
	Approach Performance Avoid	-1.32	.92	2.06	1	.15	.27	.04	1.62
High Avg	Belongingness	1.86	2.09	.80	1	.37	6.45	.11	387.20
	Mastery	-.34	4.66	.01	1	.94	.71	7.650E-5	6618.73
	Performance	1.12	1.09	1.07	1	.30	3.075	.365	25.876
	Approach Performance Avoid	-.938	.988	.901	1	.343	.391	.056	2.716

*Note.* The reference category is: High

## Research Question Seven

**Is belonging related to disciplinary outcomes?** The hypothesis that belongingness would negatively predict office disciplinary referrals, suspensions and expulsions was not supported.

**Quantitative data analysis.** Student responses to belongingness questionnaire and existing school office referral and suspension data were examined to explore any relationship between disciplinary outcomes and students' sense of belonging. There was no expulsion data for any students as no students had been expelled from the school. Two separate Poisson Regressions were conducted to assess how belongingness was related to disciplinary outcomes of office referrals and suspensions. The assumptions of dependent variable count data, a continuous independent variable, and independent observations were met. A one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test failed to reject the null hypothesis that the data followed a Poisson distribution ( $D = .061$  for suspensions;  $p > .05$ ;  $D = .038$  for office referrals;  $p > .05$ ). A standard Poisson regression was used because there was no interest in exploring the processes causing excessive zeroes in the data. In assessing how well the model fit the data, the Pearson Chi-Square Value/df value of 1.62 (office referrals) and 1.41 (suspensions) indicated over dispersion. Negative binomial with log link was selected in the Poisson regression analysis to correct for this. Subsequent values were 1.11 (office referrals) .91 (suspensions). There was no statistically significant contribution of belongingness to office referrals nor was there a statistically significant contribution of belongingness to suspensions.

## CHAPTER V

### QUALITATIVE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following chapter will present the qualitative results of this study. Results for Questions 1 and 8 will be presented based upon participant observation and interview data.

#### **Research Question One**

**How is an African-centered approach reflected in an African-centered school?** The hypothesis that the seven components of the Nguzo Saba principles would be reflected in the instructional, administrative, physical, and social context of the school was partially supported.

**Qualitative data analysis.** A participant observation rubric was used to analyze participant observation data. Condensed accounts were used to fill in a participant observation rubric (Table 32-38). This rubric allowed the researcher to think about the observations within a framework applicable to an African-centered school. This rubric is informed by the work of Tangella (2012) in observing the presence of the Nguzo Saba principles (Karega, 1980) in an African-centered school. The participant observations were guided by how the Nguzo Saba principles were present in the instructional, administrative, physical, and social context of ABC African-centered School because the participant observations are an examination of the student and teachers within an African-centered school ecological system. An examination of the interactions, persons, objects, and symbols informed an understanding of the school and how the students and teachers experienced this environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Guidelines and descriptions of how the Nguzo Saba principles could be present in these areas have been developed by the researcher based on prior research (Table 31-37) (Tangella, 2012). These examples will be revisited and compared with data collected from the participant observations at ABC African-centered School.

Table 31

*Participant Observation Rubric- Guidelines and Descriptions of Umoja*

<b>Nguzo Saba Principle</b>	<b>Instructional Context</b>	<b>Administrative Context</b>	<b>Physical Context</b>	<b>Social Context</b>
<i>Umoja</i> /unity is present when an African-American feels a sense of oneness with the African community at-large. Through unity allegiance, responsibility and respect for elders and others in the community is found (Karenga, 2008).	Lessons about African and American history, people, culture, race and, community (Asante, 1990).	Teachers serve in place of a parent for the students (Lee, 1992).	Students, staff, and parents together in community (Unity) circle meeting time where students work together to build community with each other (Kifano, 1996)	Each child has the moral responsibility to use knowledge and problem-solving strategies for the good of his or her family and community (Lee, 1992)  An environment in which all social relationships strive to achieve reciprocity or interdependence (Lee, 1992).

Table 32

*Participant Observation Rubric- Guidelines and Descriptions of Kujichagulia*

<b>Nguzo Saba Principle</b>	<b>Instructional Context</b>	<b>Administrative Context</b>	<b>Physical Context</b>	<b>Social Context</b>
The principle of <i>Kujichagulia</i> demands that people know who they are. <i>Kujichagulia</i> represents one's feelings about themselves, their community, and their race. It also represented self- esteem and one's individual and collective identity (Karenga, 2008).	Identity development practices (Murrell, 2002)  Linking cultural knowledge to traditional subject matters (Lee, 1992)	Community gatherings where students display knowledge about African American history and culture (i.e. Black History Program; school assemblies, etc.) (Kafano, 1996).  Rites of passage to preserve cultural continuity (Clarkston & Johnstone, 2011)	The wearing of African garb such as bright colored, West African adinkra cloth, kinte cloth	Reciting pledges and affirmations such as the "African Pledge" or the Black National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice & Sing" (Clarkston & Johnstone, 2011).  Positive character development (Hale, 1986).  Rites of Passage or mentorship programs designed to build racial identity and healthy self- concept (Sanders & Reed, 1995).



Table 33

*Participant Observation Rubric- Guidelines and Descriptions of Ujima*

<b>Nguzo Saba Principle</b>	<b>Instructional Context</b>	<b>Administrative Context</b>	<b>Physical Context</b>	<b>Social Context</b>
<i>Ujima</i> represents African-American people embracing differences - among their race, and working together to help build and improve their communities (Karenga, 2008)	Reinforces community ties and idealize the concept of service to one's family, community, nation, race and world (Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994)	Teacher groups and student groups working together to improve the academic and social goals of the school through enrichment classes and opportunities (Clarkston & Johnstone, 2011).	Staff that reflects educated African American leaders and staff (Napp, 2008).	Ensure that families become and remain supportive of their children's physical, social, moral, and educational development (Lee, 1992).  Share knowledge with others (Lee, 1992).

Table 34

*Participant Observation Rubric- Guidelines and Descriptions of Ujamaa*

<b>Nguzo Saba Principle</b>	<b>Instructional Context</b>	<b>Administrative Context</b>	<b>Physical Context</b>	<b>Social Context</b>
The principle of <i>Ujamaa</i> stressed the practice of <b>cooperation, shared work, and shared wealth</b> among African-American people. It further encourages sharing and cooperation with each other to <b>build communities and businesses</b> . It is also concerned with the well being, happiness and development of the human person (Nyerere, 1969).	Promote the vision of individuals and communities as producers rather than as simply consumers (Lee, 1992)	Communications within the school community about local African American businesses (Napp, 2008).	Using fundraising to change or contribute to the school, neighborhood, city physical environment in which the school is located (Napp, 2008).	Exposing students to positive role models within the African American community (Napp, 2008).

Table 35

*Participant Observation Rubric- Guidelines and Descriptions of Nia*

<b>Nguzo Saba Principle</b>	<b>Instructional Context</b>	<b>Administrative Context</b>	<b>Physical Context</b>	<b>Social Context</b>
<p><i>Nia</i> represents African-American people having a greater sense of <b>purpose</b> for their lives. Such as the obtainment of education being more than just receiving a job but serves the purpose of improving family, community, society and humanity.</p>	<p>Using activities and that help to develop students' sense of purpose for obtaining an education (Tengella, 2012).</p>	<p>Students are encouraged to use their knowledge to encourage attachment to the African American community, progress and change in this community (Shockley, 2007).</p> <p>Older students serve as mentors or leaders to younger children (Hale, 1986).</p>	<p>Art in the hallways serves to build student self-esteem and motivate students (Pollard &amp; Ajirotutu, 2000).</p>	<p>Staff using the school as a conduit to develop relationships and support the families of students (Pollard &amp; Ajirotutu, 2000).</p>

Table 36

*Participant Observation Rubric- Guidelines and Descriptions of Kuumba*

<b>Nguzo Saba Principle</b>	<b>Instructional Context</b>	<b>Administrative Context</b>	<b>Physical Context</b>	<b>Social Context</b>
The principle of <i>Kuumba</i> emphasizes that African-American people should use <b>creative strategies</b> to help heal and repair their communities and ultimately make the world a better place (Karenga, 2008).	<p>The promotion of a strong desire among African American youth to serve their people and communities (Kifano, 1996)</p> <p>Classroom activities allow the student to participate in community by joining, belonging, supporting other members. (Murrell, 1990).</p> <p>Education is used to build self-knowledge and impact one's community (Shockley, 2007).</p>	<p>Community gatherings where culturally relevant, value-laden stories, narratives, plays, songs, chants, use of literary works by African and African American authors that communicate the life, struggles, values, and aspirations of African Americans are shared (Kifano, 1996).</p>	<p>The creative art and artifacts encourage self-esteem in the students that counter negative images of African American people (Pollard &amp; Ajiroututu, 2000).</p>	<p>Community gatherings where culturally relevant, value-laden stories, narratives, plays, songs, chants, use of literary works by African and African American authors that communicate the life, struggles, values, and aspirations of African Americans are shared (Kifano, 1996).</p>

Table 37

*Participant Observation Rubric- Guidelines and Descriptions of Imani*

<b>Nguzo Saba Principle</b>	<b>Instructional Context</b>	<b>Administrative Context</b>	<b>Physical Context</b>	<b>Social Context</b>
The principle of <i>Imani</i> stands for having <b>faith</b> and belief in God/creator, parents leaders, and teachers that they will work together to make improvements to the community. (Karenga, 2008)	The use of affirmations of faith or quotes within the classroom (Akoto, 1992).	African-centered spiritual practices of libation, meditation, fire ceremonies, and ancestral worship to develop faith and belief. (Akoto, 1992).	Art, murals, pictures, or artifacts that reflect a religious or faith focus within the community (Akoto, 1992).	African-centered spiritual practices within a community gathering (Akoto, 1992).

Participant observations were primarily conducted in eighth grade language arts and social studies classrooms. In addition, observations occurred in the hallways, in the school office, at the school's morning "Unity Circle" gatherings, during an after-school African drumming class meeting, at the school's Umoja Karamu school-wide feast and celebration event, and during one monthly parent meeting. Thematic analysis was conducted for each interview conducted with 10 eighth grade students and 4 middle school teachers. The researcher read through the transcripts line by line, noting themes that appeared to emerge. Themes were written in the margins of the transcripts. Text from each interview was collapsed under the applicable themes across interviewees in an electronic file.

Participant observation data was organized under applicable Nguzo Saba principles and determining whether the individual observation datum fit under the domains of instructional, administrative, physical, or social context. The next step of organizing the data included finding data that cut across multiple Nguzo Saba principles. Then, interview text and its overarching theme were examined to see what ideas could be examples or confirmation of the observation. Linking the interview text with the participant observation data and its corresponding Nguzo Saba principle was done to help further illustrate or explain the observation. Additional organization of the data included taking a frequency count of how frequently observations reflected a particular Nguzo Saba principle within the domains and a count of the most frequent themes that emerged. In order to understand how the school represents an African-centered school the following will discuss commonly reflected principles within the Instructional, Administrative, Physical, and Social context of the school, the associated observation data that exhibits this principle, and interview data that reflects the observation.

***Instructional context.*** The instructional context includes the space where teaching and learning is happening, which usually happens in the classroom setting. The language arts and social studies classes were studied during the participant observation phase for three days each. The most commonly reflected principle within the observations in the Instructional domain was Ujima with four observations reflecting this principle. Ujima means working together to help build and improve the African American community and African American people embracing differences among their race (Karenga, 2008).

An observation within the Instructional domain that reflected the Ujima principle was a lesson conducted by Baba Khari. He was a new teacher to the school who had spent the majority of his career in education using African-centered pedagogy. He had teaching experience at other

African-centered schools, community programs that used an African-centered approach, and teaching experience at non-African-centered schools within the urban environment teaching African-American children. The lesson included students watching a movie about child soldiers on the continent of Africa. During the movie, when students began laughing at the accent of the children from the African country Baba Khari responded, “You don’t think you have a Detroit accent? Acting like white folks, making fun!” Baba Khari admonished the students for laughing at the actor’s accent. Correcting the students for laughing was evidence of Baba Khari’s effort to focus on building a positive sense of community and improving the perception of those in the African diaspora, as well as accepting differences amongst the race, a representation of the Ujima principle. Baba Khari’s reference to the students’ behavior as similar to “white folks” was his way of pointing out a history of efforts by those in the cultural majority to stamp out the cultural expression of those with an African and African American heritage, an idea that is predominant in the literature about why African-centered schools exist (Lomotey, 1992). The principal of Ujima promotes the opposite view, that one should celebrate the cultural differences and build community amongst African Americans.

Teacher interview data also included a larger theme of describing African-centered practices that illustrate the principal of Ujima within the instructional context in a similar way to the video lesson on child soldiers. Baba Kamal had been teaching at the school for five years and had taught at other African-centered schools as well as other non-African-centered schools. He saw the role of an African-centered school as one that is focused particularly on dismantling the effects of White supremacy on the lives of African Americans. He thought that, “Being an African-centered school means...developing a plan of action that would allow individuals and communities to develop themselves and uproot any negative remnants of White supremacy and

enslavement.” His words emphasized the role of the school accepting differences amongst the African American race as well as building a positive sense of community. His focus on the “remnants of White Supremacy” appeared to be contrasting how the school is focused on undoing any suppression of cultural affirmation and development that was done through the historical effects of White supremacy on African Americans in this country. Similar to the video lesson, Baba Kamal saw the role of the school as one that works to help build and improve the African American community (e.g. Ujima).

The Instructional domain of the participant observation rubric was the only domain in which every Nguzo Saba principle, except Imani, was reflected in the observations. While Ujima was most commonly reflected across observations, these observations were also representative of multiple other Nguzo Saba principles including Nia, Kuumba, Umoja (e.g. unity), Ujamma (e.g. cooperation, shared work, and shared wealth to build communities and businesses), and Kujichagulia (e.g. self-identity and self-esteem, individual and collective identity) (Karenga, 2008). When the interview data was connected with the observations as further evidence of the observations, this interview data primarily had been coded under the theme of African-Centered Practices. Thus, the observations within the Instructional Context of this African-centered school provided the most evidence substantiating the school as an African-centered school. Umoja was represented in two observations (n=2), Kujichagulia was represented in three observations within this context, Ujima was represented in four observations (n=4), Ujamaa was represented in two (n=2), Nia in three (n=3), and Kuumba in three (n=3). There were a total of five observations that fit within the Instructional Context. Each X represents one instance when a principle was represented in an observation. Each observation was represented by multiple principles.



Frequency counts of the observations within the participant observation rubric are displayed in Table 38.

Table 38

*Nguzo Saba Principles Reflected within the Instructional Context*

Domains	Themes	<i>Umoja</i>	<i>Kujichagulia</i>	<i>Ujima</i>	<i>Ujamaa</i>	<i>Nia</i>	<i>Kuumba</i>	<i>Imani</i>
Instructional	Culturally Relevant Learning	X		X	X	X	X	
	African-Centered Practices	X	XXX	XXX	X	XX	XX	

*Note.* X denotes one observation

***Administrative context.*** The administrative context includes the rules, policies, and procedures in the classroom and in the school. The most commonly reflected Nguzo Saba principle within the Administrative context was again Ujima with four observations reflecting this principle, which is described below. These observations were also representative of multiple other Nguzo Saba principles including Nia (e.g. purpose), Umoja, and Ujamaa,. Amongst the observations, the rules, policies, and procedures within the classroom and the school more frequently were examples of the idea that African Americans should work together to help build and improve their communities and embrace differences amongst the race (i.e. Ujima). Rules such as “scholars will respect themselves and others” that are posted in the school reflect the idea that as a community students will work together to build positive images of themselves and respect others similarly. Baba Zion was also very familiar with an African-centered approach in schools. With over 15 years experience teaching in an African-centered school, this was his first

year at ABC African-Centered School. He explained the social and behavioral expectations of the African-centered classroom by stating:

“...because they now understand that we’ve got to work together, we’ve got to help each other, we’ve got to do the right thing, we got to keep the class a certain way, we got to treat people a certain way...how they’re willing to help one another as well as the community.”

Baba Zion explained that the classroom is a context in which the focus is on building and improving the classroom community. Having expectations that the students will work with one another and that there would be certain decorum while working together emphasizes the Ujima principle.

Ways in which the school handles discipline for school-wide behavioral problems were also representative of Ujima. In addressing the actions of a student who had taken and digested a Xanax pill after being offered the pill from another student, the school and student worked to help build and improve their school community through the disciplinary process. The student who accepted the pill was required to make a presentation about drugs and her decisions to the middle school student and staff community. As part of the disciplinary action, she was required to present on the dangers of drug abuse and what she learned from her decision to try Xanax. While walking to the assembly, Baba Khari commented to the observer that, “...this was her being accountable to her community.” The school appeared to see this as an opportunity to help the student learn from her mistake and to better the community as well. In this way, the African-Centered approach to caring for the child and the community was exemplified. The sense of care and concern exhibited in the assembly was an example of how African-centered schools emulate *familyhood*, a central feature to an African-centered school.

Baba Kamal also described the approach to discipline and rules in the school, where teachers:

“...use love to help them and we model it. And we correct and then we allow them to make the mistake as long as they don’t go too far, we remind them, was that the best course of action? What would you do if you got a chance to do something different?”

The approach that the school took to help build awareness and accountability within the community and the individual student represented Ujima as well as the teachers’ perspective that the role of the teacher, the rules, and procedures in the classroom is to build up the student through love while also bring awareness to their choices and decision making.

Frequency counts of the observations within the participant observation rubric are displayed in Table 40. Ujima was represented in four observations (n=4), Umoja was represented in three observations (n=3), Ujamaa was represented in one (n=1), and Nia was represented in one observation (n=1). There were a total of five observations that fit within the Administrative Context. Each X represents one instance when a principle was represented in an observation. Each observation was represented by multiple principles.

Table 39

*Nguzo Saba Principles Reflected within the Administrative Context*

Domains	Themes	<i>Umoja</i>	<i>Kujichagulia</i>	<i>Ujima</i>	<i>Ujamaa</i>	<i>Nia</i>	<i>Kuumba</i>	<i>Imani</i>
Administrative	African-Centered Practices	XX		XX				
	Discipline			X	X	X		
	Relationship/ Community Family	X		X				

***Physical context.*** The physical context includes the visual aesthetics of the school including the decorations, décor, paintings, cultural artifacts (e.g. masks, fabrics, etc.), and pictures on the walls. The most common principle reflected in the observations within the Physical context was one where the focus is on knowing who you are, self-esteem, and a collective identity or Kujichagulia. Kujichagulia was most commonly reflected across observations and these observations were also representative of multiple other Nguzo Saba principles including Kuumba (e.g. creativity) and Umoja. One observation includes the plethora of books that are centered on African and African American concepts, ideas, and people in the school library. Within these books, students can see images of African Americans and explore concept surrounding both the African American and others from the African diaspora. Principal Aya had been involved with the ABC African-Centered School for 18 years. Her perspective as a teacher, former parent, and administrator of the school provided further evidence of how the school reflected an African-centered approach. She described the school's intentional focus on developing student's self- identity, self-esteem, and cultural identity by reflecting that the school

was, “A school that’s based on the traditions and customs of our traditional greatness and to make sure that students see positive images of themselves so they can become proud of where they came from.” Throughout the school in hallways, in the front office, on classroom walls, on gym and auditorium walls there are depictions of positive images of Africans and African Americans. These include depictions of village life in pictures, families interacting, children playing, masks, pictures of well-known African Americans, and paintings of African American leaders. The physical context and the way in which teacher’s describe the school represent a focus on the self-esteem and collective identity of the students. Teachers also wear attire commonly seen on the continent of Africa including clothing, headwraps, and particular garb such as dashikis in textile prints often see on the continent of Africa. This too contributes to an effort to develop the self-image of the students as described by the Nguzo Saba principle Kujichagulia.

Frequency counts of the observations within the participant observation rubric are displayed in Table 40. Umoja was represented in one observation (n=1), Kujichagulia was represented in two observations (n=2), Kuumba was represented in one observation (n=1). There were a total of two observations that fit within the Physical Context. Each X represents one instance when a principle was represented in an observation. Each observation was represented by multiple principles.

Table 40

*Nguzo Saba Principles Reflected within the Physical Context*

Domains	Themes	Umoja	Kujichagulia	Ujima	Ujamaa	Nia	Kuumba	Imani
Physical	African-Centered Practices	X	XX				X	

***Social context.*** The social context includes the social interactions and gatherings that occur in the school. Within the social context, the most commonly reflected Nguzo Saba principle within the observations was Ujamaa. These observations were also represented in multiple other Nguzo Saba principles including Nia, Kuumba, Umoja, Ujamaa, Kujichagulia, and Ujima. Cooperation, shared work, shared wealth and encouraging cooperation to build communities and businesses was seen during the school's daily Unity Circle morning gathering. During this daily ritual children and staff sing and recite verses that reaffirm a commitment to the community's work and it brings the school community together. Each class makes an affirmation that contributes to the focus on cooperating, sharing work and building the community. One affirmation, "support black businesses", is an example of the school's focus on Ujamaa. Throughout the Unity Circle each class community shares in participating in some part of the daily practice. Whether reciting the list of the Nguzo Saba, singing to the red, black, and green flag, reciting pledges, singing the National Black Anthem all represent the idea of unity and cooperation toward shared work and shared wealth. One Pledge recited during the Unity Circle states:

We are the first and the last, the Umoja and Imani

We pledge to think black, speak black, act black

Buy black, pray black, love black, and live black

We pledge to do black things today

To assure us of a strong black tomorrow

Asante Sana

Such focus on cooperation to build the Black community and Black businesses is also a central idea to Afrocentrism that informs an African-Centered approach. This pledge is recited

every day in order to foster the identity and values of students in the school. In this same vein, Baba Kamal remarked in his interview, that, “Being an African-centered school means...how to begin developing a plan of action that would allow individuals and communities to develop themselves.” His understanding was one that emphasized the intentional focus of the school in cultivating a strong Black community through cooperation and shared work, a focus of the African-centered approach and the Ujamma principle.

Another observation that exemplified Ujamma included the way in which community is fostered within the school’s Parent Resource Room. Parents are able to view on the walls quotes from notable African Americans, able to access computer resources and homework from the child’s classroom as well as enjoy a comfortable space with couches, tables, chairs, and coffee. Information about the school’s Parents Are Teachers Too (P.A.T.T. meetings) facilitate a forum for parent dialogue about the school, updates from the school administration, and community representatives to present about opportunities and resources in the city community. Baba Khari explained the relationship between the adults in the school community, which includes the parents, as one where sharing and cooperation to build the community is occurring. He stated:

“So that also is to be a liaison with the parents. We want to make sure that we’re visible to parents, we’re always accessible and that we interact, once again, beyond the parent/teacher paradigm but as adults, as brothers, sisters, as people and part of the community.”

The parent resource room and parents’ participation in the Unity Circle each morning fosters Ujamma as explained by this teacher.

Another example of Ujamma included a parent’s speech during a parent meeting. During one of the P.A.T.T. meetings a parent discussed with the group, as part of her platform for

running for president of the parent group, the importance of Black power, African-centeredness in the classroom instruction, and discipline in the classroom. During this observation she stated “we need to control our own; we need to run our own businesses, we need to do raffles with our own businesses, not Little Caesar’s Pizza” as a way to encourage the cooperation around building and supporting Black businesses. Baba Zion explained that in an African-centered school, the goal is, “...building of self, building of community, understanding school interconnectedness with others.” The parent’s platform and the teacher’s explanation of the goal of an African-centered school highlighted the way in which the social context of this African-centered school is focused on building of community and Black businesses is central to the school (i.e., Ujamma).

The school’s Umoja Karamu Feast that occurs near the traditional Thanksgiving holiday not only encourages unity within the community but the marketplace that allows vendors to sell African wares as well as the activities conducted during the feast represent Ujamma. During the feast there were students from all grade levels working together to put on a showcase of cultural skills including African drumming, dancing, and instrumental music. Community building is the focus when during the meal, elders in the community are the first to be served and to eat. All members of the community participate in the meal including custodial, office staff, and students’ family members. Baba Khari explained that the focus at the school is to “forge genuine relationships with parents”. In this instance, the observer noticed the school community coming together, cooperating, and sharing the work of creating a feast and celebration to ultimately build a sense of community. (i.e., Ujamma).

Frequency counts of the observations within the participant observation rubric for the Social Context are displayed in Table 41. As shown in the table, Ujamaa was represented in four



(n=4), Ujima was represented in three observations (n= 3), Nia was represented in two (n=2), Umoja was represented in one observation (n=1), Kujichagulia was represented in one observation (n=1), and Kuumba was represented in one observation (n=1). There were a total of nine observations that fit within the Social Context. Each X represents one instance when a principle was represented in an observation. Each observation illustrated multiple principles.

Table 41

*Nguzo Saba Principles Reflected within the Social Context*

Domains	Themes	<i>Umoja</i>	<i>Kujichagulia</i>	<i>Ujima</i>	<i>Ujamaa</i>	<i>Nia</i>	<i>Kuumba</i>	<i>Imani</i>
Social	African-Centered Practices	X	X		X		X	
	Relationship/Community/Family			XXX	XXX	XX		

**Summary.** Overall, Nguzo Saba principles that were most frequently reflected in the participant observations within each context were Kujichagulia, Ujima, and Ujamma. The observations that represented these three principles also represented multiple other Nguzo Saba principles as well. Except for the Imani principle, the Instructional context was the one context where all of the seven principles were represented within the observations. The seven components of the Nguzo Saba were mostly reflected in each context, but the hypothesis for Question 1 was not supported.

## **Research Question Eight**

**How do adults and students describe and understand racial identity, cultural values, belonging, achievement goals, learning, and behavior in an African-centered school? What is the role of the school in promoting African American racial identity and cultural values?**

For questions 8a and 8b, the hypotheses that students, teachers, and the principal would describe students having identities and values reflecting an African American racial identity and cultural values, that girls would view demonstrate stronger racial identity than boys and that participants would view the school as intentionally promoting African American racial identity and cultural values through teacher/school practices and teacher-student interactions was partially supported.

**Qualitative data analysis.** Interview data were coded using thematic analysis and the themes that emerged were used to identify the themes that could be used to answer both questions 8a and 8b as well as the themes that could answer both questions 8c and 8d. The data were then reviewed to see how respondent reflections were related by similar ideas within each relevant, individual theme.

**Student racial identity and cultural values.** In order to understand how racial identity and cultural values were reflected in students' experiences and the role of the school in promoting these constructs relevant themes that emerged from the thematic analysis were reviewed. Students reflected on their experiences in the school and highlighted ways in which the school promoted the development of the racial identity and cultural values and positive experience with the increased awareness of their racial identity. Three themes that were particularly relevant in students' reflections on how they experience racial identity, cultural values, and the schools' promotion of these constructs included traditional school differences, African-centered practices, and impact.

***Traditional school differences.*** Students were able to highlight that one difference between their school and more traditional schools was the school's cultural emphasis that would not be a focus elsewhere. Briana is in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and has been at ABC African-Centered school since the fourth grade and had two siblings at the school. She explained her experience of the school's cultural emphasis:

“I feel like you won't get this nowhere else. Most schools doesn't really teach you about your history. They teach about the European history and I feel like sometimes they only teach you about your African history when it's Black History Month because the school that my cousin goes to, they do that.”

Briana pointed out the fact that other schools are likely to not have the explicit promotion of student racial identity and cultural values in the practices and interactions within the school.

Teachers also discussed differences from traditional schools in how students experience racial identity and cultural values and how these are promoted in the school. Having the freedom to cover African-centered content in the classroom, promote positive images about African Americans, and invested staff were all differences teachers discussed. Baba Khari noted differences between the school and non-African-centered schools: “I can come into this environment and do it freely, not under the table, secretly or any of that.” Baba Khari discussed how he did not have to justify the African-centered pedagogy in his classroom and that he might have to answer questions at another school about having an African-centered focus in teaching students. At other schools teachers talked about not having the ability to cultivate students' racial identity and cultural values.

***African-centered practices.*** Many of the students highlighted that idea that they experience the school as one where their knowledge about African and African-American history

was expanded, their self-identity as an African-American is cultivated, and group identity was nourished through the visual images seen both in staff and with pictures and images, central features to instructional and other school practices within an African-centered school. Many students reiterated how the school taught them about their culture and cultivated their self-identity as an African American. Kya, an 8th grader, began attending ABC school in kindergarten and had a sister at the school. She was able to articulate the school's focus beyond academics: "They teach more than math and they teach more than science. They teach history about us...yeah, how to identify ourselves as Black people."

Teachers reflected on how the school and their instruction focus on knowledge of African and African American history and culture. Baba Kamal described how he incorporates African and African American culture within the curriculum by pulling from various approaches to math:

"I teach math and I'm kind of down with the other ways in which math is interpreted or has been used to instruct communities, most prominently the Nation of Gods Earth. I use some of their curriculum to help aspects of geometry that you may find in astrology. I deal with that to help give it relevance. Certain aspects of Kabbalistic sciences with gematria and helping students understand the frequency behind letters and numbers."

Baba Kamal infused spirituality and philosophy within his curriculum.

"So traditionally the three houses of African practice, or Pan-Africanism, Black Power, Black Nationalism, has always been the Nation of Islam, the Moorish Science Temple, and the Nation of Gods and Earths...we inculcate that within our curriculum and what we do and how we deliver as an African-centered school and an African-centered process."

Baba Kamal also discussed liking the freedom to impart this knowledge onto students. He reflected, “ I like the freedom that we have and being able to teach using Common Core... and still have integrated cultural ideals.”

Teachers noted that student’s self-identity is an important part of shaping their racial identity and cultural values and these teachers take responsibility for cultivating this identity. Baba Zion explained, “ I’m teaching them self-esteem, how to be spiritually strong, how to realize that the power is within them.” Baba Kamal explained that his role is to, “help them understand everything they need about themselves to grow and develop.” Mama Amina had been involved in African-centered education as a parent and now as an educator. With over 20 years of teacher experience, she had many references in her interview to the focus of an African-centered school. She noted the importance of students understanding who they are, “ We want them to carry on...we want them to have an understanding of who they are...whose they are and what they are doing here.”

Students also reflected on the school’s role in shaping their group identity and observance of group cultural norms for Africans and African Americans. Students discussed engaging in cultural practices, social experiences, and a cultural focus within the curriculum. Students also repeatedly mentioned how the décor of the school and/or classroom and the attire of teachers cultivated identity. When asked to describe her school and classrooms or reflect on how the school is an African-centered school Briana remarked:

“It’s a lot of African decorations in the class, like in math we’ve got the African flag. He has a table that can remind him of the ancestors. And sometimes, he shows us how and what it means. In social studies, sometimes we barely have to touch a book because we physically reenact what happened.

Dion, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student, attended a different African-centered school that closed two years ago and has been at ABC African-centered school for the last two years. He also talked about teachers pouring libations, a ritual often seen in African countries. In describing how the school is an African-centered school he stated that,

“I like how the school does Rites of Passage for the boys and the girls because it teaches you how to become a young lady into a woman and it teaches how to become a young boy into a grown man and a gentleman.”

Much of the teachers’ reflections within the theme of African-centered practices focused around the goal of nurturing students’ group cultural identity. The school intentionally shapes the way students identify with that which is African and African American so that students know what it means to be a part of the culture. Teachers talked about the physical environment of the classrooms as schools as one way to form the group identity. Baba Khari explained,

“The visual theme is African-centered...the traditional shrine...varied images of our people globally so they can understand we come in shapes, sizes, colors, all different styles. The physical environment, of course it has some certain cultural artifacts that I think students should be exposed to. I make sure we have representation, I try to give them as many images of a Diaspora as possible so they know that, you know, we’re Afro-Brazilians, Afro-Asians...the various images that we come in. So I have a boxer and a Masai warrior, so they can see these are both African men...so they feel like they have some cultural competencies.”

Rituals were also discussed within the theme of African-centered practices as a way to develop students’ group identity as African Americans. Teacher’s discussed the way they interact with students such as using African-centered practices within the classroom, preparation

for school-wide practices such as Unity Circle, and student participation in school-wide celebrations. Principal Aya explained that the instructional environment is important for developing student identity and values, “ We encourage alters if you want students to pay homage to their ancestors and things like that, to help them along the way because sometimes we need that strength from people that are no longer with us that you can all on”. She talked about the importance of using the Nguzo Saba principles in the classroom and highlighted that:

“We have school-wide celebrations for Umoja Karamu, which is similar to Thanksgiving. Then we have our Kwanzaa celebration annually which is around Christmastime, before we take that break. We have family nights that are monthly, parent meetings that are monthly. ”

The purpose behind African-centered practices is to cultivate student group identity and values, teachers explained that knowledge of culture and ancestral influence are key to developing this group identity.

“I think that we are able to share and express and pass on our culture through African-centered education. Our children know about our ancestors. They know that our ancestors are important to us and why they are important to us. They begin to embrace and feel free to be who they are in an African-centered environment (Baba Zion).”

**Impact.** Some students and teachers reflected on how students experience racial identity and cultural values in the school and the school’s promotion of these as why this school matters. Baba Khari stated, “ I think it’s important to have these types of schools so we can thrive and develop as who we are, unencumbered by the obstacles that want to keep us from becoming the norm for ourselves.” To Baba Khari, remarks suggest that the school impacts more than student learning. Its purpose is to help students and the larger school community to embrace African

American racial identity and cultural values as normative. When he mentions obstacles it suggests that some outside the school might try to prevent embracing one's identity and culture. Mama Amina sees the benefit of the school developing student as giving them pride and group identity that fosters student potential, "When you feel like you come from a lineage that has excellence, then your opportunities and potential then grows."

***Challenges with student racial identity and cultural values.*** Teachers and administrators also highlighted challenges in cultivating the racial identity and cultural values of students and how they experience these within school. One theme that emerged was teacher conflict with the school's African-centered approach. As a new teacher to the school, Baba Khari explained that, "something I think has been a challenge, to be quite honest, there's a difference between being knowledgeable about African culture and living out those cultural values. Because...I don't know there are philosophical differences. This teacher discussed his way of shaping the identity and culture of students as one that is frowned upon by the administration. He stated, "I've gotten a lot of flak [when saying things like] "pull your pants up" [or] "you don't answer me 'huh', you say 'yes' ". But apparently those things are a little too rigid." He continued, "I have to balance learning to be a lot more casual with my interaction with youth and less stringent about character based behavior, to put it as concise as I can." Elaborating on non-African-centered practices that he sees as not shaping students' racial identity and cultural values, he said, "...then there are certain practices here that are absolutely taboo in other African-centered school, absolutely candy, allowance of certain dress styles. The ability of certain teachers to court favor with leadership, students override teachers' rulings, and the lack of parental involvement." He also stated, "...the philosophical challenge between not so much behaviorally, but culturally. Do we



allow twerk videos even though it's popular amongst our folks? If we take a hard stand do we find ourselves ostracized and isolated? Should we accept it even if it means degradation”?

Similar to the theme of conflict with the schools African-centered approach was also the theme of implementation challenges of an African-centered approach. These challenges can be seen as impediments to student racial identity and cultural values being promoted by the school and could impact how students experience racial identity and cultural values in the school. One idea within the theme of implementation challenges was instructor limitations. Since teachers impart knowledge about African and African American history and culture and because of this play a role in how students experience racial identity and cultural values in the school, interviewed teachers discussed teachers' knowledge about African-centered education as being important. Baba Khari explained that, “Instructors can create limitations...lack of knowledge or understanding of how to interpose, interconnect and make the connection” Another teacher, Baba Zion, explained some teachers don't have the familiarity with African-centeredness, “... you know for some people they're here because they were seeking a job and they found their place here and they're not as familiar with the culture.” Both teachers appeared to see teachers who were not as familiar with the African-centered approach as a hindrance to promoting the school's focus on racial identity and cultural values.

Another implementation challenge in implementing an African-centered approach, which could have an impact on student's racial identity and culture, was what teachers described as the State Department of Education interfering because of legislative and educational mandates on the school. Baba Zion stated,

“Those who seek to direct or provide the structure in which an African-centered public school must function may not understand some of the things we do or why we do them.

So there is often a need to translate or try to figure out or reexamine how we're still going to accomplish our goals within the context of this structure. So sometimes that gets to be a challenge."

The implications of specific mandates like No Child Left Behind legislation was mentioned by Principal Aya.

"At one point our school was all African-centered staff. Like these people lived it, breathed it, talked it. And with No Child Left Behind we had to let them go and bring in certified instructors. These instructors came from DPS, they came from parochial schools, they came from private schools. And they just weren't aligned with what we were doing culturally. So in those cases there were some limitations, definitely, especially on how instruction was delivered. So it became more academic focused than culturally focused."

Both interviewees recognized the difficulty in using an African-centered approach given legislative requirements. They seemed to see these requirements as interfering with how well the school could fully implement the approach, suggesting that promoting student identity and values might be compromised.

Within the theme of implementation challenges of an African-centered approach is lack of acceptance of the approach from students and parents. Teachers talked about this as a roadblock to the school's promotion of student racial identity and cultural values and an impediment in how students experience racial identity and cultural values. Students' parents were described as interfering with the school's promotion of student racial identity and cultural values in several ways. One way is how students get mixed messages from school and home about the value of the norms in the African-centered school. Mama Amina explained some

students get the message from home that, "...whatever you all are doing that really isn't that important, it's just important that you just be there." Baba Khari reiterated having parents who say things like, "I don't want my children calling anybody 'Mama' or 'Baba' as living in a "dichotomy" where the home and school don't agree in how to reference teachers at the school. Principal Aya explained that parental support of the school's efforts to cultivate racial identity and cultural values through an African-centered approach is "the most challenging thing". She continued,

" But because a third of our students come from the neighborhood, it's the convenience factor. It's like parents believe 'you go to that school because it's up the street...not that I believe in the philosophy, not that I believe in the culture.' " (Principal Aya)

Teachers noted that some parents have even instructed students to just go through the motions of participating in school rituals and practices in explaining that students are encouraged to not be fully present during activities such as Unity Circle. Such incongruence between home and school appeared to interfere with students assimilating into the African-centered beliefs and practices of the school, which they described as problematic for promoting student racial identity and cultural values.

Under the theme of implementation challenges that might affect students' racial identity and cultural values in the school was this idea that students do not internalize African-centeredness. Teachers reflected on their frustration, " It's draining...sometimes they get it, sometimes they don't." (Baba Kamal) Mama Amina lamented, "So I always get disappointed by our middle school kids because we've fed so much into them and then they make these huge decisions that are contrary to what they've been taught." Aliyah, a student who had been at ABC African-Centered School since the third grade, commented on the behavior of students that might

not reflect some cultural values of the school, “More students need to follow instead of trying to go against the rules.”

There was also this idea that there are cultural influences outside of the African-centered approach that work against the students’ experience of racial identity and cultural values and/or the school’s promotion of these. Baba Kamal explained that, “It’s a retraining, a reprogramming that has to go on. Not many students come in with an African-centered point of view. (Baba Kamal) It’s the neighborhood child that this is new to. Calling somebody ‘Mama’ and ‘Baba’ is weird to them.” Teachers talked about societal norms and influences that work against what the school is trying to do by describing the competing influences of parents, social media, and other cultural norms. An administrator acquiesced that the school alters its approach in response to outside influences,

“So we have actually kind of went to a community centered approach, which is the same as an African-centered approach but it sounds a little different. Now you’re saying you’re encompassing a community so you’re going to cater to the community, which is what we do in an African-centered school. But it’s a little more palatable.” (Principal Aya)

Not only was there a theme that seemed to reflect a lack of acceptance of the African-centered approach in the interviews, some teachers and students in their interviews described what could be called student aversion to African-centeredness that could affect students’ racial identity and cultural values within the school. This aversion is talked about almost as seeing things that are African-centered as negative. One teacher explained,

“ They have this real aversion to Africa. It’s probably because it’s cultural because they don’t understand that Africa is a land of many different cultures with many different

dressess, languages, foods, and they feel that they have to subscribe to one on the continent as opposed to no, your culture *is* Africa.” (Baba Kamal)

Baba Khari remarked,

“Some of the biggest battles though is convincing African American children that they’re African. That they have a link to Africa...because they have not linked Africa to being poor, to kids with big bellies, to jungle. And that’s not what they want to associate with.”

Some students are not full participants in the activities and some students struggle with adopting the school’s version of racial identity and cultural values particularly during adolescence. Teachers mentioned that students do not always understand what is said during the Unity Circle and what the songs or chants actually mean. The principal even lamented over how some middle school students, who have been at the school for several years, appear to not accept the African-centered approach. Once students reach the middle school years, they seem to switch in the acceptance of the approach, from her perspective. She also mentioned having a similar aversion in her adolescence when she was first introduced to African-centered education:

“...but when I turned 14 I was introduced to this African-centered perspective, and I was combative at first , really, because it was different than what I had grown up with. So I was questioning why do you have all these Black people up her and where are the White people at? They did some stuff too, presidents and this, that, and the other. It’s not until I grew a little older that I understood why I had these positive Black images around me and it made me feel like there’s tons of things that we’ve done.” (Principal Aya)

**Summary.** Most girls seemed to like the African-centered approach in teaching about African and African American culture. Students and teachers did not discuss a difference in how

boys and girls demonstrated their racial identity. Thus this was not supported. From the interview data, the school appears to be promoting African and African American racial identity and cultural values. Teachers did acknowledge that challenges existed in students adopting or internalizing the school's focus on African-centered education and fully adopting a racial identity promoted by the school. Some challenges included implementation challenges of the African-centered approach, cultural influences from outside of the school, lack of acceptance of African-centeredness, and student aversion to the racial identity and cultural values of the school, especially among adolescents.

**Belonging, motivation, learning, and behavior.** The hypotheses that students, teachers, and the principal would report experiencing a sense of belongingness that reflects the African-centered school value of *familyhood* and that the school's practices that explicitly cultivate community would engender student belongingness with each other as well as with teachers and staff members were supported. Additionally, the hypotheses that participants would also view student's sense of belongingness as being positively related to a mastery goal orientation and negatively related to a performance goal orientation were not supported in the data. Finally, the hypotheses that participants would view students' sense of belongingness as positively related to their learning, related to their behavior, and negatively related to incidences of disciplinary outcomes were partially supported.

Participants reflected on how students experienced belongingness and discussed ways in which such an environment fostered learning and a classroom supporting motivational goals. Two main themes that included references to belongingness and learning were traditional school differences and relationship/community/family. Participants referenced the connection between belonging and learning and motivational goals within these themes.

***Student belonging: traditional school differences.*** The nature of students' sense of belonging was plentiful in the interviews with teachers and parents. Under the theme of traditional school differences students and teachers identified how other schools did not provide the connection, support, acceptance or inclusion like this African-centered school. Teachers reflected on past experiences teaching at other schools, "...I saw major deficits in terms of the connectivity the student had to the school, to the teachers, and to the learning itself. I don't see a community at schools. "I think at most conventional schools there are teachers that the children will gravitate toward and talk to. But in this environment it is more universal." (Baba Khari) Teachers also focused on the presence of the Black male in the African-centered environment and how this was lacking in other schools. "My job is to be a disciplinarian slash father figure. So we are pushed to interact with students on a level of more personal than your average public school would require." (Baba Khari) Mama Amina noted that at other schools, "There is not a strong presence of men, fathers in the community." Principal Aya also commented on how she has heard students talk about the lack of belonging they feel once moving on to high school after attending this African-centered school, "...the response I get from students when they leave and they return...I don't feel the closeness...we don't have a connection...(they say) I don't have friends like I do here...disconnect between them and the teacher...it's just not the same as what we have here."

Tenecia attended one other school before coming to ABC African-centered school in the fifth grade. Now in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, she contrasted their experiences in other schools as they reflected on how they did not experience belonging in those schools. She explained, "I feel like the love I have here I get nowhere else. It's the environment, at any other school the teachers are not going to care about you as much as they do here." One student even highlighted her negative

experiences at another school related to lack of belonging related to suspensions. This was Juwanna's second year at ABC. She explained,

"They didn't care at all. I feel like I was set up for failure. I feel like I got suspended a lot because I was Black. I always go into it with White girls. White boys. I fought a White boy. That's why I ended up packing to leave...No they didn't care. They didn't ask me what happened. They just suspended me. That was that."

***Student belonging: relationship, community, and family.*** The amount of interview data coded under the theme relationship/community/family was second only to the theme of African-centered practices. This data reflected teachers' and students' perceptions about how students experience belonging, how student belonging helps motivational goals, and helps their learning. Most of this data reflected students experiencing belonging. Some of the interviews included instances where teachers or students expressed instances where belonging helped students learn. Very rarely did this data explicitly make some connection between belonging helping student motivation to learn. Examples of teachers talking about students experiencing belonging included how teachers facilitate an environment where students can feel accepted and supported. Baba Khari talked about school policies, "It's highly suggested that outside of the school hours that we interact. So if the students are having a game, if a particular group of students are doing a rehearsal, as much as possible interacting with the youth in a community in regular settings so they can say,

"Hey, Baba you wear jeans and you at a basketball game?" And that will bring relevance and it will bring that sense of my community is rich. Hey, there's my teacher, there's my mom, that's my coach over there and it's not just a barren community that doesn't have anybody of value."



He continued by describing the extent of the relationship between teacher and student that is a part of how students feel like they belong, “ My job as a *mwaliimu* or teacher doesn’t stop when they graduate. I’ll be their *mwaliimu* forever.” Baba Zion talked about acts he makes within school hours to build connection with students,

“...they just want to find a place to sit and relax and think and have comfort, sometimes they come and do that. They come sit with me... Sometimes they want us to respond.

Then they get to say what they really want to say...”

Baba Khari also discussed that the administration supports the teachers doing things that can help students feel belonging, “Our school administration reiterates on a regular basis that we must remember to treat the children as we would treat our own, because they are our own.” Mama Amina explained that the school helps students to feel that they can approach anyone about what concerns them. This teacher explained that the principal even will take students to her home and open her home up to give personal cooking classes and treat the students like family. Even the principal referred to having “countless daughters” in describing her relationship with students.

“So I have countless daughters here. I do have a couple cousins that go here, like blood cousins. Because they say, “Hey cousin,” then I have another kid say, “Can you be my cousin too?” So I have tons of nieces and nephews, cousins, daughters around here. And some take it to heart. So I’ve been invited to birthday parties, going to people’s houses or funerals of their grandparents or parents, and things like that.” (Principal Aya)

When students talked about how they experience belonging in the school during the interview, they often used the word, “family”, which also is an example of the belonging students experience.

*Student-to-student belonging.* Teachers and students reflected on student interactions with other peers that can facilitate a sense of belonging. Baba Khari explained,

“ I guess the thing I see is speaking and lending itself to African-centered learning is cross-peer interaction. You have a third grader interacting with a seventh grader interacting with a seventh grader and talk and play, which is refreshing. That’s not always seen. And that’s a major component of African-centered learning. Not rigid peer, I’m ten, you’re ten, we don’t speak to 12 year-olds.”

Such cross-grade connections between students is an example of how grade and age boundaries were less rigid in this school, allowing students across the school to interact regularly.

Principal Aya recounted an experience where students were supporting each other in the midst of some teasing that occurred,

“Just recently one of the students, there was a video on Snapchat that was being passed around through the middle school. He was embarrassed. He started crying, you know, just not feeling well. He’s an eighth grader and he’s been here for about four years. So there was a group of students that were laughing, making him feel pretty bad about the video that he posted. It was a student who had been here now for five years, she went over to console him and in the middle of consoling him she asked them, “Is this how we lift our brother up?” And that was amazing to me, to hear her say that! And with that those other people that came to stand behind her to say that you know, we all got some embarrassing videos, we all look funny...so we shouldn’t be laughing and making him feel bad. Now I don’t know if that made him feel good instantly but by the end of the day he was over it, the video wasn’t being circulated anymore and he wasn’t being teased about it. So to me, those are the things that matter.”

When students talk about their interactions with other students, many report helping each other, feeling welcome, and getting along. Students described teachers as helping them with their work and in turn helping their peers with their schoolwork. For example, Kya, remarked how students in the school welcome new students:.. “When I came here I didn’t talk to nobody, but they came up to me and talked to me.”

***Student belonging related to learning.*** Students talked about how teachers work to help students learn within a context that focuses on supporting students. This can be conceptualized as belonging facilitating learning. Students talked about students being in a supportive environment where teachers care about students learning and will help them when they need it so that they can be successful in their learning. Aliyah talked about how, “ The school makes you feel like family and it brings you up. If you feel like you can’t do something they’ll try their best for you to understand and won’t give up on you.”

Teachers and administrators gave some examples of how the goal of supporting students facilitates learning in their classrooms. Mama Amina described having a responsibility to support students in ways beyond and including academics, which can be considered as engendering belonging as well as learning. She explained,

“ I am responsible for preparing my students to learn and preparing myself to teach on all levels, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually. I am responsible for the well being of...the children. And so that entails making sure that in particular the children have what they need to learn in this environment.”

Principal Aya explained how within an African-centered environment multiple parts of the student are supported and supporting their learning comes from this as well, “...the root of being an African-centered school is being centered. Having the child at the center of their own

education...cater to that child holistically, emotionally, socially, spiritually.” She explained how classrooms develop students’ sense of belonging and facilitate learning,

“We try to make our classrooms like home. So we encourage plants, we encourage altars if you want so students can pay homage to their ancestors and things like that, to help them along the way because sometimes we need that strength from people that are no longer with us that you can call on. So we start with a setting, making sure that there’s splashes of African fabric and making sure the room is set up that will lend a hand to cooperative learning. And then with instructional strategies, making sure that it’s catering to students. So teachers are digging deep into data, making sure that the lessons that they’ve prepared are actually lessons that the students are in need of.”

Mama Amina described taking care of the students’ needs in order to facilitate learning, “...once the students have their basics, food, eat, breakfast, whatever, once they realize that they’re safe mentally, physically, spiritually, verbally, that actualization begins and then learning is excelled.”

***Student belonging and motivation to learn.*** Teachers who described efforts to develop belonging in their classrooms also discussed cultivating motivation to learn. Mama Amina discussed providing learning experiences that are not centered on the student earning a grade, but that pique their curiosity and develop their desire to learn about a topic:

“I do put some very subtle emphasis on things that are in the environment that I want the children to take advantage of and to learn about that, for instance I have a container of mealworms, and when I put the container of mealworms on my desk....I want them to be mindful of life cycles. I don’t want to make it a lesson, a formal lesson, notes, you get graded...The mealworms went through metamorphosis and when they were in their

chrysalis they looked like they were dead. So I got a lot of inquiries during that time.

Then maybe over the break they morphed into beetles and everybody wanted to know where'd those beetles come from and what happened to the mealworms. So I let them work through that. They talked to each other. Some students who had some experience with it were able to shed some light on it. But I have opportunities for the students to work on their own."

She talked about how it is important to have a love for learning in her students, "There are a lot of other things that might concern other people, such as getting an A on a test...honestly grades don't mean a lot to me, except as a way of evaluating the experience and to help to bridge the gaps. In a perfect world, we would just be learning freely and there would be no grades." (Mama Amina)

**Not belonging.** Within several themes, there was the idea that some students did not experience belonging. Though teachers and students talked about an environment in the school that attempts to create students' sense of belonging and both discussed situations in which belonging was actually felt, there were instances where students experienced a lack of belonging. When students are new to the school environment, they reported feeling not accepted, respected, or included. Some students mentioned feeling unwelcomed when they first arrived at the school. Toriana, an 8<sup>th</sup> grader, who had been at the school for three years, recounted her initial social experiences at the school, "When I first got here it was terrible. People picked on me a lot." Juwana talked about her lack of cultural fit when she first arrived, "Yeah, because I had came...I went to school on the Hill so you know I sat up straight, I always talked with my nose sort of...so they picked on me for that. They called me a little white girl. I was picked on for the whole fifth grade. So I just sat in the corner and I was just quiet."

Other students mentioned social dynamics between students where bullying and fights occur and not connecting with teachers. Several students mentioned bullying occurring between students. Some students described fights or how bullying and fights occur. Students talked about other students being mean and making fun of them. Aliyah remembered her experience as a fifth grader, which impacts how she interacts with students as an eighth grader, “I don’t really let people get close to me. I don’t know why. It’s always been like that because fifth grade people made fun of me. Same people that make fun of me are in my class now.”

Some of the interviews also reflected that students experience a lack of connection with staff. One student was unable to identify a staff person in the school that she felt she could go to if she had a problem or an issue. Jenay, an 8<sup>th</sup> grader,, had been at the school since kindergarten and had three other siblings at the school. She explained, “So the administration don’t believe some people. They used to, I don’t know if they still do, they have pets around the school.”

**Summary.** Students and teachers reflected on ways students experience belonging in the school. Students, teachers, and the principal recounted ways in which students experience this belongingness with each other as well as with teachers and staff. Students also mentioned that there are times when bullying and fights between students and lack of connection occurs between students and staff. On the whole, more respondents described feeling and experiencing a sense of belongingness amongst students. The theme relationship/community/family coded with the most data only second to African-centered practices.

Only one teacher discussed implementing teaching strategies that can lead to achievement goals where students are focused on learning to increase their ability. No teachers or students discussed behaviors that can be described as motivational achievement goals. There

was no specific data about students having the desire to learn to develop their ability, a desire to demonstrate their ability, or a desire to avoid demonstrating their lack of ability.

Many teachers expressed ways in which they experienced belongingness with and amongst students and students described experiencing belongingness with teachers, staff, and students. In these same classrooms and with these same teachers and staff where students experience belongingness, students expressed getting help that facilitates their learning.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION

The current study examined how students experience racial identity, cultural values, belongingness, motivation, learning, and behavior within an African-centered school. It explored the role of gender and grade in identity, values, belongingness, and motivation as well. The study investigated potential relationships between belongingness, motivation, and learning. How students experience and understand identity, culture, belongingness, motivation, and behavior through the voices of students and staff was also a focus. A mixed methods approach was used to obtain complementary qualitative and quantitative data to explore overlapping or discrepant patterns. The goal of this chapter is to integrate these two parallel strands of data in the interpretation of the results. Limitations of the research are discussed as well as implications for future research.

#### **Research Question One**

**How is an African-centered approach reflected in an African-centered school?** The current study examined how an African-centered approach was reflected within a particular African-centered school. It was hypothesized that the Nguzo Saba principles, a centerpiece to an African-centered approach (Durden, 2007; Kifano, 1996; Lee, 1992; Shockley, 2007; Tangella, 2012), would be reflected in the instructional, administrative, physical, and social context of the school. Using a rubric to organize participant observations that were representative of these principles, singling out observations that represented multiple principles, identifying associated interview data organized from thematic analysis helped to assess whether the school reflected an African-centered approach. Through this analysis it was found that the values Kujichagulia, Ujima, and Ujamma were represented within each context across observations. The focus on



one's individual and collective identity (Kujichagulia), embracing differences within the community and working together to help build and improve one's community (Ujima), and cooperation, shared work, and shared wealth that can build communities and businesses (Ujamaa) were all present in the observations and supported through the views of student and staff interviews. While these three principles were often represented by the observations, these same observations reflected numerous other Nguzo Saba principles as well. Additionally, observations within the instructional context represented each Nguzo Saba principle except Imani. Overall, all the Nguzo Saba principles were reflected at least once in the participant observations and the presence of the Nguzo Saba was also supported through interview data.

The participant observation data reflected the Nguzo Saba by demonstrating ways in which the principles are evident throughout the school. Within the instructional context, the learning environment supports making learning relevant, teachers sharing stories of overcoming adversity and channeling one's experiences to build up the African American community. The administrative context reflected expectations, social contracts of behavior to improve the classroom community and disciplinary actions that support the entire community and building up the student community through holding each other accountable for actions and teaching each other about issues that impact the entire community. Rather than traditional methods of suspension, students were able to contribute to fixing and preventing problematic student behavior such as drug use and abuse. The physical context of the school intentionally builds the self-esteem of students as well as individual and collective identity through a plethora of visual images including fabrics, motifs, masks, posters, and pictures that reflect uplifting the African American community. Social gatherings and interactions within the social context of the school emphasize cooperation amongst the community, emphasizing supporting Black business,

fostering a strong parent community that empowers parents, and parents who support the African-centered ethos of the school leading the parent organization.

The quantitative data confirmed and disconfirmed ways in which an African-centered approach is reflected in this African-centered school. This data also helped to support the idea that the Nguzo Saba principles were reflected within the school context. One way to explore how an African-centered approach is reflected in the school is to look at how students scored on measures similar to the Nguzo Saba principles. Measures of racial identity, cultural values, and sense of belonging can be conceptualized as representing principles within the Nguzo Saba. The racial identity-centrality and racial identity- private regard can be conceptualized as similar to the principle Kujichagulia as these constructs focus on one's individual and collective identity as an African American as well as one's thoughts about this group membership. Sense of belonging focuses on the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the school social environment (Goodenow, 1993). Belongingness can be considered embedded within the principles of Ujima and Ujamaa. These principles focus on embracing differences, working together, cooperation, and shared work to build and improve communities and businesses. When compared to previous research of students in non-African-centered school environments the current study demonstrated racial identity-centrality (Elementary Centrality:  $M = 4.04$ ;  $SD = .98$ ); Middle School Centrality =  $4.22$ ;  $SD = .76$ ), racial identity- private regard (Elementary Private Regard:  $M = 4.50$ ;  $SD = .$ ; Middle School Private Regard =  $4.69$ ;  $SD = .47$ ) , and sense of belonging ( $M = 3.51$ ;  $SD = .52$ ) were higher than previous research (Elementary Centrality:  $M = 4.04$ ;  $SD = .98$ ; Elementary Private Regard:  $M = 4.50$ ;  $SD = .$ ; Rowley et al., 2008; Middle School Centrality =  $4.22$ ;  $SD = .76$ ; Middle School Private Regard =  $4.69$ ;  $SD = .47$ ; Scottham et al., 2008), but the level of cultural values varied in

comparison to research. Collective works and responsibility ( $M = 1.35$   $SD = .45$ ) was higher in the current study in comparison to previous research ( $M = 1.26$ ;  $SD = .32$ ) indicating weaker endorsement of this cultural value. However, both Cooperative Economics ( $M = 1.63$ ;  $SD = .63$ ) and Self-Determination ( $M = 1.27$ ;  $SD = .49$ ) were lower on average in comparison to previous research (Cooperative Economics:  $M = 2.13$ ;  $SD = .71$ ; Self-Determination:  $M = 1.39$ ;  $SD = .50$ ) indicating stronger acceptance of these values. Gender differences within the quantitative data suggests that students may endorse racial identity, cultural values in the school at different levels. The overall qualitative research supported that the school was an African-centered school, but how well the students were reflective of this approach in their personal beliefs and perceptions appears to vary according to student-level factors.

Previous research has discussed how the *Nguzo Saba* are central and important to the implementation of an African-centered school. Scholars have discussed that how it is infused within the curriculum and school cultural fabric (Durden, 2007; Lomotey, 1992; Shockley, 2007; 2010; Tangella, 2012). Researchers note that emphasizing the values within the curriculum and the school culture encourages commitment to the values such as togetherness, collective action, love, and responsibility and ultimately “a sense of African nationalism” (Shockley, 2007, p.). Durden (2007) argued that the emphasis helps students “internalize their role and moral obligation” for themselves and to the African American community. The findings of the current study supported previous research, which found that these values are transmitted through administrative rules and practices, physical space of school, social interactions between teachers, staff and students, as well as curricular methods (Shockley, 2010).

According to the racial identity context-congruence perspective a school’s racial identity-context congruence is important for fostering students’ sense of belonging and academic

outcomes. When others in the school and the individual student see their racial group membership as a defining feature and students have pride in their racial group membership and perceive that the schools values this membership, a sense of belonging can be an important mechanism through which students develop motivation to learn. It is important to consider the context of the school and whether it is structured in a way that fosters racial identity-context congruence. The current study found that most of the Nguzo Saba principles were evident in the instructional, administrative, physical, and social contexts of an African-centered school. This was important for laying the foundation for how the school might foster racial identity-context congruence for its African American students. This study was framed around the idea that an African-centered school, through this congruence, might foster students' sense of belonging and be important for their academic outcomes. The findings of this study support previous research regarding the purpose and function of an African-centered school. Researchers believe that the way in which an African-centered school sees being African-American as a defining feature for students, supports students viewing their racial group membership this way, and creating a school that has norms around valuing this membership is a foundational feature of this type of school (Clarkston & Johnstone, 2011; Durden, 2007; Shockley, 2007). Student and teacher reflections about their words and the practices in the classrooms and around the school suggested that being African American was discussed as central to the students and most of the students reflected on the school's intentional focus on teaching them about what it means to be African American. Higher racial identity-centrality scores with the current sample in comparison to previous research supports the idea that students in the school find being African American as a defining feature. Researchers have also described how African-centered schools focus on Africa as a source of identity for its students, teach racial identity, and reorient students values and

actions by viewing Africa as central to their identity in order to develop a school climate that is supportive, understanding, and encouraging (as cited in Durden, 2007; Shockley, 2007). The observations suggested that within the instruction, the administrative rules, the social environment, and the physical aesthetics, this African-centered school is focused on what it means to be an African descendant, an African-American, and seeking to influence the perspective of its students to accept and value this identity.

Previous researchers (Durden, 2007; Lomotey, 1992; Shockley, 2007; 2010; Tengella, 2012); have discussed the idea that African-centered schools should be creating experiences that cultivate student identity and cultural values and that familyhood is a central feature of an African-centered approach. Within the current research the school-wide meals and celebrations such as Umoja Karamu and the Unity Circle at the beginning of the day center the students on what it means to be African American by reciting values and affirmations that include this message. Family Nights, parent meetings, and classroom pedagogy appear to bridge connections between movies, literature, and everyday events to the African American experience. Tengella (2012) found students positively endorsed having experiences that reflected the Nguzo Saba principles. More than 60% of students reported experiencing positive relationships, social interactions, social behaviors, faith, self-esteem, identity, and creativity, on ratings of the Nguzo Saba principles in Tengella's (2012) research. Thus, the higher racial identity, cultural values, and belongingness ratings found in the current study in comparison to research conducted at other non-African-centered schools, provides evidence that ideas and values foundational to students' racial and cultural identity characterize the classroom and overall school experiences in this African-centered school.

In qualitative research, researchers have found similar findings to the current study in being able to observe a focus on the Nguzo Saba principles in order to cultivate racial identity-context congruence. Nap (2008) found that an African-centered school promoted the principles to redress negative school experiences African American students had at previous schools and to create connections within social interactions between students and staff. Nyameke (2010) highlight observations of school-wide celebrations using the Nguzo Saba principles (e.g Kwanzaa) as ways to implement an African-centered pedagogy. Tengella (2012) also found that the Nguzo Saba principles were being transmitted to students through curriculum and interactions with students.

In the current study, students repeatedly made references to the school teaching them about what it means to be African American, teaching them about their history, and teaching them about what it means to live in this society as an African American. Most students expressed an appreciation for this emphasis and commented how their learning about these ideas has increased. Teachers and the principal stated the importance of uplifting their African American students so that they see their racial group membership as positive. Talking to students using terms as “brother” and “sister” added to creating a family environment. Social experiences such as school-wide meals and celebrations, which include African and African American cultural practices, were used to teach and celebrate being African American. It did appear that students recognized and appreciated the emphasis on what it means to be African American and they did participate in the activities where this was emphasized. With racial identity and cultural values scores that were higher than previous research, this suggests students are internalizing the message of this African-centered school.

Within the instructional, administrative, social, and physical context of this school, evidence of an African-centered school was found. The Nguzo Saba principles were reflected in these contexts and student's stronger perceptions of racial identity, cultural values, and sense of belonging in comparison to research conducted at non-African-centered schools also provide evidence of an African-centered school. Reflections of the Nguzo Saba principles are an important part of understanding the school in the current study as an authentic African-centered school. These findings suggest that the school is providing a student experience that reflects central principles for the African-centered approach. Moreover, some students appear to be adopting identity, values, and belongingness that is reflective of an African-centered school. This research provides another example of how African-centered schools focus on the racial identity and cultural values of its African-American students, promote *familyhood*, and use the instruction, administration practices, and social and physical environment to reinforce the Nguzo Saba principles. These are key to an African-centered school and the current study suggests the school is an authentic African-centered school.

## **Research Question Two**

**What is the level of racial identity, cultural values, sense of belonging, and achievement goal orientation for boys and girls in each grade at this school?** The current study explored the level of racial identity, cultural values, sense of belonging, and achievement goal orientation for boys and girls in each grade. It was hypothesized that girls would have a higher racial identity and the difference would be larger among older students. In comparison to previous research, cultural values were expected to be stronger, belongingness and master goal orientation were expected to be higher, and performance-approach goal orientation and performance-avoid goal orientation were expected to be lower. Cultural values were expected to

decrease with grade and gender differences were exploratory for cultural values, belongingness, and achievement goal orientations.

Quantitative data partially confirmed the hypotheses. Due to a small sample size, analyses to find meaningful, significant findings were not feasible. However, patterns in the data suggested elementary and middle school girls did have higher racial identity than boys. It is difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the mean differences between boys and girls on racial identity and cultural values, but the research offers some ideas worth considering. Some have hypothesized that girls are socialized to embrace the racial identity of African Americans through their tendency to cultivate social relationships (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). The nurturance and closeness in social relationships that girls can gravitate towards could be a means by which this affinity to one's racial identity is cultivated. Smith and colleagues (2009) suggested that the feeling of belongingness with their group through their racial identity could foster healthy development. It may be, as others have suggested (Cross and Mason, 1997), that girls and young women may be more interdependent and concerned with being connected to others and maintaining this relationship with those of a similar race is natural and meaningful. The strong male presence of male teachers and staff might also provide social models for elementary male students to more strongly adopt the cultural values of the school as the staff attempts to make students' school experiences and interactions culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1996). This supports the racial identity-context congruence theory and the important role that a supportive racial climate can have on developing a racial identity that engenders belongingness for some students (Byrd & Chavous, 2011).

The gender differences in racial identity and cultural values suggest that teaching and affirming the Nguzo Saba principles across the school and home setting may be key. While



interviewing the principal at the school she indicated that approximately 1/3 of students attended the school because the family lives in the same neighborhood of the school and therefore did not select the school because of its African-centered focus, but rather because of its accessibility and convenience. The principal and at least one other teacher also noted that parents are not always as willing to adopt the African-centered approach. These factors were not explored in the current research, but could have played a role in the differential ways in which male and female students endorsed racial identity and cultural values.

Gender differences found with belonging scores were exploratory. The current study revealed boys had a pattern of higher levels of belongingness in comparison to girls. Gender differences in belonging in non-African-centered schools suggests that girls will often identify more with school and have higher levels of belonging in general than boys (Anderman, 2002; Van Houtte & Stevens, 2009; Voekl, 1997). They have also reported higher emotional engagement in school (Wang et al., 2011). Often researchers point toward that lack of connection and antithetical relationship between school and African American boys as one reason for girls having a higher level of belonging (Barbarin, 2010; McMillian, Frierson, & Campbell, 2011). The findings in this study show that this is not always the case; boys may not only experience belongingness to the same degree as girls, but also feel more connected. It may be that the valuing of African American culture and identity by the larger social context may matter more for boys than for girls.

Oyserman, Brickman, Bybee, and Celious (2006) found that in-group belonging, as indicated by physical markers of similar dark skin tone, for African-American males in particular, can create connection to the in-group because the students look like in-group members. Moreover, when schools are able to counter the negative school experience of African

American boys by students being connected with teachers it could be that belongingness can be encouraged for African American boys. Most research in this area has not been done in schools that are African-centered. The current research showed that boys reported higher levels of belongingness in a school where connections between students and teachers who shared and explicitly valued their racial values and identities were encouraged. Also, seeing many African-American male staff persons who reflected back to boys their own image could also create an in-group sense of belongingness for male students.

Higher sense of belonging scores in the current study in comparison to previous research (Goodenow & Grade, 1993) when the PSSM measure was developed could also be associated with the positive racial climate of an African-centered school. The racial identity-context congruence perspective suggests that belonging is an important mechanism by which the racial identity-context congruence affects motivation. The data in the current study suggests that the school has created a context that fosters connections, respect, acceptance, support, and inclusion. While it is not possible to determine from this study whether a positive racial climate for students is the cause of the higher level of students' sense of belonging in comparison to non-African-centered schools, prior research has supported an association between a supportive racial climate and students' sense of belonging. In an ethnically and economically diverse sample of over 3,000 urban middle schools, Kogachi (2003) found that experiencing a supportive racial climate significantly predicted a greater sense of belonging for students. Byrd and Chavous (2011) also found that a positive racial climate can encourage belonging, particularly when the students perceive the school to be fair and equitable around race.

Gender differences in achievement goal orientation were also exploratory. Girls reported a higher mastery goal orientation than boys at the elementary level, but not at the middle school

level patterns of scores were comparable. Findings were also less consistent with performance goal orientation scores. The current study replicates previous research that has found elementary girls having a pattern of higher mastery orientation than boys (Gherasim et al., 2013; Middleton & Midgley, 1997; Shim, Ryan, and Anderson, 2008; Pekrun, Elliot, & Maier, 2006). There is existing evidence that African American girls, when compared to both African American boys and Caucasian girls and boys, show significantly higher mastery goal orientations (Shim et al., 2008). Students in the current study, on average, had a higher desire to develop ability as an achievement goal in comparison to previous research (Shannon et al., 2012). Researchers have suggested that a mastery orientation might be especially salient for African Americans because African American cultural values align with a mastery orientation (Gutman, 2006). Thus, African American schools, as well as parents, who endorse cultural values such as the importance of learning and having confidence in one's ability, may promote mastery oriented goals in their students/children.

Previous research has found that boys tend to report higher performance-approach (Freudenthaler, Spinath, & Neubauer, 2008; Middleton & Midgley, 1997) and performance-avoid goal orientations (Shim et al., 2008). The current research had mixed support for these findings. Elementary girls and middle school girls had a pattern of higher performance-approach goal orientation scores and performance-avoid goal orientation scores, respectively. This aligns with previous research's findings that girls become less confident in adolescence and middle school (Fredericks & Eccles, 2002; Lord & Eccles, 1994). An increase in performance avoidant achievement goals may reflect girls' perceptions of being less capable and greater pressure to perform in the middle school years. Elementary boys and middle school boys had higher performance-avoid and performance-approach scores, respectively. In this African-centered

school, where three out of four teachers and one middle school paraprofessional were male, perhaps boys grew in confidence and competence as a result of the connection and support provided by these individuals. Researchers have suggested that changes in achievement goal orientation can be influenced by changes in perceptions of competence (Jagacinski, Kumar, Boe, Lam, & Miller, 2010). Perhaps male staff provided positive African American role models who not only communicated high expectations, but also motivated male students by providing evidence of competence and success (Dee, 2007). Further research would be needed to examine the strength of this pattern and why girls may become more performance-avoidant as they approached adolescence, while boys showed more performance approach goals.

Other researchers also point toward the facilitative nature of performance-approach goals when mastery goal orientation is also present (Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001). That elementary girls and middle school boys had a pattern of higher performance-approach goal orientation in comparison to their opposite gendered classmates would need to be further investigated for simultaneous levels of mastery goal orientation to suggest its adaptive capability. For elementary girls in particular, the display of higher mastery goal orientation and performance-approach orientation may be a productive combination that changed in middle school. For the middle school boys in the current study, previous researchers have suggested that higher levels of performance-approach goal orientation may reflect African American adolescent boys' valuing competition (being better than others), societal ideals of masculinity, dominance, and competition (Shim et al., 2008). Middle school has also been described as more performance oriented in general (Eccles, Lord, Roeser, Barber, & Jozefowicz, 1997). However, these explanations do not seem reflective of the type of school and culture of an African-centered school, one that embraces family, community, and the Black male (Lomotey, 1992). Qualitative

ethnographic studies have also found that when students have motivation goals such as performing better in class in hopes of attaining a different level of status in the future (e.g. doing well financially or providing for one's family), performance-approach goals can be facilitative for African-American achievement (Rowley, 2000). This can also be an explanation for why African American students in the current study had patterns of higher level of performance-approach orientation in comparison to previous research given the emphasis of the African-centered approach on improving one's community. There appears to be a need to continue investigating the role of gender on achievement goal orientation, but the fact that there were gender differences highlights that even in an African-centered school students can have different experiences as a function of gender.

The stronger cultural values, belongingness, and mastery achievement goal orientation scores displayed by students in the current study compared to previous research may be associated with this African-centered learning context. According to the racial identity-context congruence perspective, the match between the racial identity beliefs of the individual and the school's racial climate is important for promoting autonomous motivation (Byrd & Chavous, 2012). The African-centered school has a racial climate that endorsed Afrocentric cultural values. It could be that the higher cultural values mean scores in the current study are a function of being in an environment that focuses on cultivating particular Afrocentric cultural values.

The qualitative data in the current study does little to confirm the patterns of gender differences suggested by the quantitative data except for the sense of belongingness measure. Racial identity and cultural values were ideas threaded throughout themes of African-centered practices and relationship/community/family. These themes include interview data suggesting neither explicit gender differences in how the school approaches cultivating these in their

African-American student body nor in how students differentially experience racial identity and cultural values in the school. Boys and girls equally recognized the school's focus on their racial identity and cultural values which most students embraced. Ladson-Billings' (2014) explanation of culturally relevant pedagogy aptly describes this African-centered school. A school where "helping students appreciate their culture, gain knowledge of their culture and take learning beyond the classroom to engage with real world problems is the focus of the teacher's goals and the actual classroom environment" (Ladson-Billings, pg. 75, 2014) was reflected in students, teachers, and administrator's reflections and understanding of the school. The gender differences in the measures would need further investigation in order to better understand why these patterns emerged.

### **Research Question Three**

**What percentage of girls and boys in each grade are meeting literacy learning benchmarks? Are there differences?** The current study investigated potential gender differences in whether or not students were proficient in literacy as assessed by the attainment of learning benchmarks at an African-centered school. It was hypothesized that a majority of girls would meet literacy learning benchmarks, that girls would be more likely to meet benchmark than boys, and less than the majority of boys would meet literacy learning benchmarks. These hypotheses were partially supported. Overall, most students in the sample were not proficient in literacy learning benchmarks. The most significant finding of the analyses revealed that elementary boys were significantly more likely to be proficient in comparison to elementary girls. This was only the case at the elementary level. By middle school, male students were not performing as well in comparison to their female peers and were in many cases, underperforming in comparison to them.

Research has detailed the academic achievement difficulties that can exist with African American students who underperform in meeting achievement-based, high-stakes testing standards (Aud et al., 2010; NAEP; NCES, 2013). The finding in the current study, that most students in the sample were not at the proficient level in their literacy learning benchmarks, has been the focus of critique of African-centered schools (Irvine, 2000). Other research examining academic achievement at African-centered schools has reported mixed results; some students show strong achievement (Sanders & Reed, 1995; Teicher, 2006) while others perform at low levels (Manley, 1994; Marks, 2005). Clarkston and Johnstone (2011) found that an African-centered education in combination with other best-practices such as communities of practice and school culture of achievement complemented an African-centered approach that facilitated academic achievement in their research. A more thorough examination of the curricular and instructional environment beyond the current study may help to better understand the academic achievement level of the student body.

The current findings also revealed that although there were no major differences between girls and boys in level of proficiency status, when the data were disaggregated by gender, elementary boys were significantly more likely to be at the proficiency level on benchmark scores in comparison to middle school boys. This is consistent with the general decline in achievement across the elementary and middle school years (Barber & Olsen, 2004; Eccles & Midgley, 1989) and among African American boys in particular (Xie et al., 2013), reported in prior research. This finding illustrates the academic vulnerability of African American boys in particular, as they move toward adolescence. Clearly there is still work to be done in identifying the unique needs and supports needed for African American boys to sustain the achievement levels as they move into middle school.

When the dataset was disaggregated by school level (elementary and middle school) and boys and girls were compared at each level, gender differences were close to achieving significance. This suggested an emerging trend of elementary boys outperforming elementary girls on literacy learning benchmarks. This trend along with elementary boys being significantly more proficient than middle school boys, suggests further investigation on how the elementary school experience successfully promoted male students' reading achievement. There may be a factor in the elementary school setting worth investigating to improve school-wide academic achievement on literacy benchmark assessments. One factor worth considering includes the lack of literacy pedagogical expertise of secondary educators. Within the middle school curriculum and instruction there is not a focus on early literacy skills and fluency, which contribute to more advanced literacy skills needed for middle school reading achievement. Additionally, with average attendance at the school for middle school students being four years, many of the students had different early literacy instructional experiences. Thus, the finding that middle school boys were not as proficient in early could be associated with differential early instruction, lack of secondary education early literacy curricular focus, and lack of teacher preparation and knowledge in addressing these deficits. While the school appears strong in how it emphasizes the cultural focus of African Americans, other teaching principles and literacy practices may need to be bolstered in the middle grades.

When talking about strategies that promote the academic achievement of African American boys, some researchers point toward the value of a culturally relevant pedagogy and a sociocultural context that supports and affirms the culture of the student (Brown, 2009; Clark, Frank, & Davis, 2013; Davis, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2014). The qualitative data reflected the African-centered school's implementation of these ideas in particular, cultural competence and



sociopolitical consciousness beyond the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2014), within the school. Furthermore, within the theme of African-centered practices, all four teachers noted that the school focused on the presence and value of the African-American male teacher within the school. With three out of four male middle school teachers, two out of six male classroom teachers in elementary school and three male paraprofessionals who support the learning needs of K-8 students, the school has a strong presence of African-American male staff. Although not explored directly, one consideration in light of elementary boys being more likely to score at the proficiency level could be the presence of African American male role models and influences.

#### **Research Question Four**

**What is the level of disciplinary outcomes (e.g. office disciplinary referrals; suspensions; expulsions) for boys and girls in each grade?** It was hypothesized that in comparison to previous research there would be fewer incidences of disciplinary outcomes by gender and grade. Overall, boys experienced more disproportional incidents of discipline in comparison to girls. Individual office referrals were disproportionately given to boys. Additionally, individual boys were disproportionately suspended and individual suspensions were disproportionately given to boys at a higher amount. Not only did teachers send more boys to the office for their behavior, boys received multiple office referrals more often than their female peers. There were no expulsions in the current sample. These findings add to the large body of extant research (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Martinez et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2000; Skiba et al., 1997) indicating that African American students, and males in particular, disproportionately received more disciplinary actions in comparison to other ethnic groups. The current study demonstrated, that even in an African-centered school, African American males disproportionately received disciplinary actions; in this case, compared to girls.

The racial identity-context congruence perspective suggests that the environment of the school could create connections that foster positive student outcomes that support fewer discipline problems and alleviate the student and staff negative interactions around potential bias, yet disproportional disciplinary outcomes were found. Previous research has highlighted bias as an explanatory variable when other variables such as socioeconomic status, gender, and cultural mismatch have been controlled (Skiba et al., 2000), but explaining disproportionality is complex (Skiba et al., 2011). The current study examined discipline within a school where cultural mismatch and bias would be assumed to be less of an issue than in conventional schools and presumably addressed by an African-centered approach so that discipline disproportionality would not be present. These disproportional outcomes may persist because there may be nuances of cultural mismatch and bias that have not been explored in the literature that are relevant to this site. One may not be able to assume that taking away the type of cultural mismatch and bias in more conventional schools alleviates different kinds of cultural discord or bias.

Although African American boys experienced most of the disproportional discipline, the mean number of referrals, maximum number of suspensions, and percentage of students who were not referred was lower than other research (Skiba et al., 1997). With a small sample size, conclusions about the significance of this difference are difficult to make, but worth noting. Future research within African-centered schools with larger sample sizes would help to better understand any significance to these lower incidences of disciplinary outcomes.

The qualitative data suggested that the bias and disproportionality in disciplinary procedures commonly reported in non-African-centered schools were not found in this African-centered school. The interview data suggested a commitment to multiple themes such as African-

centered practices, relationship, community, and family, and teacher passion for the African-centered approach, that were inconsistent with the commonly observed disciplinary bias. Embedded within these themes were instances where students, staff, and an administrator discussed seeing the commitment to implementing the Nguzo Saba principles such as developing the self-esteem and collective cultural identity of students, creating connections beyond the student-teacher relationship, and being committed to helping students know who they are and be successful. Observations in the school also reflected the Nguzo Saba principles as teachers used alternative methods of discipline that were designed to help students learn from mistakes and improve the student community through peer accountability. The disciplinary data collected in this study do not include information about particular infractions that lead to the office referrals or suspensions. It also does not include data surrounding other factors that could be related to disproportionality (Skiba et al., 2011) such as teacher beliefs and classroom management procedures. The qualitative data suggested that bias is less likely, but the data as a whole are insufficient to draw conclusions about why the discipline disproportionality was found.

### **Research Question Five**

**How are racial identity, cultural values, and belongingness related?** The analyses of the relation between racial identity and cultural values with belongingness while controlling for gender and grade disconfirmed the hypothesis. It was hypothesized that racial identity and Afrocentric cultural values would positively predict students' sense of belonging. Out of the two racial identity subscales (e.g. private regard and centrality), and the three cultural values subscales (e.g. collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, self-determination) only a significant negative predictive relationship was detected between collective work and responsibility and belongingness. It suggested that the more students agreed with and adopted the

value that the community and family work together, the less connected, accepted and respected they felt as an individual in the school. Conversely, the more connected a student felt, the less they agreed with this value.

Qualitative data suggested that adopting or believing in the values of group may not necessarily be experienced with individuals in the group. For example, four out of eight eighth grade students experienced or witnessed bullying when describing interpersonal relationships between students at the school. In fact, they used the term, “bullying”, when describing their experiences. These students talked about valuing learning about their culture, celebrating their culture, and learning about the world around them in reference to their culture as African Americans, however they also described challenges with connecting, being accepted and respected amongst peers. One student also described challenges with working together with her peers, because of previous bullying, but at the same time describing the school environment as a “family”. This particular student could have been experiencing some of the connection and respect associated with belonging through relationships with the adults in the school, but yet not willing to buy into the value of working together with her peers because of past interpersonal conflict. It is possible that students can value the cultural ideals of their cultural group, but yet encounter personal challenges to putting these ideals into practice. It is also possible that one might feel connection with certain persons in the group, but have difficulty adopting the values of the group.

The term secondary marginalization (Cohen, 1999; Khare, Joseph, & Chaskin, 2015) may provide some context for why there might be a negative predictive relationship between belongingness and the cultural value of collective works and responsibility. Secondary marginalization concept describes how individuals within a larger marginalized group are

disconnected with others and frown upon the values of a smaller segment of individuals within the group. In the political science literature, African Americans who are more affluent will look down upon the values of more economically vulnerable members of the racial group and though they belong to the same racial group, more affluent members will not agree with some of the norms of the less affluent subgroup. It could be that students generally feel a sense of belonging in the school, particularly with adults, but they might disagree with working together and being responsible (Collective Works & Responsibility) for another student who bullies other students.

An additional finding indicated that grade level made a positive, statistically significant contribution to students' sense of belonging. This indicated that at higher grade levels, students reported higher feelings of belongingness. The individual classrooms could represent group and interpersonal dynamics that were unaccounted for in the analyses. Teachers, students, and their relationships within classrooms, as well as the social climate of individual classrooms could have influenced how students experienced belongingness. It could also be that older students began to understand and put into practice, what it means to connect, be respected and appreciated in an African-centered educational environment as race becomes more salient towards adolescents (Byrd, 2012; Erickson, 1968; Seaton et al., 2009).

One theme illustrated in the qualitative data includes relationship, community, and family. Eighth grade students who were interviewed overwhelmingly mentioned experiencing the school as a "family". While younger students were not interviewed, observations within the school suggest that community gatherings such as the Unity Circle, student-teacher relationships fostered in extra-curricular activities, parent-like interactions and connections in relationships between teachers and students in learning situations, possibly had a cumulative effect on belongingness if students were in the environment for an extended period of years. Eighth grade

students, on average, attended four grades at the school. Out of the ten interviewees, eight students mentioned the word, “family” or “parents” when they described the relationships and interpersonal experiences between students and staff at the school. This could be an example of older students being more in tune to the familial aspect of the school and sensing belongingness as a result of greater dosage and cumulative exposure to the African-centered ideas. Research has shown that when students are able to keep the same group of teachers over the course of several years, they experience a greater sense of belonging by being a part of a consistent learning community (Arhart & Kromery, 1993) particularly for African American, low-income students (Westerfield, 2009).

Teacher-student relationships as well as number of years at the school and their predictive relationship with student belongingness could be a point of further study when thinking about how students at this school who have the same teachers over the middle school years experienced belonging. Further inquiry into other students and different grade levels would also help to better understand how grade is related to students’ sense of belongingness. It could also be that the reason parents chose to send their student to an African-centered school better explains belongingness as well. The principal mentioned in her interview that about a third of the students came to the school because it was in the neighborhood. If the primary reason for choosing the school was because of convenience and not because it was African-centered, this could play a role in how much students connected with the others in the school, particularly if the parents were not necessarily committed to its African-centered approach.

## Research Question Six

**How are belongingness and achievement goals (mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidant) related to learning?** It was hypothesized that belongingness, mastery achievement goal orientation, and performance-approach goal orientation would positively predict reading benchmark scores and performance-avoid goal orientation would negatively predict student reading benchmark scores. The analyses did not support these hypotheses.

The data revealed that a majority of male and female students were not proficient in the reading literacy benchmark scores (e.g. low average or low) according to assessment descriptors. It could be that there was not enough variance in the scores to find a relationship with any of the predictors. Qualitative data illustrated the challenges of this African-centered school under the themes of implementation challenges and conflict with the school's African-centered approach. Out of the interviews, two out of four teachers, and one administrator acknowledged that academic achievement was or has been a challenge for students in the school. One teacher discussed his frustration that the school used an easier grading scale and grade descriptors that were misleading in representing students' true academic performance and mastery of the subject content. Another teacher remarked that the intensity with which African-centeredness was infused in the instruction was done well, but acknowledged that academic achievement could be better addressed. The principal discussed previous challenges with the school being cited for low performance by the state board of education. Teacher turnover was also observed in the study, which the literature has cited as possibly affecting academic achievement (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Ronfeldt, Loeb, Wyckoff, 2013). Irvine (2000) noted the continuing challenges of connecting achievement with the African-centered school. Other predictors with

empirical evidence from the literature base should be explored in future research to better understand achievement in this African-centered school.

### **Research Question Seven**

**Is belongingness related to disciplinary outcomes?** In the current study, belongingness was regressed on count data for disciplinary outcomes (e.g. office disciplinary referrals and suspensions). It was hypothesized that sense of belongingness would be negatively related to office disciplinary referrals and suspensions. Whereas previous research has found removing students from school more frequently in comparison to White classmates could negatively affect students' perceptions of school belonging (Bottiani, Bradshaw, & Mendelson, 2016; Debnam, Johnson, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2014) and that discrimination at school interrupted school bonding (Dotterer & Lowe, 2015), the hypothesis was not supported.

The findings from the current study showed that even when there was ostensibly a person-context fit as described through the racial identity-context perspective, discipline disproportionality for African American boys in particular was still observed. In the current study, boys received more individual office referrals, individual boys received more suspensions, and individual suspensions were given to boys disproportionate to their enrollment when compared to girls. This was especially surprising because boys in the sample had a higher sense of belonging. This finding is important to the discipline disproportionality literature because there has yet to be an examination of what discipline outcomes look like when both the students and staff share the same racial background. This finding suggests that other factors, such as gender bias, classroom/teacher factors, lack of social skills, or mismatch in expectations could contribute to discipline disproportionality. Researchers have concluded that gender, in and of itself, is too broad of a category to critically examine problems of educational equity (Thomas &



Stevenson, 2009; Dee, 2005). Additionally, while researchers overwhelmingly highlight the benefits of cultural and racial match between student and teacher (Dee, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2014) others recognized that bias is not eradicated just because African American students have African American teachers (Ferguson, 1998).

There may be classroom complexities that were not investigated that would help further explain the lack of relationship between students' belongingness and disciplinary outcomes. One classroom/teacher factor that was not assessed in the study was the behavioral management approach used in the school. The use of prosocial, positive behavior supports within the school could help to understand the pattern of disciplinary outcomes. Research highlights the value of a prosocial, positive behavior support and intervention approach in minimizing discipline problems, particularly in a culturally responsive environment (Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin, & Swain-Bradway, 2011). Moreover, since there was teacher attrition in two classrooms during the data collection, classroom management and positive behavior supports and interventions or lack thereof cannot be ruled out as reasons for discipline disproportionality when such disruption occurs within a classroom. At a minimum, the current study's findings suggested that there may be further complexities within the classroom that deserve future exploration to better understand the discipline disproportionality within this African-centered school.

### **Research Question Eight**

**How do adults and students describe and understand racial identity, cultural values, belonging, achievement goals, learning, and behavior in an African-centered school.** The current research began answering this question by first exploring how racial identity and cultural values were reflected in students' experiences and how the school promoted African American racial identity and cultural values. For this part of the study, it was hypothesized that participants

would describe having identities and values reflecting an African American racial identity and cultural values and girls would demonstrate stronger racial identity than boys. It was also expected that they would view the school as intentionally promoting African American racial identity and cultural values through teacher/school practices and teacher-student interactions. The qualitative data did not reveal differences in racial identity between girls and boys; participants described ways in which the school focused on cultivating racial identity and cultural values for all students.

Interviewees did reflect on how the school differed from conventional schools and how, African-centered practices impacted students by developing students' racial identity and cultural values. Although students described challenges in implementing an African-centered approach, such as, students appearing to not wholeheartedly accept an African-centered approach and disagreements with how the school was implementing African-centered practices, most interviewees recognized that students were receiving an educational experience focused on developing African American racial identity and cultural values.

Previous researchers (Napp, 2008; Rayford, 2012; Tengella, 2012) who have studied African-centered schools have noted its deliberate cultivation of student racial and cultural values in both philosophy and practice. African-centered schools are noted for emphasizing knowledge and pride in both racial identity and cultural values (Lomotey, 1992). Other researchers (Fine & Bowers, 1984; Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Smith et al., 2009) have demonstrated quantitatively that girls will often endorse stronger racial identity. Finding no gender differences in the qualitative data, in contrast to observing a trend of higher racial identity among girls compared to boys in the quantitative data, was not expected. Many students who were interviewed acknowledged the school's focus on African American racial identity and

cultural values. It could be that differences in racial identity should be further explored. The challenges with implementing an African-centered approach that were revealed in the interviews, such as, students not internalizing an African-centered approach or questions about the fidelity of the implementation, could explain the differences found in both racial identity and cultural values. In his qualitative research of an African-centered school, Ginwright (2004) found that a conflict between the students' hip-hop culture and the African-centered approach were not appreciated in the school's implementation of an African-centered approach. One teacher interviewed in the current study noted the competing cultural influences of other aspects of African-American culture such as music and technology that appear to be antagonists of students adopting wholeheartedly the school's African-centered approach. Khalifa (2013) also found that there can be conflict between other identities of students including those associated with hip-hop that can be in conflict with the values and beliefs a school wants its African American students to adopt. Future research could try to discover what conflicting identity and values are present for students as well as implementation integrity of an African-centered approach to better understand the discord between the current study's quantitative and qualitative data. It may be that students have a general sense of how the school influences their identity and values, but knowing specific information is not strong enough.

The second part of question eight explored the nature of students' belonging in the school and whether this was related to their motivation, learning, and behavior. It was hypothesized that participants would report experiencing a sense of belongingness that reflects the value of *familyhood* and that the school's practices would engender student belongingness with each other as well as with teachers and staff members. It was also hypothesized that they would view students' sense of belongingness as being positively related to students' mastery achievement

goal orientation and negatively related to their performance goal orientation. It was hypothesized that participants would view students' sense of belongingness as being positively related to their learning and behavior. Finally, it was expected that participants would view student's sense of belongingness was related to their behavior and negatively related to incidences of disciplinary outcomes.

Students, teachers, and the administrator did discuss ways in which students experienced belongingness with each other and with teachers and staff. Overwhelmingly, participants talked about experiencing the school as a "family". Teachers and administrators honorably took on the role of parent at school for students, embracing the terms of Mama and Baba. Although students talked about their relationship with teachers as one where they felt supported, when discussing their relationship with other students, half of the students also mentioned bullying as something they experienced or witnessed.

Previous research at African-centered schools highlights the "familyhood" that resembles belongingness (Lomotey, 1992; Napp, 2008; Tengella, 2012). Researchers point out using the terms "Mama" and "Baba" represent the parent-like role of teachers to students. Some of the challenges found in schools in general, which includes bullying, seem to be missing from the literature base on African-centered schools. Bullying seems contrary to an African-centered approach, but researchers do note that sometimes the culture of the school and the culture of the student can be in conflict (Ginwright, 2004; Khalifa, 2013). Observational data did not reveal overt acts of bullying and students appeared to get along, but the intricacies of interpersonal relationships between adolescents may have been more elusive to the researcher. Additionally, prosocial and positive behavior supports were not explicitly observed either. Further research examining the school's policy on bullying and prosocial positive behavior and students'

understanding and experience with these policies would help to better understand how belongingness is activated between students.

Students and staff discussed ways in which student belongingness encouraged them to learn. Students discussed working with their peers to complete assignments and helping each other with their learning. Teachers discussed desiring to connect with their students in a parent-like manner as well as wanting students to learn. In this way, the connections and belongingness students were experiencing existed along with learning goals of students. Direct links between student belongingness with motivation, learning, and behavior were not explicit in the qualitative or quantitative data. The quantitative data did not reveal a particular relationship between belongingness and learning or between belongingness and behavior and gender/grade differences in belongingness, motivation, and learning suggests that there is variability in how some students think about experiencing the school. This lack of convergence in the quantitative and qualitative data suggests that even in an African-centered school students can have different experiences. This also suggests opportunities to better understand what happens in the school. Future research could explore observations of teacher interactions across classes and grades to get a better sample of how teachers and students interact in order to understand the role of belongingness in student motivation, learning, and behavior.

## **Summary**

An African-centered school can provide evidence of how racial identity-context congruence can create a sense of belongingness. The school's emphasis on cultivating student racial identity and positively affirming African American racial group membership overwhelmingly created a sense of *familyhood* or belonging amongst its students. Students expressed views that the individuals with whom they felt belongingness also supported their

learning. The strong empirical evidence of student racial identity, cultural values, belongingness, and motivational goals in comparison to previous research suggests that students are experiencing these constructs differently within an African-centered environment. Gender differences and grade level differences in racial identity, cultural values, belongingness, and motivational goals suggest that even in an African-centered environment factors are at work where students can have differential school experiences and perspectives. Moreover, an African-centered school may still have to grapple with techniques and practices that have been related to achievement and low discipline problems (e.g. curriculum and instruction; classroom management) in order to improve its effectiveness for African American student educational outcomes.

### **Future Research**

Future research could explore the current questions with a larger sample size, possibly comparing multiple African-centered schools or comparing an African-centered school with a traditional school to understand whether the current findings are generalizable. Exploring all grades to understand how the school is African-centered would help to get a developmental perspective on how teachers and students experience the school. Patterns of gender differences in racial identity, cultural values, belongingness, and achievement goal orientations could be further explored with a larger sample size and additional measures on parental socialization would help consider other factors that can be related to gender differences in student racial identity and cultural values. The achievement level of students in the current study placed the majority of students in the non-proficient range. Examining the achievement growth of students might be a better indicator of how students are learning given that the school was recently taken of the state's priority list for having an underperforming school. Although the school was recently

taken off the priority list, examining other factors related to academic achievement such as curriculum and the instructional environment would help understand current academic achievement levels. Since elementary boys were significantly different than girls in reading benchmark scores, it might also be important to consider the impact of African American male teachers and staff on boys' achievement.

Other research could explore disciplinary outcomes with a larger sample and the examination of any potential gender bias and classroom environmental factors seem important for understanding whether the current discipline disproportionality with males is significant in light of this being an African-centered school. In order to know how being with the same teacher over several years impacts students' belongingness at this African-centered school, a longitudinal study could be illustrative. Teacher turnover and its relationship to achievement and disciplinary outcomes were also issues that were raised in the current data. Asking more questions about identity, values and any conflict students might have with the school's African-centered approach seems important due to some of the bullying and gender differences found in the quantitative data.

### **Limitations**

The proposed study has several limitations that restrict the conclusions that can be drawn. First, the study was conducted in only one school. This limited generalizability and comparison of African American student outcomes and the participants' experiences with other African-centered schools. Second, without collecting data from a control school that uses a traditional, standard curriculum, this research was limited in its ability to attribute any significant findings to the African-centered nature of the school. No causal inferences can be drawn regarding African American student belongingness, motivation, and learning and the African-centered educational

program. Additionally, students' experience of identity, values, belongingness, and achievement goal orientation were nested within classrooms and teachers. It is difficult to discount the impact of these additional factors on student's perceptions. The limited number of questions in both the racial identity (i.e. 3 items per scale) and cultural values (i.e. 3-5 items per scale) measures could have lowered the reliability of assessing these constructs. Perhaps exploring the psychometric properties with collapsing the items into one measure could be explored in future research. Students self-reported their perceptions of racial identity, cultural values, belongingness, and achievement goal orientation and such data can be subject to bias as respondents consider how their answers will be viewed. Although not suspected, it is also possible that the interview content of students, teachers, and the principal was not as forthright. It could also have been subject participants were guarded in providing their answers because of the intimate nature of providing their perspectives.

### **Educational Implications**

The current research has the potential to enrich and broaden current understandings of students' and educators' experiences of African-centered education. It can add to the current literature about how context matters for African American students from multiple perspectives of students, teachers, and an administrator. Overall, there is not a lot of research on students' academic outcomes in an African-centered school environment and the mixed-methods approach of the current study helped to understand students' experiences in the school from various vantage points. Future research should investigate other factors that can contribute to achievement such as curriculum and instruction that were not a part of this investigation. The challenges in implementing an African-centered approach are important to consider further. For future research, investigating counter or competing cultural influences on the implementation of



the approach within a school, acceptability from parents and students, and teacher knowledge and implementation of the approach would help to distill the integrity of an African-centered approach and could help better understand how students are influenced by the approach. The methodological approach of this study is important because both qualitative and quantitative data enriches our understanding of what an African-centered school means for African American student outcomes.

There are important educational practice implications particularly for African American students that were revealed in the current research. This study illuminated the value in strong teacher-student relationships and school community amongst students, teachers, staff, and parents. Students frequently observed how being at the school felt like being around family. Other schools would do well to explore ways in which students can be supported by caring, multifaceted relationships with staff and faculty that extends beyond the school and into the community. Teacher and staff buy-in to an African-centered approach provided a way to promote relationships between students and educators that was not forced or punitive towards staff members. Staff and faculty who held teacher philosophies that embraced relationships that extended beyond school hours and school grounds were vital in promoting the adoption of such practices. Attending student family gatherings, celebrations, ceremonies, and other events were one way in which to broaden the scope of school community, but essentially finding ways to create family-like relationships appeared to be of great value to the participants in the current study.

Culturally-relevant learning experiences in both the classrooms and in the school appeared to be valuable to participants in the study. Higher endorsement of cultural values, belongingness, and mastery achievement goal orientation suggests that many students respond

adaptively to such pedagogical experiences. Ladson-Billings (1994) has long suggested such an approach for positive educational experiences of culturally diverse students. The current findings add to the voices in the literature base that advocate for relevant learning in education.

The school describes itself as supporting students holistically , which sets the school apart from some traditional models of schooling. The school provides free uniforms, breakfast and lunch, feeds the entire school community, including families, at traditional feasts around Thanksgiving and Christmas, has full after-school programming including tutoring, has on-site licensed staff to address the mental health needs of the entire family, and addresses student disciplinary problems by supporting the entire family. Each of these elements expands what school means for its students and families. Such a model is being used in non-African-centered settings to some degree, but having all of these elements for students and families can create the community that is so vital and meaningful to the lives of student. This is an important consideration for how context matters, particularly for African American students. Adopting these practices would be beneficial for all students, but African American students in particular, who experience schools in negative ways, would particularly be best served by implementing these policies and practices that strengthen and value their cultural identities.

## **Conclusions**

The racial identity-context congruence perspective suggests that when students are in an environment where the racial climate is supportive because students' racial identity is intentionally affirmed and celebrated, students experience belongingness, which can lead to motivation to learn. In the current study, the Nguzo Saba principles were used to understand how the practices and interactions within multiple contexts in the school reflected African-centered schooling environment that promoted and cultivated African-American identity and values.

Although students in this environment had not fully achieved academic achievement consistently across the grades, students, teachers, and the administrator acknowledged other important aspects of the African-centered school that were important. These included cultivating racial identity and cultural values in the school and establishing a strong African-American community. However, quantitative data revealed gender and grade differences in the degree to which all students experience these constructs suggesting that not all students have similar perspectives when thinking about how they experience the school. This African-centered school confirms how a racially affirming environment can foster a sense of belonging for students in the community in a way that is perhaps stronger than non-African-centered schools. In particular, some of the adaptive ways in which African American boys experience higher patterns of cultural values, belongingness, early reaching achievement in the lower grades with a high percentage of male faculty and staff suggests this environment as one model for African American male student success across multiple educational outcomes. The low achievement benchmark scores across the school and male discipline disproportionality do suggest the need to strengthen the school's academic and behavior management practices so that questions about the effectiveness of an African-centered school in addressing the academic needs of students can be addressed.

The data did not reveal a significant negative relationship between belongingness and disciplinary outcomes suggesting that other factors should be considered as potential contributors to discipline disproportionality. This is an important next step given the striking manner in which African Americans and particularly African American boys, specifically, receive disproportional office referrals and suspensions in non-African-centered schools as well as in this school.. If an African-centered school has to grapple with overuse of disciplinary outcomes disproportional to African American male or female student enrollment, then more must be done to figure out how

to support these students. Nevertheless, this study does illuminate promising practice and policy directions that should be considered in supporting African American students in order to counter the negative experiences plaguing many traditional school settings.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Interview Protocol:

*Thank you for taking the time to meet with me for this research project. This interview will take about 60 minutes. I'm going to ask you some questions about your experiences as an administrator at this African-centered school and to describe how you see students' racial identity, cultural values, belongingness, motivation, learning, and behavior within the school. The goal is not to evaluate, but to understand your experience.*

*Would it be okay if I record the interview because I don't want to miss any of your ideas or comments? Your responses will be confidential in that they will not be attached to your name, however because the interviews are with a select group of teachers and students, I cannot guarantee total anonymity. The general findings of this study, but not specific information connected to the individual, will be shared with the school. In this case, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. There aren't any right or wrong answers so please feel free to share your thoughts freely. I may pause between questions so that I don't interrupt your thoughts and I may ask for additional information after each question.*

*If you want to withdraw from the study, I will destroy your information. You can email me if you don't want to participate anymore.*

*Are there any questions? Does this make sense? Can we begin?*

## **PRINCIPAL**

Opening:

1. *For the tape, please state your name and position at this school.*
2. *How long have you been working at this African-centered school?*
  - a. *What brought you to this school? Why did you decide to work here?*
3. *As principal, what are your roles and responsibilities?*
4. *What does a typical day look like for you working in an African-centered school?*
  - a. *Probes: administrative tasks, student interactions, adult interactions, etc.*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Introductory:

5. *What does it mean to be an African-centered school? Please define this for me.*
6. *This is an African-centered school. How would you describe your school?*
  - a. *What are some of the attributes of this school? (e.g., school culture and climate; adult-student interactions; student-student interactions; instructional styles; mission/vision, etc.)*
  - b. *How would you describe this school to a parent of a prospective student?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Transition:

7. *Please walk me through a typical day in the building.*
  - a. *Probes: school schedule, student schedules, assemblies, after school activities*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Key Questions:

Establish the context of the participant's experience

8. *What has it been like to be principal at this school?*
  - a. *What has been most rewarding about your job as principal?*
  - b. *What has been most challenging?*
9. *Have you been a principal in any other school? If so, how is this experience similar and/or different?*
  - a. *If not, how do you perceive your experience as principal as similar and/or different in being principal at other schools?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Details associated with this experience

- 10. How do you see teachers implement an African-centered approach in the classroom?*
- 11. How is this approach implemented/evidenced in the rules and policies? In the physical environment? In the interactions between teachers, students, and staff?*
- 12. What clubs are offered to students? How many students participate?*
- 13. In what ways do students connect with one another? With adults in the school?*
- 14. Students come from different areas of the city, does that make it difficult to make friendships? Please explain.*
- 15. How would you compare African American students' experiences at this African-centered school with those at traditional schools? Please explain.*
  - a. What, if anything, makes the African-centered approach unique for African American students?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Reflect on the meaning of their experience

- 16. How would you describe student-student relationships?*
  - a. In what ways, if any, do you see these relationships inform how they behave or act? Please explain.*
- 17. How would you describe student-teacher relationships and student-staff relationships?*
  - a. In what ways, if any, do you see these relationships inform how they behave or act? Please explain.*
- 18. Do you see ways in which the African-centered approach at this school positively influences students?*
  - a. Prompt: how students see themselves; their motivation to learn? Please explain.*
- 19. African-centered schools have received widespread support, but some people, including African Americans, don't agree with this approach.*
  - a. What, if any, are the limitations to this approach to teaching and learning?*
  - b. How would you describe critiques you have heard of African-centered education?*
    - i. How would you respond to current critiques of African-centered schooling?*
  - c. Is it important to have schools like this? Please explain.*
    - i. (Prompts: What difference does this school make? Why does this type of school matter?)*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]



Ending Questions:

20. *Suppose you had one minute to tell me about this African-centered school, what would you say?*
21. *If you could only use three words to describe this school, what would they be? Why?*
22. *We have talked today about your experiences at this African-centered school and what it has been like for you to be a part of this kind of school. Have we missed anything? Is there anything else that you'd like to tell me?*
23. *Do you have any questions for me?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

## **TEACHERS**

Opening:

1. *For the tape, please state your name and position at this school.*
2. *How long have you been working at this African-centered school?*
  - a. *What brought you to this school? Why did you decide to work here?*
3. *As a teacher, what are your roles and responsibilities?*
4. *What does a typical day look like for you working in an African-centered school?*
  - a. *Instructional tasks, administrative tasks, student interactions, adult interactions, etc.*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Introductory:

2. *What does it mean to be an African-centered school? How would you define this?*
3. *This is an African-centered school. How would you describe your school?*
  - a. *What are some of the attributes of this school? (e.g. school culture, climate; adult-student interactions; student-student interactions; instructional styles; mission/vision, etc.)*
  - b. *How would you describe this school to a parent of a prospective student?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Transition:

4. *Please walk me through a typical day in the building and your classroom.*
  - a. *Probes: classroom schedule, school schedule, student schedules, assemblies, after school activities*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Key Questions:

Establish the context of the participant's experience

5. *What has it been like to be a teacher at this school?*
  - a. *What has been most rewarding about your job as a teacher?*
  - b. *What has been most challenging?*
6. *Have you been a teacher in any other school? If so, how is this experience similar and/or different?*
  - a. *If not, how do you perceive your experience as a teacher as similar and/or different in being a teacher at other schools?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Details associated with this experience

7. *What does African-centered education look like in your classroom? In the physical environment of your classroom? In your rules and policies? In interactions between you and students?*
8. *How do you perceive other teachers implement an African-centered approach in their classroom? In the physical environment of the classroom? In their rules and policies? In interactions between them and students?*
9. *How is this approach implemented /evidenced in the school rules and policies? In the physical environment of the school? In interactions between teachers, students, and staff?*
10. *Are you involved with any student clubs or activities?*
11. *In what ways do students connect with one another in your classroom? In the school? With adults in the school?*
12. *Students come from different areas of the city, does that make it difficult for them to make friendships? Please explain.*
13. *How would you compare African American students' experience at this African-centered school with those at traditional schools? Please explain.*
  - a. *What, if anything, makes the African-centered approach unique for African American students?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Reflect on the meaning of their experience

14. *How would you describe student-student relationships?*
  - a. *In what ways, if any, do you see these relationships inform how they behave or act? Please explain.*
15. *How would you describe student-teacher relationship and student-staff relationships?*
  - a. *In what ways, if any, do you see these relationships inform how they behave or act? Please explain.*
16. *Do you see ways in which the African-centered approach at this school influences students? Please explain.*
17. *African-centered schools have received widespread support, but some people, including African Americans, don't agree with this approach.*
  - a. *What, if any, are the limitations to this approach to teaching and learning?*
  - b. *How would you describe critiques you have heard of African-centered education?*
    - i. *How would you respond to current critiques of African-centered education?*
  - c. *Is it important to have schools like this? Please explain.*

- i. *(Prompts: What difference does this school make? Why does this type of school matter?)*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Ending Questions:

18. *Suppose you had one minute to tell me about this African-centered school, what would you say?*  
19. *If you could only use three words to describe this school, what would they be? Why?*  
20. *We have talked today about your experiences at an African-centered school and what it has been like for you to be a part of this kind of school. Have we missed anything? Is there anything else that you'd like to tell me?*  
21. *Do you have any questions for me?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

## ***STUDENTS***

Opening:

1. *For the tape, please state your name and your grade.*
2. *How long have you been a student at this African-centered school?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Introductory:

3. *This is an African-centered school. How would you describe an African-centered school to a friend whose parent was thinking about sending him or her here?*
  - a. *What are some characteristics of this school? (e.g. student interactions with students? Student interactions with adults? The teaching?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Transition:

4. *Please walk me through a typical day for you in this school. How would you describe a typical day in your school?*
  - a. *Probes: morning routine, assemblies, classes, friend interactions, adult interactions, etc.*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Key Questions:

Establish the context of the participant's experience

5. *What has it been like to be a student at this school?*
  - a. *Prompts: What do you like most about school? What do you like least about school?*
6. *Is this the only school you have attended? If so, how do you think this school differs from other schools? If not, how is it similar or different to other schools you have attended?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Details associated with this experience

7. *If you were to describe to a friend what to expect if they were going to do a one-day visit at Timbuktu, what would you say?*
8. *How would you describe your classrooms? What do they look like? What would you change?*

9. *In your classroom, how do students talk to each other and work together?*
10. *In your classroom, how do teachers and students talk to each other and work together?*
11. *What are some of the rules at this school? What do you think about these rules?*
12. *Students at this school come from different areas of the city, how do students make friends?*
13. *How would you describe your relationships with your teachers and other adults in this school?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Reflect on the meaning of their experience

14. *How would you describe your relationships with your peers or friends?*
15. *Do you have a favorite teacher?*
  - a. *If so, describe him or her to me.*
  - b. *What is it about him or her that makes him or her your favorite?*
16. *Do you have a least favorite teacher?*
  - a. *If so, describe him or her to me.*
17. *Are there adults in the building you can go to if you have a problem or an issue?*
  - a. *What is it that makes you think you can go to these adults?*
18. *What do you see as the benefit of attending this school?*
  - a. *What has been most helpful to you personally in being at this school?*
19. *Why would a kid choose to go to an African-centered school like this one?*
  - a. *If you had your choice to go to another school would you? Please explain?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

Ending Questions:

20. *Suppose you had one minute to tell me about talk about this school, what would you say?*
21. *If you could only use three words to describe this school, what would they be? Why?*
22. *We have talked today about your experiences at your school and what it has been like for you to be a part of an African-centered school. Have we missed anything? Is there anything else that you'd like to tell me?*
23. *Do you have any questions for me?*

[Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? Would you say more? Tell me more. Say more. Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean. I don't understand.]

## Appendix B

### Demographic Questionnaire

**1. Parent's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Mother      ☐ Father      ☐ Guardian  
☐ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Child's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Child's Teacher

**4. Child's Birthdate** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Month/Year**

**5. Grade in 2014-15:**

- ☐ 3<sup>rd</sup>                      ☐ 4<sup>th</sup>                      ☐ 5<sup>th</sup>  
☐ 6<sup>th</sup>                      ☐ 7<sup>th</sup>                      ☐ 8<sup>th</sup>

## 6. Child's Gender:

- ☐ Male                      ☐ Female

## 7. Mother's Race:

- ☐ African American  
☐ Other (please specify)

## 8. Father's Race

- ☐ African American  
☐ Other (please specify)

**9. Child's Race:**

- ☐ African American  
☐ Other (please specify)

**10. Please check ALL the grades that your student has attended this school.**

- ☐ Kindergarten
- ☐ 1<sup>st</sup> Grade                  ☐ 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade ☐ 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade                  ☐ 4<sup>th</sup> Grade ☐ 5<sup>th</sup> Grade
- ☐ 6<sup>th</sup> Grade ☐ 7<sup>th</sup> Grade                  ☐ 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

**11. Do you have other children attending this school?**

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**Name/Grade**

---

**Name/Grade**

---

**Name/Grade**

---

**Name/Grade**

---

**Name/Grade**

---

**Name/Grade**

**12. My child is receiving special education services.**

☐ Yes    ☐ No

If yes, please indicate the area of service: specific learning disability, speech and language impairment, etc.

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**13. Please tell me about your reason(s) for enrolling your child at Timbuktu Academy of Science & Technology:**

**14. Please rate your knowledge of the Nguzo Saba Principles:**

Principle	None I don't know anything about this principle.  1	Little I know little about this principle.  2	Some I know about this principle.  3	A Lot I know a lot about this principle.  4
Umoja (Unity)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kujichagulia (Self- Determination)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ujima (Collective Work & Responsibility)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nia (Purpose)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kuumba (Creativity)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Imani (Faith)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**15. In what ways do you think that this school is *different* from non-African-centered Schools?**



**16. In what ways do you think that this school is *similar to or the same as* non-African-centered Schools?**

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