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Church and Public School Partnerships Creating Educational Equity

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by

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Dedication

My dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful and supportive wife, Shawn Patterson. You stood by my side when I had the initial thought of seeking this degree, and you encouraged me through the final phase. Sweetheart, thanks for always having the willingness to go on adventures with me. God blessed me tremendously when He allowed us to find one another; I love you.

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I have to conclude my acknowledgments by saying thank you to my Creator. God, only you gave me the strength to complete this undertaking. Thank you for never leaving my side and reminding me "not [to] become weary in doing good, for you will reap a harvest at the proper time if you do not give up" (Gal. 6:9–10).

Abstract

The problem of this study involved how pastors can enhance their awareness of creating church and public school partnerships, the contributing factors that prevent the formation of public school and urban church partnerships, and the need to identify leadership strategies that can be implemented by school leaders and urban pastors to overcome those obstacles. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how urban pastors and public school leaders could become more aware of church and public school partnerships and address contributing factors that prevent church and public school partnerships. In addition, possible leadership strategies to increase church and public school partnerships were identified. Researching a more comprehensive understanding of perceived problems, knowing the strength of each challenge, and identifying leadership strategies to overcome the obstacles may help pastors and school leaders develop the necessary leadership skills needed for holistic partnership building. Qualitative data were collected through semistructured interviews with 10 school leaders and a discussion panel of four pastors. After data were assessed from the ideology and practices of the pastors' focus group and the semistructured school leader interviews through the eyes of cross-boundary leadership, it was apparent that implementation of the right leadership skills can result in more synergistic church and public school partnerships. Neighboring churches and public schools share the same geographical area and serve the same residents. Churches partnering with schools seek to rebuild communities by comprehensively influencing the lives of youths and their families in addressing the education, health, economic, and social needs of hurting people by leaving the four walls and interacting with the people. In essence, they are operating in the mission that Jesus commanded to look after the less fortunate.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Across the globe, a consistent component to addressing social challenges has been through partnerships formed between faith-based organizations (FBOs) and government agencies (Pandya, 2016). FBOs are emerging as key players in the arena of social welfare (Bridwell-Mitchell, 2017; Pandya, 2016). In the United States, church and public school partnerships are an example of two traditionally separate entities working together to increase the educational opportunities and achievement of underprivileged youth (Bridwell-Mitchell, 2017; Jordan & Wilson, 2017).

Although the U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly struck down specific policies—for example, those requiring the reading of Bible passages during school hours or the recitation of prayer during sports events organized by schools—church people are still wanted as school volunteers (Bennett & Foldesy, 2013). The following sections identify the problem of practice, background, purpose of the study, theoretical framework, and research questions. Also, definitions of terms were included to give clarity to the research. Chapter 1 concludes with a summary and an outline of the following sections.

Background

During their tenure in office, former presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama set up advisory councils that promoted faith-based and neighborhood partnerships, with the understanding that religious and community leaders who serve the same people could create synergistic relationships to better their neighborhoods (Pegram et al., 2016; Perkins, 2015). U.S. government officials gave educational leaders detailed instructions for working with FBOs (Bindewald, 2015; Daly, 2013; Thompson & Russo, 2017). For decades scholars have believed that

urban policymakers and practitioners . . . know the importance of proactive involvement

of religious community-based organizations. Even though some community

organizations draw membership outside specific neighborhoods' radius, experts believe

all volunteers are potential agents to increase students' self-efficacy and academic

achievement. (Pegram et al., 2016, p. 16)

Likewise, many academics argued that urban schools, as single entities, are not equipped

to meet all the needs of families and communities (Bennet & Foldesy, 2013; Green, 2015; Jordan

& Wilson, 2017). Jordan and Wilson (2017) stated, "Churches are resources to motivate,

emotionally support, and marshal capital to support children which complements the efficacious

processes highlighted by social learning theory" (p. 98). Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2014) added to

the conversation by arguing that students build social capital by engaging with family, friends,

teachers, and community organizations (including FBOs) on and off campus. Kaplowitz (2015)

argued that just as secular and business organizations can partner with public schools to increase

students' social capital, religious institutions should also be given the same opportunity.

Evidence supports how churches and public schools have collaborated to increase student

achievement. A study conducted by Henry et al. (2017) reported how a group of economically

underprivileged students in Florida increased their standardized reading and math scores because

of a church partnership. Likewise, Oosterhoff et al. (2017) concluded in a quantitative study that

faith-based volunteerism correlates to student achievement. One of the conclusions they drew

was students involved in after-school sports conducted by church members had a positive effect

on other aspects of the students' life, such as education and goal setting.

Although there was a plethora of evidence advocating the positive attributes that are

spawned from public school and church partnerships, there were scholars who questioned the

practicality of church and public school partnerships (Green, 2015; Perkins, 2015). Perkins (2015) stated, "School-community partnerships rhetoric embraces an idealized notion of community to be attained without addressing whose ideal is being promoted. Much in the same way we question colorblind policies, blanket assumptions of the community for school-church partnerships must be challenged" (p. 318).

Also, researchers chronicled examples of unsuccessful church partnerships with public schools. For instance, in a small community in southwest Michigan, the secular constituents were highly suspicious that their First Amendment rights were being infringed upon by the activities of church members (Geier, 2014; Green, 2015). Geier recorded how some secularists believed a contingent of school employees fostered the church's mission during school hours and ignored the separation between church and state. This case and other cases may be indicators as to the scarcity of church and public school partnerships.

Despite the criticisms of the church and school partnerships, there was a need for community leaders to create collaborative environments (Bridwell-Mitchell, 2017). Schools and churches can be thought of as a continuum in which teachers and community adults play a vital role in adolescents' transitioning into mature and self-sufficient adults (Forgeard & Benson, 2019). However, specific leadership skills are needed to create collaborative and effective community partnerships between churches and public schools (Kaplowitz, 2015; Reece et al., 2013). Krumm and Curry (2017) argued that successful community partnerships occur when leaders are equipped to meet the needs of the organizations they lead, as well as organizations they partner with. This concept is known as cross-boundary leadership.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study involved how pastors can enhance their awareness of creating church and public school partnerships, contributing factors that may have prevented the formation of public school and urban church partnerships, and the need to identify leadership strategies that could be implemented by school leaders and urban pastors to overcome those obstacles. Students who reside in the United States are facing an increasingly competitive global community (Dunac & Demir, 2017). As a result, educational leaders and policy makers are challenged to find ways to support and enhance learning outcomes (Krumm & Curry, 2017). Holistically, churches and other faith-based institutions remain an undertapped and underresearched community resource to help increase student achievement (Jordan & Wilson, 2017). Research has illustrated how school partnerships benefit students in the public school and the surrounding community by improving student achievement (Henry et al., 2017; Oosterhoff et al., 2017).

However, a substantial body of research has identified the following areas as potential leadership barriers to robust partnership building: conflicting lines of demarcation (Hernandez-Gantes et al., 2018), a lack of network-building experience (Toledano & Maplesden, 2016), and the pastor's philosophical mindset regarding community engagement (Pegram et al., 2016). Regarding lines of separation, school administrators and pastors are crucial for the initiation and sustainability of mutually respectful partnerships (Krumm & Curry, 2017). If one of the essential leaders does not effectively execute their responsibilities, the collaboration will be jeopardized. For example, Geier (2014) analyzed the conflicts between a church and public school when the principal of the school became a church member of the ministry that was volunteering at his school. Staff and parents felt the principal's religious affiliation conflicted with his job

responsibilities. Toledano and Maplesden (2016) stated that many administrators and pastors are

ethical and professional in their communities; however, some lack the training or proper

expertise to facilitate network building. They further argued that leaders of organizations must

learn how to leverage their personal and social capital for collaborative and community

development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how urban pastors and

public school leaders could become more aware of church and public school partnerships and

address contributing factors that prevent church and public school partnerships. In addition, I

identified in this study possible leadership strategies to increase church and public school

partnerships (Gross et al., 2015; Jordan & Wilson, 2017). Researching a more comprehensive

understanding of perceived problems, knowing the strength of each challenge, and identifying

leadership strategies to overcome the obstacles may help pastors and school leaders in

developing the necessary leadership skills needed for holistic partnership building. The

qualitative data were collected through semistructured interviews with 10 school leaders and a

discussion panel of four pastors.

Theoretical Framework Discussion

Universities, businesses, and other community organizations have developed partnerships

with public schools to help underperforming students (Aleman et al., 2017; Kaplowitz, 2015;

Krumm & Curry, 2017). These entities, known as stakeholders, are recognized partners who are

committed to creating a positive learning environment to increase the number of future

productive citizens and employees (Gross et al., 2015; Pandya, 2016). Krumm and Curry's

(2017) cross-boundary leadership theory can be used as the guiding idea for churches and FBOs as potential stakeholders.

Krumm and Curry (2017) introduced cross-boundary leadership as a needed skill in network and partnership building. They argued, "The concept of cross-boundary leadership is based on the idea that educational and social problems require collaborative approaches to leadership that cross structural boundaries and create a network of shared responsibilities among the different spheres of children's lives" (p. 103). I used two components from Krumm and Curry's (2017) cross-boundary leadership theory as the theoretical framework to guide this research. Lederman and Lederman (2015) stated a theoretical framework should (a) identify the problem and (b) then indicate the researcher's approach to solving the problem. Thus, I used Krumm and Curry's (2017) cross-boundary leadership theory to address how a school leader and a church pastor could work collaboratively to build strong community partnerships. In this study, I investigated church and public school partnerships. The following questions guided this research.

Research Questions

RQ1: How can pastors enhance their awareness of creating synergistic church and public school partnerships?

RQ2: What contributing factors prevent pastors and school leaders from creating an effective and collaborative church and public school partnership?

RQ3: How can pastors and school leaders implement leadership strategies to strengthen church and public school partnerships?

Definition of Key Terms

Church. A church is a group of individuals committed to the same doctrine, beliefs, and practices (Bindewald, 2015).

Church and public school partnership. A church and public school partnership is a verbal or written agreement between a religious organization and a state organization, entered into with the understanding of working toward shared goals and objectives (Jordan & Wilson, 2017).

Faith-based organizations (FBOs). Faith-based organizations are a collection of individuals united through their spiritual and religious beliefs who are advocates for community improvement through social and religious methods (Lin, 2018).

Leadership strategies. Experts recommend organizations take various approaches to help their constituents to meet stated goals and objectives (Krumm & Curry, 2017).

Partnerships. Partnerships are organizations who work in collaboration to achieve a goal or who have a shared vision (Perkins, 2015).

Pastor. A pastor is the lead minister for a Christian congregation who makes leadership and financial decisions (Geier, 2014).

Public schools. Public schools are children's learning institutions funded by government taxes (Kaplowitz, 2015).

School/educational leader. The school leader is an individual recognized by the superintendent as the leader of a cluster of schools or a school (Krumm & Curry, 2017).

Urban community. An urban community is a cluster of citizens who reside in more densely populated areas with other individuals of similar social, racial, or economic demographics (Jordan & Wilson, 2017).

Worldwide community. A worldwide community describes how more connected individuals are because of technology (Dunac & Demir, 2017).

Summary

The interconnectedness and competitiveness of the worldwide community has challenged educational leaders to seek innovative ways to help their students (Krumm & Curry, 2017). School-community partnerships play an essential role in successful schools often providing support and resources to meet staff, family, and student needs that go beyond what is typically available through school (Gross et al., 2015). Although churches have had historical significance in urban communities, especially in the realm of children's education, church and public school partnerships are rare (Dancy, 2010; Jordan & Wilson, 2017). A thorough review of the literature revealed many pastors were not aware of the processes, possibilities, or promises that occurred through robust and collaborative partnership building (Henry et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2016). Unfortunately, many pastors were not trained in seminary or through their denominational leadership on how to build and facilitate community partnerships (Geier, 2014). With pastors growing in their understanding of church and public school partnerships and how to develop the necessary leadership skills to assist said partnerships, more resources will be available for schools and communities.

Chapter 1 contains the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, definition of terms, and theoretical framework. The second chapter contains a review of the literature related to (a) the historical precedent, (b) the definition of partnerships, (c) examples of school and business partnerships, (d) legal ramifications, (e) partnership barriers, (f) benefits of partnerships, and (g) the needed leadership skills to develop partnerships. The third chapter contains the research design, sample population, and instruments used in this study. Also, I

explain the data collection methods, how they were analyzed, and how the confidentiality of participants was protected in this study. The fourth chapter contains the findings of this research study in both narrative and table form. The fifth chapter presents the findings, conclusions related to the research questions, and the recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Most of the literature regarding church and public school partnerships is qualitative research from case studies grounded in social learning theory. Also, quantitative researchers have investigated whether a church and public school partnership improved students' academic or behavioral outcomes. A thorough investigation of the current literature revealed that numerous cases have been argued before the U.S. Supreme Court regarding the lines of demarcation in church and public school relationships (Bennett & Foldesy, 2013; Gooch & Abel, 2018).

However, there is a scarcity of research that addresses the specific leadership strategies needed to facilitate and manage partnerships between churches and public schools. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how urban pastors and public school leaders could address contributing factors that prevent church and public school partnerships (Gross et al., 2015; Jordan & Wilson, 2017). Researching a more comprehensive understanding of perceived problems, knowing the strength of each challenge, and identifying leadership strategies to overcome the obstacles may help pastors and school leaders develop the necessary leadership skills for holistic partnership building. The qualitative data were collected through semistructured interviews with 10 school leaders and a focus group meeting with a panel of four pastors. The setting for this study was in public schools and via telephone conversations.

The following research questions guided this literature review:

RQ1: How can pastors enhance their awareness of creating synergistic church and public school partnerships?

RQ2: What contributing factors prevent pastors and school leaders from creating an effective and collaborative church and public school partnership?

RQ3: How can pastors and school leaders implement leadership strategies to strengthen church and public school partnerships?

The eight areas examined in this literature review were (a) historical precedent, (b) definition of the term "partnership," (c) church and state, (d) government intervention, (e) benefits of church and public school partnerships, (f) barriers to church and public school partnerships, (g) leadership strategies for developing church and public school partnerships, and (h) best practices for sustaining church and public school partnerships. For this literature review, I utilized Abilene Christian University's Margaret and Herman Brown Online Library. From Abilene Christian University, I used the OneSearch engine for many of my journal articles. Also, I defined terms with CREDO and examined ProQuest for dissertations with similar topics. Lastly, I used the Atlanta University Center Robert Woodruff Library's eJournals, which are powered by WorldCat Discovery and googlescholar.com. The following terms were used in both search engines: "church and public schools," "partnerships," "community partnerships," "faith-based organizations," and "community leadership."

Historical Precedent

For centuries in the United States, religious institutions, especially Black Protestant churches, have been involved in public education (Deichmann, 2015; Jordan & Wilson, 2017). Researchers have chronicled numerous examples of churches influencing secular institutions and creating collaborative partnerships. Before the formation of the United States of America, religious groups were creating policies that affected their congregants and other community members. In the 1600s, Massachusetts colonists established the Old Deluder Satan Act, which was designed to encourage children and adults to be taught how to read so they could read the Bible for themselves and become more productive citizens (Bindewald, 2015). America has had

a varied perspective when discussing the intersection of religion and public institutions. Since the framing of the U.S. government, there has been tension regarding the role of religious activity in government-run facilities (Gooch & Abel, 2018).

In the 1800s, the church was highly engaged in community service. Its devotion to meeting the needs of urban immigrant families became known as the Social Gospel movement. The Social Gospel movement was organized by Christian believers who believed the essence of Christianity was to serve the poor and oppressed as Jesus did. Thus, they took the gospel out of the building and went into tenements and slums in urban communities during the U.S. industrialization period (Deichmann, 2015). Church members advocated for the rights of the poor and oppressed, illiterate immigrants, African Americans, women, and children. Christians provided safe environments for all people to learn life and vocational skills (Deichmann, 2015; Zurlo, 2015).

During the Social Gospel era (1870s–1920), Jane Addams, a social worker, used innovative strategies to educate the urban poor. As a social worker and activist in the slums of Chicago, she focused on the needs of women and children (Malinowski, 2018). One of her primary concerns was the lack of compulsory public education for children. However, through her efforts at Hull House, the organization she founded, numerous immigrants and their children were taught to read and write, which prepared them to become functional and self-sufficient citizens (Deichmann, 2015). Scholtz (2015) stated, "Addams sought a public role for herself at the same time that she had internalized a strong sense of social responsibility and even stewardship for those less fortunate in society" (p. 208). As Addams set out to spread a Christian gospel that reflected the ministry of Christ, she left the four walls of the church and went into the

streets to serve people. One could argue that her program was a forerunner of church, school, and community partnerships (Deichmann, 2015).

Historically and traditionally, the Black church has been instrumental in providing education for children of color (Jordan & Wilson, 2017). Research has also illustrated how the Black church and community members have worked together to uplift the Black community (Green, 2015). It can be argued that the Black church and Black schools were also forerunners to church and public school partnerships (Jordan & Wilson, 2017).

Since the 1700s, racism and de jure and de facto segregation were challenges that the Black community had to endure (Hine et al., 2004; Pegram et al., 2016). Black people were denied access to any legal form of education during slavery. However, through the efforts of African American churches, spiritual and literate communities were created (Hine et al., 2004). One of the reasons some Blacks learned to read was due to the efforts of White abolitionists, who believed that every individual, Black or White, was entitled to receive the opportunity to learn to read. The church was used as the primary vehicle to accomplish that mission (Jordan & Wilson, 2017).

Kammerer (2017) explored the correlation between the Black church and education in the Northeast. He shared how free Black men, especially preachers, were strong advocates for education, and at times encouraged missionaries, who were also teachers, to return south to teach former slaves. During this turbulent era, especially when facing opposition from White racists, many Black educators received support from the Black church community (Hine et al., 2004; Jordan & Wilson, 2017).

Fairclough (2000) stated:

A former Black 20th-century intellectual, W. E.B. Du Bois stated: "the South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro. The South was not wholly wrong; for education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution, dissatisfaction and discontent. Nevertheless, men strive to know." (p. 65)

Dr. Du Bois's statement aptly described the Black church because it became more than a Sunday institution. Out of necessity, the members had to practice "holistic community," meaning every aspect of African Americans' livelihood, including education, was championed by the church (Hine et al., 2004; Jordan & Wilson, 2017; Pegram et al., 2016).

In Philadelphia, Richard Allen founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), the first Black-led denomination (Hine et al., 2004; Jordan & Wilson, 2017; Kammerer, 2017). He and his fellow parishioners were instrumental in educating numerous African American children in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. Richard Allen and his colleagues also equipped teachers who went south and taught freed slaves after the Civil War (Hine et al., 2004). From 1890 to 1910, legislation was passed by all southern states that effectively disenfranchised African Americans and gave license to lynching and other forms of racial suppression (Hine et al., 2004). In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court ratified Jim Crow segregation by approving "separate but equal" railroad cars in the case *Plessy v. Ferguson.* Unfortunately, this ruling included all public facilities, even schools (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 28). Green (2015), Jordan and Wilson (2017), and Pegram et al. (2016) recorded the significance of the Black church in the fight against racism and injustice during the Reconstruction era through the civil rights era. The authors highlighted the revolutionary role the church played in fighting against discrimination in public education.

The country's most potent catalyst for educational reform for all children, Black or White, transpired during the 1950s and 1960s the civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Klaman, 1994). From its onset, the civil rights movement was anchored in the African American church (Jordan & Wilson, 2017; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* outlawed segregation in all public schools (Anderson, 2016). Although the verdict was passed in 1954 and took decades to implement fully, the Black church remained stalwart through the process (Jordan & Wilson, 2017; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Through determination and faith, Black people made decisions to better themselves and their communities, and one of the avenues they used was public education (Dancy, 2010). The numerous historical examples of Black churches' involvement in public education is a reminder to the U.S. urban church of the possibilities and the potential that churches have to create equitable and transformative partnerships with public schools, especially for children living in underresourced communities (Jordan & Wilson, 2017).

Definition of Partnerships

Since 1988, numerous researchers have investigated school and community partnerships to assess if there were improvements in students' academic performance (Gross et al., 2015). Dornbusch and Ritter (1988) conducted a study in San Francisco to measure the difference between parental involvement on the elementary school level versus parental participation on the high school level. From their research, the authors drew the following conclusion:

Parental participation in school programs is also related to family structure. Families that

contain both natural parents show the highest rate of participation. Stepfamilies and

single-parent families are low in participation, and their children have numerous social and economic disadvantages. (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988, p. 16)

Building on Dornbusch and Ritter's paradigm, in 1998 researchers such as Dryfoos looked beyond the family unit and investigated the impact of the broader community involvement. Dryfoos (1998) stated, "Schools should become the locus for health and social services intervention as an intervention to improve classroom experience . . . [T]eachers were not equipped to meet all their students' needs" (p. 10). Lareau (2011) countered Dryfoos's argument by stating that one of the reasons middle- and upper-middle-class suburban students academically outperformed their urban peers was the amount of additional resources and support these students received from immediate family as well as community volunteers. Lareau's research suggested that teachers and administrators were not tasked with the sole responsibility of educating students (Lareau, 2011; Sanders & Lewis, 2005). The presence of moms volunteering, reading, fundraising, and advocating for their children's academic rights was a significant factor in students' efficacy; therefore parental volunteerism was a vital partnership (Lareau, 2011).

The concept of community partnerships was emphasized during President Barack Obama's tenure in office (2009–2017). The president and his staff believed that organizations servicing the same individuals should not operate in silos but should have collaborative partnerships (Sanacore, 2017). Thus, the following definition of partnerships grounded this study:

A partnership may be defined as a coequal interdependent relationship that is established and developed over time with the primary purpose of working together toward a mutually determined set of goals and objectives. In the case of school-community partnerships, the

targeted goals and objectives are related to the needs of students and the community.

(Cowen & Swearer, 2004, p. 309)

Although there have been differing perspectives regarding best practices for community and school partnerships, many education experts agree that the interconnectedness of young adults through online platforms has created a broader community and presented a unique set of opportunities and challenges for parents and educators (Oltman & Surface, 2017). As a result of this recent phenomenon, policy makers and educational leaders have concluded that public schools can no longer function as separate entities from the broader community (Reece et al., 2013). Experts recommended the need to create community partnerships to help address students' ever-increasing social and emotional learning needs (Kaplowitz, 2015; Krumm & Curry, 2017; Reece et al., 2013).

Examples of Business and Public School Partnerships

In the early 2000s, the country's most extensive school system, New York City Public Schools, entered into private-sector partnerships (McCombs et al., 2009; Scott & DiMartino, 2009). During Mayor Michael Bloomberg's tenure in office, more than 350 new schools were created, many through the support of community partners (DiMartino, 2014). After a thorough investigation of the private sector and school partnerships, DiMartino (2014) pioneered a new concept called "continuum of control" to observe and measure the type of influence private sector partners exerted with their educational partners. DiMartino stated:

Taking organizational goals and local context into consideration, this framework captures the breadth of public-private-sector relationships and places them on a continuum of control: from affiliation, which represents the least control, to comprehensive management, which represents the most control and how likely the educational values

and goals for schooling take precedence, even if they clash with stakeholders. (pp. 264–265)

According to 2016 U.S. Department of Education graduation statistics, Black and Hispanic males had the highest high school dropout rate: Black and Hispanic 15- to 24-year-olds were dropping out of high school at the same rate since 1976, and in the nation's most extensive school system, New York City, the dropout rate was 57% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Despite numerous federal and state interventions, the federal government alone had not been able to improve minority males' academic performance. Rhoden (2017) stated of all public school students, Black males have the highest probability of dropping out of high school, becoming gang affiliated, going into the penal system, or experiencing an early violent death. As a result, public schools have recently reached out to community partners to help at-risk males, who have a higher high school drop-out rate and are the least likely to attend a 4-year college (Milner, 2016; Rhoden, 2017).

In response to the minority male drop-out crisis in 2004, the 100 Black Men of America began a partnership with New York Public Schools to stem the tide of minority males' academic underachievement. The national organization, 100 Black Men of America, was founded in 1963 in New York City. A group of successful African American businessmen and community leaders began looking for ways to improve their communities, and education was chosen as a priority (One Hundred Black Men of New York, 2019).

In a joint venture with the New York City Board of Education, "the Eagle Academy for Young Men opened in the fall of 2004" (Eagle Academy for Young Men, 2019). The Eagle Academy is a single-gender, all-male school exclusively created to educate boys from Grades 6–12. As a result of the New York City Board of Education partnering with the 100 Black Men

organization, The Eagle Academy saw remarkable graduation results. As of 2018, 93% of the senior class, consisting of Blacks and Hispanics, were graduating and entering college or the workforce (Eagle Academy for Young Men, 2019).

In other major cities such as Philadelphia, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and Newark, New Jersey, private-sector organizations were partnering with school districts to provide the necessary financial and business savvy resources to bolster academically struggling schools (DiMartino, 2014; Scott & DiMartino, 2009). Bulkley and Travers (2013) reported that Philadelphia became one of the nation's first large cities to engage in community partnerships to enhance public education for underresourced school districts. The state of Pennsylvania hired both non- and for-profit organizations to bring additional stakeholders to disrupt the old districts' operational system. State officials believed "outside" perspectives would bring innovations and yield more educational achievement. Other significant cities soon imitated Philadelphia's attempt to transform its public school system.

In the 2000s, the city of Los Angeles took steps to reform its public schools. For decades, especially in East Los Angeles, a large percentage of students did not complete high school. Of those who graduated, many were not academically prepared to enroll in 4-year institutions (Perez & Madera, 2015). Perez and Madera highlighted two schools created by stakeholders, parents, community partners, and teachers who partnered to reverse the failure rates. One of the schools, Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez High School for College and Career Preparation, was recognized for academically outperforming numerous other schools in the state of California and for having tremendous gains in its adequate yearly progress (AYP).

Barbieri and Edwards (2017) highlighted the necessity for the forming of school and community partnerships in post-Katrina New Orleans. In the aftermath of the hurricane and

numerous middle-class citizens evacuating, the public school system was in shambles. New Orleans was a tragic example of how a public school system was forced to operate in a different manner. This rapid transformation from traditional school board control to a loosely nontraditional school brought into sharp focus the national debate about marketization (charter schools) as a strategy for educational change (Beabout, 2010).

Another example is Newark, New Jersey, one of the most impoverished urban communities in the United States (Noguera & Wells, 2011). In the fall of 2010, New Jersey governor Chris Christie, Newark mayor Corey Booker, and Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg created a partnership that resulted in Facebook donating $100 million to improve Newark public schools, which had traditionally struggled with providing quality educational opportunities for their public school students (Chin et al., 2019). The criteria included the revamping of some schools, the closing of some underperforming schools, and the creation of a new curriculum that aligned with the Common Core standards (Chin et al., 2019; Noguera & Wells, 2011).

Kaplowitz (2015) argued that just as secular organizations are allowed to partner with schools, churches and faith-based institutions should also be allowed to build collaborative partnerships. Green (2015) stated that principals, community leaders, and pastors who hold formal positions in the neighborhoods have a unique and insightful perspective on the citizens and the needs of those citizens. Pegram et al. (2016) added empirical evidence, suggesting that churches and community organizations that draw membership outside the boundaries of a set neighborhood are positioned to bring tremendous resources and change to that geographic area. They termed the support "collective efficacy."

Church and State

Historically, the U.S. government has had varied opinions regarding church and public schools relationships. Although the Founding Fathers included the First Amendment, freedom of religion, in the U.S. Constitution, they also included the establishment clause, which states:

> The Establishment Clause prohibits the government from making any law respecting an establishment of religion. This clause not only forbids the government from establishing an official religion but also prohibits government actions that unduly favor one religion over another religion. (Beschle, 2018, p. 1)

Many citizens adhere to Thomas Jefferson's interpretation of the establishment clause, better known as "separation of church and state," which was President Jefferson's opinion (Bridges, 2017). As a result of Jefferson's interpretation, numerous cases have been tried before the U.S. Supreme Court arguing the acceptable lines of demarcation between churches and public schools (Bennett & Foldesy, 2013). Although there are documented cases of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling against churches engaging in religious activities on public school properties, interestingly there are also examples of judgments in favor of high school students exercising their religious liberties during instructional hours (Bindewald, 2015; Bridges, 2017).

Bennett and Foldesy (2013) chronicled examples of the Supreme Court consistently striking down school policies that allowed religious overtones during school hours, such as prayer or reading passages of scriptures from the Bible and the display of religious language during Friday night football games. In June of 1962, the Supreme Court made a landmark ruling against prayer in public schools. Parents in the state of New York challenged the public school policy of mandatory morning prayer in their students' public schools. In *Engel v. Vitale*, the Supreme Court ruled it was a violation of the establishment clause for school officials to

mandate public school prayer (Bridges, 2017). The ruling from the Supreme Court said that since

all taxpayers support public schools, public schools must maintain a neutral stance regarding

religious activities (Oltman & Surface, 2017).

In the case of *Wallace v. Jaffree* (1985), again the Supreme Court justices rendered a

decision regarding acceptable religious activity during public school hours. Parents from the

state of Alabama argued that state officials overreached when they enacted a law allowing time

for "meditation or voluntary prayer" (Brown, 1986). Based on their understanding of the

establishment clause, the Supreme Court justices ruled in favor of Jaffree, who filed suit against

the State of Alabama, and again it was deemed unlawful for religious activity at public schools,

even if it was phrased "voluntary" (Brown, 1986).

According to Durden (2001), in another controversial case, *Lee v. Weisman* (1992), the

Supreme Court ruled school districts could not allow a member of the clergy to perform public

prayers at middle or high school graduation. In 1992, Mr. Weisman, an observer of Judaism, was

offended by a Baptist minister while attending his daughter's middle school graduation. He

complained to the school principal, who tried to appease the Weisman family by asking a Jewish

rabbi to offer prayer the following year at another Wiseman child graduation. However, the

Supreme Court adjudicated it was a violation of the establishment clause for any religious

official, regardless of religious persuasion, to offer any form of prayer at a public school

graduation event, and it was deemed a violation of the First Amendment.

In 2000, the State of Texas challenged the interpretation of the establishment clause and

its application during after-school activities at Friday night football (Bennett & Foldesy, 2013).

The Santa Fe Independent School District was involved in a controversial religion and public

school matter argued before the Supreme Court in *Santa Fe v. Doe* (Bennett & Foldesy, 2013).

The families, one Catholic and the other Mormon, were offended by scriptures on a cheerleader's poster and prayer over the intercom before the football game. The Supreme Court resolved it was a violation of the First Amendment if prayer was broadcast over the intercom system before a sporting event. Although students created the sign and said the prayer, the Supreme Court Justices ruled 6–3 in favor of the plaintiff. They stated it was unlawful because "(a) it was delivered on school property; (b) broadcast over school equipment, (c) delivered within the visible presence of the school's name, logo, insignia, and colors" (Bennett, 2019, p. 48).

Harding (2013) stated, "It is a seemingly paradoxical state that a country can view itself as a highly secularized nation and at the same time maintain close relationships with various religious denominations." (p. 342). His statement aptly describes the uneasy interactions the federal and state governments have had to circumnavigate church and public school relationships. However, despite various rulings, fears, and concerns, such as the separation of church and state, religious people have continued to be necessary volunteers (Bindewald, 2015; Bridwell-Mitchell, 2017; Pegram et al., 2016).

The federal government's position regarding church and public schools was most clearly defined under the leadership of President William "Bill" Clinton. In 1996 President Clinton championed the Charitable Choice Act; the initial intention of the bill was to allow religious organizations the opportunity to become contractors with state and county agencies just as secular organizations were allowed. He believed religious institutions were equipped to provide much-needed services to underresourced communities (McCormick, 2017). However, President Clinton encountered resistance, and he was only able to pass the Welfare Reform Act, in which he asked community organizations and FBOs to help former prisoners who were returning to society (Daly, 2013; Deichmann, 2015; Persons, 2004).

Out of his initiative grew more policies as the next elected president, George W. Bush, supported faith-based initiatives. He issued an executive order on January 29, 2001, which created the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives and an executive level faith-based advisor who was committed to ensuring the development of community-based partnerships (Daly, 2013). The executive order stated:

> The Office of FBCIs would take the lead responsibility in creating policies, priorities, and objectives for the federal government's comprehensive effort to enlist, equip, enable, empower and expand the work of faith-based organizations to the extent permitted by the law. (Persons, 2004, p. 69)

While campaigning in 2008, President Barack Obama surprised his liberal constituents as he announced the continuation of President Bush's faith-based initiatives (Carlson-Thies, 2010; Daly, 2013). After President Barack Obama's election, he announced the creation of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships Department (Biebricher, 2011; Carlson-Thies, 2010; Daly, 2013). The department was tasked with creating equitable opportunities for religious organizations and secular organizations to offer competing services to underprivileged communities in areas such as education, health care, and addiction treatment, with the understanding that individuals could choose their service provider (Daly, 2013). President Obama also instructed the department to create policies that would protect the rights of individuals and the religious provider (Daly, 2013).

One of the primary objectives of the newly formed faith-based department was to ensure the constitutional rights of both parties were protected (Carlson-Thies, 2004; Daly, 2013). Koh and Coles (2019) acknowledged that some applauded President Obama and his cabinet policies to help the poor; however, just as many were concerned his faith-based policies would blur the

lines between religious and secular organizations. Just like his predecessors, Presidents Clinton and Bush, President Obama faced intense criticism for his attempt to stem the tide of poverty by partnering with FBOs. However, all three presidents shared the fundamental belief that people of faith willingly share their time, talent, and money to religious causes and secular purposes and that Christian people and their organizations contribute to the common good (Bridwell-Mithcell, 2017; Carlson-Thies, 2004; Daly, 2013). The former presidents acknowledged believers do well because of their faith, and their volunteerism is an asset to society (Daly, 2013).

Partnership Barriers

While numerous researchers have advocated for church and public school partnerships, many have shared concerns about building partnerships between churches and public schools (Bindewald, 2015; Perkins, 2015). Geier (2014) and Green (2015) identified the following factors as possible challenges that negatively impact church and public school partnerships: the misunderstanding regarding lines of demarcation, a pastor's philosophical mindset toward volunteering, and the organization's leaders lacking network building skills. Scholars questioned if a church or public school leader had adequate training or the skill set to build and manage community partnerships. For example, some principals had crossed the lines of demarcation and did not maintain a professional relationship with their stakeholders (Perkins, 2015; Thompson & Russo, 2017).

Geier (2014) analyzed the conflicts between church and state by examining a case study of a church and public school partnership in the Michigan school system. In the Michigan case study, a religious group was accused of using the public school setting to proselytize their Christian message. Parents not affiliated with the church stated their constitutional rights were violated by dominant church members' views, especially after the high school principal became

a member of the volunteering congregation (Geier, 2014). Davis et al. (2018) argued secular

parents and community members are sometimes skeptical of churches' motives when they are at

public schools with students during instructional hours.

Research indicated some pastors do not view community service as a vital part of their

church's mission (Jordan & Wilson, 2017; Pegram et al., 2016). In a study conducted by Pegram

et al., the authors noted that some clergy felt it was challenging to build meaningful relationships

in communities because the surrounding community was not interested in partnership building.

Also, some pastors of aging congregations stated they felt inadequate to meet the needs of high

school students (Pegram et al., 2016). Bindewald (2015) stated some ministers focus on

proselytizing and are not interested in building community partnerships.

Research revealed many organizational leaders did not have clarity as to who should lead

the charge in partnership building, and this factor may negatively impact the number of church

and public school partnerships (Pandya, 2016; Toledano & Maplesden, 2016). Aleman et al.

(2017) stated the creation of community partnerships starts with collaboration between the

leaders of organizations who are looking to partner. Bridwell-Mitchell (2017) asserted successful

partnership building with stakeholders is impossible if the identified leader is not involved.

McMillon (2016) argued that teachers should take the lead in community partnership

building. The author believed school–community collaboration should be thought of as a

continuum in which teachers play a vital role in finding community volunteers to support their

students. Aleman et al. (2017) advocated for teachers to receive training in working with FBOs,

and they asserted it is important that veteran teachers become experts in partnership building in

order to help fellow educators. Krumm and Curry (2017) stated that the creation, and the

sustaining of active church and public school partnerships only occurs when a school leader is

involved. They argued, "The school leader's reform knowledge, professional influence, and reform focus is crucial in the sustainability to develop the school, family, and church partnerships" (p. 102).

Reece et al. (2013) further argued it was necessary for a principal to lead the charge in church and public school partnership building, especially in urban communities. They theorized that in many lower-income neighborhoods the recognized authority figure's validation of community partners will create an environment of trust and mutual respect. Reece et al. (2013) also believed it was crucial for the school leader to create a school-wide culture of teacher buy-in to sustain partnerships.

The identified organizational leaders' network-building capacity was a factor that negatively affected the number of church and public school partnerships that are built and maintained (Krumm & Curry, 2017; Toledano & Maplesden, 2016). Toledano and Maplesden (2016) stated the importance of the organizations' leaders understanding the inner workings of a traditional network. They further argued that a leader must leverage their professional and social capital for collaboration and community development when building or fostering relationships between churches and public schools. Krumm and Curry (2017) added to the conversation by introducing the concept of cross-boundary leadership as a needed skill in network and partnership building. They argued

> the concept of cross-boundary leadership is based on the idea that to adequately address children's educational and social challenges, a leader must have the skills and ability to navigate structural boundaries and one who is able to create a network of shared responsibilities among the different spheres in children's lives. (p. 103)

Benefits of Partnerships

Graham et al. (2019) emphasized how school partnerships could be sources of social capital for schools. They defined social capital (school) theory as "the dynamic of teachers and stakeholders working in collaboration to mitigate the effects of poverty and increase education efficacy for young adults" (p. 119). Numerous studies are documenting the academic, emotional, and social improvement and success of students whose schools are in partnerships with FBOs. Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2014) shared the positive results of a qualitative study that tested how community support from family, friends, and mentors—a form of social capital—was crucial to academic success among underprivileged African American and Latino students. From their research based on data obtained from interviews and focus groups, the author chronicled the academic achievement of students who were in partnerships with stakeholders.

In a similar study, Cholewa and Smith-Adcock (2013) argued students build social capital by engaging with family, friends, faculty, and community organizations, including FBOs on and off campus. Social capital is an essential factor in helping impoverished students matriculate through school and successfully graduate (Cholewa & Smith-Adcock, 2013; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014). Both Sandoval-Lucero et al. and Cholewa and Smith-Adcock believed families living in poverty—and mainly their children—benefit educationally from a strength-based support system that includes the family, FBOs, and/or churches working harmoniously to create community change.

Henry et al. (2017) and Gordon et al. (2009) shared results from studies conducted to measure the impact of adults mentoring students. Henry et al. (2017) in a quantitative study examined the effects of counselor-led faith-based school-family-community (FBSFC) mentoring partnerships and their positive impact on the reading and math achievement of a group of

socioeconomically underprivileged elementary school students in Florida. Henry et al. (2017) compared data from standardized tests in reading and math for students from schools that were part of an FBSFC partnership and to those of students from schools that were not involved in the mentoring group. Data analysis provided evidence of the efficacy of FBSFC's mentoring efforts in improving student scores on standardized tests in reading and math.

Likewise, Gordon et al. (2009), using results from their qualitative study, recommended ways churches and FBOs could positively impact their communities through mentoring partnerships. The authors hypothesized how mentoring could have a positive impact on underperforming students. The researchers compared the academic achievement of 61 Black male middle school students who participated in a mentoring program with that of the general population of Black male middle school students who did not participate in a mentoring program. They found improvement in students' self-efficacy, which is crucial for Black male middle school students, a group that has a high risk of academic underachievement or dropping out of school. Henry et al. (2017) and Gordon et al. (2009) provided valuable evidence that illustrated how public school children's academics improved with the encouragement and guidance of volunteers from churches.

Unfortunately, many urban youths are struggling with emotional health as they battle depression and anxiety. Advocates of church and public school partnerships believed FBOs could offer valuable resources as mentors (Cholewa & Smith-Adcock 2013; DiPierro et al., 2018; Wright et al., 2018). DiPierro et al. (2018) shared results from a quantitative study in which they examined the role of religion/spirituality as a mediator between hope and anxiety in a sample of Latino youth. DiPierro et al. (2018) hypothesized that students who have some form of religion/spirituality or high levels of faith showed lower symptoms of stress. To test their

hypothesis, the authors administered a survey of 134 Latino youth attending a charter school in a Midwestern city. The children completed a questionnaire that included a matrix that measured religiosity/spirituality, beliefs around goal setting, and self-reported anxiety symptoms, although their data analysis did not reveal a sharp reduction of stress management results from children with a religious slant versus those who were nonreligious. Their study indicated that religion/spirituality are reliable measurements for researching children's spiritual development (DiPierro et al., 2018).

In a yearlong survey of more than 300 minorities, Wright et al. (2018) explored how young adults dealt with emotional stress, such as anxiety and depression. From their findings, Wright et al. (2018) challenged previous research that stated youth adults became less religious as they age. Their research indicated that many youths were drawn to religion because "religiosity and spirituality were protective resources that buffer against adverse effects of stressful life events" (p. 10). Thus, based on the results from the studies, researchers believed spirituality grounded volunteers have much to offer children and young adults (DiPierro et al., 2018; Reingle-Gonzalez et al., 2016; Wright et al., 2018). Although religious people cannot initiate a spiritual conversation, proselytize, or "share their faith," during instructional hours, they can become a source of emotional encouragement and possibly spiritual support after school hours (Jordan & Wilson, 2017; Kaplowitz, 2015).

Oosterhoff et al. (2017) and Sango and Forrester-Jones (2017) reported the critical role FBOs can play in helping young adults develop crucial social skills. Oosterhoff et al. explored the impact of faith-based sponsored activities (e.g., volunteering, sports, church, community clubs, arts/music, and school clubs) and how they influence sociopolitical values (e.g., patriotism, authoritarianism, spirituality, social dominance, materialism) in adolescents.

Oosterhoff et al.'s (2017) research revealed that adolescents who were involved in faith-based after-school activities were more apt to become community volunteers and develop a more pronounced spiritual foundation, which in turn enabled them as students to perform better academically and to have a more optimistic view for their future goals.

In a parallel study, Sango and Forrester-Jones (2017) reported the findings of a mixed-method research study that examined the role of FBOs in expanding and maintaining the social network of individuals with intellectual disabilities. The authors used semistructured interviews, and participant observations to collect data. Data analysis showed that compared to individuals who received services through "secular" organizations, individuals with intellectual disabilities who received services through faith-based initiatives were more likely to have a bigger social network than their counterparts. The researchers' findings helped to validate the important role FBOs have in developing an inclusive and positive community for those who have disabilities (Green, 2015; Oosterhoff et al., 2017; Sango & Forrester-Jones, 2017).

Leadership Skills to Develop Partnerships

Welton and Freelon (2017) argued that traditionally, urban communities have always valued and respected individuals who were striving to provide educational opportunities for children, and many of the school leaders are recognized as neighborhood leaders. Toledano and Maplesden (2016) emphasized how leaders of community networks use their skills to enhance community interactions as they mobilize their associates (e.g., business owners and other community leaders) to become stakeholders for public schools.

Thus, school leaders who understand how to leverage their professional and social capital for collaboration and community development can influence their entire neighborhoods (Green, 2015; Gross et al., 2015; Toledano & Maplesden, 2016). Gross et al. further emphasized how

school leaders play a crucial and pivotal role in the formation of community partnerships. Krumm and Curry (2017) stated:

> Effective 21st-century educational leaders must understand how to develop partnerships that will withstand the challenges of a multitude of obstacles including deficit thinking, competing priorities/understandings, lack of resources, and fragmented reform efforts that promise limited sustainability. (p. 101)

> Various research provides compelling evidence as to how the establishment of community involvement efforts can enhance the quality of students' educational and developmental experiences (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Also, supporters for the establishment of community engagement as a strategy in school improvement efforts claim that student needs are met when housed in the students' communities (Cohen-Vogel et al., 2010; Jordan & Wilson, 2017).

> Bukoski et al. (2015) stated:

> Given the dwindling amount of state-sponsored resources being provided to public schools, it is important for the field of educational leadership to examine how educational leaders serving within challenging socio-political contexts perceive and realize the benefits of learning how to engage their communities. (p. 412)

Likewise, Blankstein and Noguera (2015) argued more school leaders must become 21st-century leaders and bring new perspectives and opportunities to their school. For example, pioneering school leaders are bringing community organizations to their schools. Thus, parents and students are able to acquire much needed support, such as counseling and food services. For many students these amenities, known as wraparound services, make a difference in the students' academic success.

Krumm and Curry (2017) further identified these individuals as cross-boundary leaders. Cross-boundary leaders create relationships with other leaders beyond traditional boundaries and, as a result, have a more significant impact on students' lives. Wei et al. (2010) argued cross-boundary leadership is synonymous with transactional leadership. Transactional leadership has some of the following characteristics: (a) a style of leadership that rewards followers with mental or material rewards, (b) the leader supervising a project to achieve set goals and objectives, and (c) the leader gives their team the freedom to explore options but intervenes to avoid detrimental mistakes.

Clipa and Serban (2018) concurred by stating "leadership as a process/state/structure of influence based on personal values and conscience, social intelligence, independent of the position authority, exercised by an individual or more on others aiming at transforming the vision into efficient reality" (p. 90). Ultimately, in cross-boundary leadership or transactional leadership, the leader has recognized authority within their community, is able to create buy-in for a specific goal, and is respected as the main opinion leader, utilizing their influence to inspire and motivate teachers, students, parents, and community members to mobilize for a common cause (Jean-Marie & Mansfield, 2013). Gross et al. (2015) added to the argument by stating educators, as the authority figures, must create a respectful and inclusive environment for parents and other stakeholders for partnerships to exist. Reece et al. (2013) observed in some low-income communities; it is crucial for the principal or partnership leader to create an inviting atmosphere for parents. They further explained how some urban parents' bad memories of their time as public school students may negatively influence their view of the school leader. However, when the organizational leader worked harmoniously and respectfully with all parents and students, especially in underserved areas, the school had greater chances of academic

success (Kaplowitz, 2015; Krumm & Curry, 2017). Krumm and Curry (2017) argued that there

are four fundamental concepts that successful cross-boundary leaders embrace:

- emphasis on relationships rather than a program

- shared influence through collaborative decision-making

- shared responsibility through shared vision and goals and

- sustaining partnerships through promoting a "win-win" context. (Krumm & Curry, 2017, p. 106)

Jean-Marie and Mansfield (2013) stated leaders who share influence and responsibility

can create a community and school culture that transcends the school walls. Green (2015) stated

that historically, before integration, Black principals were crucial in connecting the public school

to the greater community because they had the authority to build coalitions within the

community among churches, businesses, and other possible stakeholders. Thus, through the

implementation of cross-boundary leadership, school and community leaders may once again

recreate the intentional and transformative relationships that not only benefit the public school

but also the entire community at large (Green, 2015; Krumm & Curry, 2017; Reece et al., 2013).

Best Practices for Partnerships

Bridwell-Mitchell (2017) emphasized how school partnerships could be sources of social

capital for schools. Social capital (school) theory "posits that interpersonal trust, norms of

reciprocity, and exchange of social support each constitutes a type of resource and that access to

these resources may promote the resilience of the individuals against adversity" (Novak et al.,

2016, p. 49). An exhaustive investigation of public school districts' websites showed the

willingness of schools to build partnerships. The cities of Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit,

Philadelphia, and New York gave clear instructions for organizations desiring to enter into a

formal partnership. All the websites instruct potential partners to identify a school and then communicate with the school office to see if their proposed service aligns with the schools' agenda (Atlanta Public Schools, n.d.).

Atlanta Public Schools instructions were comparable to those of other large school systems. Large school systems have an office that gives the criteria and oversight for community partnerships:

>To have a formal partnership with _____ school(s), one must adhere to the following steps. According to the guidelines, the first step the potential partner must take is downloading a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and completing the highlighted sections. Once completed, the prospective partners submit their proposal to the leader of the school or schools they desire to work with. During their meeting with the school leader, both individuals set the goals and expectations of the partnerships. Both parties must make sure their mission and visions align; if there is a misunderstanding of foundational tenets, the partnership may be counterproductive. After the agreement is completed, the information is sent to the Office of Partnerships & Development. (Atlanta Public Schools, n.d.)

The Baltimore Public School system had very similar criteria. They asked their potential partners to clearly state what type of partnership they wish to build with a prospective school. Also, they wanted clarity as to how the program would benefit the student body. Lastly, the officials requested organizations to be mindful of the principal's busy schedule and to exercise patience (Davis-Olds, 2017).

The public school system of Boston had creative partnership ideas. They were partnering with numerous community and artistic agencies. Through a unique partnership, students in some Boston-area schools practiced yoga:

> Hands to Heart Center–Yoga for the People is a nonprofit organization in Boston that shares the healing practice of yoga with people affected by addiction, poverty and trauma in Greater Boston. HTHC trauma–informed yoga teachers work with non-profit organizations and high-poverty schools in Boston that serve vulnerable populations to develop and teach individualized classes that promote healing, increase capacity, and build resilience. (Boston Public Schools, n.d.).

Detroit Public Schools Community District had community partnerships, and unlike some major cities, Detroit schools were allowed to partner with an individual. However, they clearly stated on their website, "All partnerships must align with the District's Strategic Plan" (Detroit Public Schools Community District, n.d.). The school district officials did not want organizations that were undermining the school's predetermined objectives.

Like many other major cities, Philadelphia public school officials encouraged partnerships with outside organizations; however, they had clearly defined stipulations. The city of Philadelphia clearly distinguished the difference between private partnerships and organizations. Secondly, the school district only allowed partnerships that were free for the students and schools; outside partners had to have internal funding (Philadelphia School Partnership, 2019). The New York City Department of Education is "the largest and most diverse school system in America," which has resulted in a plethora of partnerships ranging from business and corporations, universities, sports teams, arts, and entertainment to organizations like

100 Black Men of America that was mentioned earlier in this study (NYC Community Schools, n.d.).

Examples of Church and Public School Partnerships

There are multiple examples of churches, and public schools having successful partnerships. *Zorach v. Clauson* (1952) is a case that was debated before the U.S. Supreme Court. The attorneys argued in northwest Indiana around 1914; ministers had petitioned the government for an opportunity to give religious instructions to students whose parents had permitted them (Zucker, 2007).

One of the longest-lasting and most successful church and public school partnerships was in Dallas, Texas. Twenty-five years ago, a principal from a local Dallas school contacted Pastor Dr. Tony Evans and asked for "help" (Evans, 2012). The Oak Cliff Bible Church responded and adopted one school. Currently, the partnership has grown to over 60 schools (Evans, 2012). What started as a ministry of one church has evolved into a nationwide movement known as the National Church Adopt-a-School Initiative (Adopt-a-School Initiative, n.d.). The blueprint for their ingenuity is known as "Project Turn Around (PTA), [which] was established in July 1985 to provide programs that address the social, emotional, and spiritual needs of urban youth and their extended families" (Evans, 2012).

Through Project Turn Around, the students had access to character development programs and received education support. Also, students and their families were eligible to receive essential resources such as food and clothing. Also, program participants' families were supported with continuing education classes, life skills development, and career training (Evans, 2012).

Theoretical Framework Discussion

To properly structure this case study of church and public school partnerships, it was crucial to understand the rationale for this research approach. Yin (2003) stated when conducting a qualitative case study, the researcher's objective is to observe modern problems with a well-rounded and unbiased approach. In doing this study, I used cross-boundary leadership theory for the theoretical framework.

Cross-boundary leadership theory is an extension of the shared leadership theory. Hoch (2013) stated an essential aspect of shared leadership is that the team members share their distinct knowledge, and it is through education sharing that team members access and build on each other's ideas. Thus, in shared leadership, a collaborative environment is created. In cross-boundary leadership, leaders are individuals who possess the ability to identify shared goals and objectives with other like-minded organizations to better the circumstances of individuals in a school or community (Krumm & Curry, 2017). Williams (2015) stated, "Boundary spanners attempt to build trust while surrounded by variably close and heterogeneous client team members, which is crucial to network building and creating an environment that fosters partnership building" (p. 51).

Summary

This study began with exploring various researchers' reviews regarding the development of partnerships and the importance of community partnerships and how churches can become stakeholders for public schools. Churches and public education have had a long and intertwined relationship since the founding of America (Bridwell-Mitchell, 2017). There have been numerous debates between religious and secular citizens, even before the U.S. Supreme Court, as to the amount of influence a church should have in public schools (Dancy, 2010). However,

scholarly research indicated schools must look outside of their walls to generate the needed

resources for their students' educational advancement (Kaplowitz, 2015). FBOs can be strategic

partners in bridging the needs of underserved individuals and communities to public schools that

are disproportionately affected by poverty and lack of community resources (Taylor et al., 2011).

To implement the most effective partnerships, both parties—the schools and

stakeholders—must understand the proper procedures for implementing alliances. It is crucial for

educational leaders and pastors to recognize that a shared vision can produce positive student

outcomes. Also, "a shared vision can provide the foundation and motivation for collaborative

efforts to enhance the sustainability of partnerships and the academic achievement for under-

resourced students" (Krumm & Curry, 2017, p. 106).

An exhaustive examination of the literature revealed a myriad of characteristics that

embody community and public school partnerships. Businesses and other nonprofit agencies

have been supportive stakeholders for underserved communities. However, a detailed

investigation of the research indicated that churches, especially the Black church, have a long-

intertwined history with public education. Studies showed that despite the overwhelming

evidence for church and public school partnerships, they are currently rare (Jordan & Wilson,

2017). There have been legal confrontations between secular and religious people regarding the

appropriate lines of demarcation; evidence reveals that educational leaders have consistently

desired caring and supportive volunteers.

A study of the literature revealed the importance of the right leadership skills necessary to

initiate, facilitate, and sustain the robust synergistic church and public school partnerships.

Additionally, the research showed the current best practices of partnership building. Although

there are legal and fundamental protocols partners must adhere to, there are a myriad of ways to

mold services for the local school. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research design and methods I used to design my study. Also, I identify the research population and setting for my qualitative case study. I elaborate on my data collection methods, my analysis process, and the steps taken to ensure reliability and validity. Lastly, I explain the IRB procedures that I chose to protect my research subjects.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Across the globe, a consistent component to addressing social challenges has been through partnerships formed between FBOs and government agencies. FBOs are emerging as key players in the arena of social welfare (Pandya, 2016). In the United States, church and public school partnerships are an example of two "traditionally" separate entities working together to increase the educational opportunities and achievement of underprivileged youth (Bridwell-Mitchell, 2017; Jordan & Wilson, 2017). During their tenure in office, former Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama set up advisory councils that promoted faith-based and neighborhood partnerships, with the understanding that religious and community leaders who served the same people could create synergistic relationships to better their neighborhoods (Pegram et al., 2016; Perkins, 2015). U.S. government officials gave educational leaders concrete guidance on how to solve the problems faced by the clash between law and faith (Bindewald, 2015; Daly, 2013; Thompson & Russo, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study revolved around how pastors can enhance their awareness of creating church and public school partnerships. Also, contributing factors that may have prevented the formation of public school and urban church partnerships and the need to identify leadership strategies that could be implemented by school leaders and urban pastors to overcome those obstacles. Students who reside in the United States are facing an increasingly competitive global community (Dunac & Demir, 2017). As a result, educational leaders and policymakers are challenged to find ways to support and enhance learning outcomes (Krumm & Curry, 2017). Holistically, churches and other faith-based institutions remain an undertapped and underresearched community resource to help increase student achievement (Jordan & Wilson,

2017). Researchers have illustrated how school partnerships benefit the students in the public school and the surrounding community by improving student achievement (Henry et al., 2017; Oosterhoff et al., 2017).

Regarding lines of separation, school administrators and pastors are crucial for the initiation and sustainability of mutually respectful partnerships (Krumm & Curry, 2017). If one of the essential leaders does not effectively execute his responsibilities, the collaboration may be jeopardized. For example, Geier (2014) analyzed the conflicts between a church and public school when the principal of the school became a member of the volunteer ministry. Staff and parents felt the principal's religious affiliation conflicted with his job responsibilities.

Toledano and Maplesden (2016) stated many administrators and pastors are ethical and professional in their communities; however, some lack the training or proper expertise to facilitate network building. They further argued that leaders of organizations must learn how to leverage their personal and social capital for collaborative and community development. Pegram et al. (2016) concluded the mere presence of churches in urban neighborhoods is not enough for enhancing collective action for school improvement. The researchers further argued that many urban pastors are singularly focused on supporting the needs of their parishioners and the needs of the surrounding community. Thus, Reece et al. (2013) argued there is a need for the development and implementation of shared leadership concepts between public school leaders and church leaders to increase overall student success in schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how urban pastors and public school leaders could become more aware of church and public school partnerships and address contributing factors that prevent church and public school partnerships. In addition, in

this study I identified possible leadership strategies to increase church and public school partnerships (Gross et al., 2015; Jordan & Wilson, 2017). Researching a more comprehensive understanding of perceived problems, knowing the strength of each challenge, and identifying leadership strategies to overcome the obstacles may help pastors and school leaders in developing the necessary leadership skills for holistic partnership building. The qualitative data were collected through semistructured interviews with 10 school leaders and a discussion panel of four pastors.

Research Questions

RQ1: How can pastors enhance their awareness of creating synergistic church and public school partnerships?

RQ2: What contributing factors prevent pastors and school leaders from creating an effective and collaborative church and public school partnership?

RQ3: How can pastors and school leaders implement leadership strategies to strengthen church and public school partnerships?

In this chapter, I discuss the research setting, participants, and methods utilized to enhance trustworthiness and reliability. Also, I discuss the assumptions and limitations and delimitations for the research process. Lastly, I conclude by explaining the ethical procedures that were used to protect my participants.

Research Setting and Participants

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how urban pastors in a large southeastern metropolitan city could enhance their awareness of partnership building with local public schools to improve student success. Research has indicated that although businesses and nonprofit organizations have partnered with public schools, church partnerships are rare

(Kaplowitz, 2015; Perkins, 2015). According to Jordan and Wilson (2017), "Churches can motivate, support and marshal a variety of resources to support children, especially those who reside in under-resourced neighborhoods" (p. 98). For this study, I moderated a semistructured discussion with a focus group of four urban pastors from a network of churches, and I conducted 10 semistructured interviews with school leaders in the metro area of a large southeastern city.

Also, according to Stalmeijer et al. (2014),

The number of participants in focus groups depended on the amount of information that needed to be gathered; the optimum number of participants within a focus group was between four and eight. The moderator should take on various roles to stimulate the discussion within a focus group. (p. 923)

Researchers have stated an open forum approach with four to eight participants is sufficient to capture qualitative research (Stalmeijer et al., 2014; Terrell, 2016). After receiving approval from Abilene's IRB department (see Appendix A) and IRB approval from my local school district (see Appendix B), I met the focus group at one of the pastors' partner schools. The principal was very supportive and allowed us to meet in his conference room.

For the 10 school leaders, I conducted semistructured interviews. Dworkin (2012) stated, "Utilizing interviews for qualitative research, is extremely acceptable for articles, book chapters, and books. Furthermore, five to 50 individuals were an adequate amount for research" (p. 1319). My participants were selected by purposive sampling. Terrell (2016) stated, "It is a form of intentional sampling used in many qualitative studies to allow the researcher to identify small, specific groups to work with" (p. 255). The school leaders came from a local school district in the metropolitan area of the sizable southeastern city that had been trained in partnership

building and had active community partnerships. All participants were from the target population that I had envisioned, and they met my requirements.

After I received permission from Abilene Christian University IRB department, I contacted and obtained IRB approval from the local school district office. After receiving permission, I contacted a district leader and asked permission to contact potential volunteers from his professional network. I met with three school leaders at their sites. However, I had to conduct my remaining interviews via telephone. Unfortunately, as I started my research, we started experiencing a worldwide pandemic, the coronavirus. Thus, I had to modify my participants' approach. In addition, I was informed by Abilene's IRB department to suspend all in-person interviews.

Trustworthiness/Reliability

My worldview could have influenced the data analysis process; therefore, I implemented safeguards that ensured the reliability and credibility of this study (Shento, 2004). Terrell (2016) stated qualitative researchers have a scholarly responsibility to present trustworthy research. Lincoln and Guba said, "Trustworthiness must have the following sections, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability" (as cited in Amankwaa, 2016, p. 8). Therefore, I ensured trustworthiness by using persistent observation as I carefully chronicled each participant's perspectives. While transcribing the interviews, I employed triangulation methodology to collect reliable research. According to Cope (2014), "Triangulation involves the use of multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon. This method included interviews, observation, and field notes" (p. 89). Once all the data had been collected, I used triangulation as I compared public school leader interviews and urban pastors' focus group responses. Lastly, before completing my study, I contacted subjects to check their responses,

which meant interviewees read their transcripts and made corrections if statements were inaccurate (Terrell, 2016).

Data Collection Procedures

To better grasp a pastor's understanding of public school and church partnerships, I conducted a qualitative case study of pastors with churches located in the metropolitan area of a large southeastern city and, subsequently, southeastern public schools. Before collecting my data, I field-tested interview questions with a volunteer principal and a volunteer pastor. I used their responses to better structure my interview questions.

I received permission from Abilene's IRB department to conduct my study. Then, I contacted my local school district's IRB department and received permission to conduct this study. I spoke to my pastor and asked permission to contact the leader of his fellowship network, who oversees a group of pastors. Once he gave me the number, I called and introduced myself, explained my research, and asked if he was willing to help me secure volunteers for this study. He stated that he was busy and that we could not participate, but he encouraged me to contact the pastors in his network. Two pastors in his network responded, and my lead pastor helped me to secure another. The final member was a pastor from the community who had a reputation for building public school partnerships. I sent an email to the pastors and then called to make sure they had first received the email and, secondly, knew the time and location for our meeting.

I met the panelists at one of the pastors' public school partners. The place was an ideal location for all of the panelists, and each arrived at the agreed-upon time. The principal of the school was a great host, and he allowed us to meet in his conference room for the discussion. As each participant entered the room, I gave him a participant form (Appendix C) and a consent form. Everyone was given time to read the consent form and ask questions. I assured the

panelists their identity and responses were confidential and there would be no personal markers for them or their congregations.

I told the group our session would only last an hour. Also, I highlighted the importance of everyone sharing as openly and honestly as possible so that I could have a plethora of perspectives. One of the pastors prayed as we opened the session. Before beginning, I informed the panel that I was recording the session and taking field notes to insure accuracy. I asked my first research question, which was regarding their experiences of working with a school. Basically, I received a one-word answer: positive (my research questions are in Appendix D). I took the opportunity to encourage the participants to share more specific examples. After that small admonishment, the remainder of the conversation was hearty, and everyone shared details. When I asked the panelists what barriers they had encountered, one of the pastors hesitated and seemed as though he did not want to share anything that sounded negative. However, he was urged by his fellow pastors to share his heart. This segment of the conversation was so emotional and thorough that I had to stop the dialogue and move on to the remainder of the topics.

As we were approaching the 45-minute marker, I announced to them that we were in the final stages of our discussion. I wanted to reassure each pastor that I was sensitive to their time. After we concluded our discussion, I introduced them to our host principal, and we all thanked him for allowing us to use his space. I escorted them to the elevator and out of the building. Later that week, I emailed the participants and thanked them for their input.

After completing the pastors' panel, I started interviewing school leaders. Based on Dworkin (2012), I obtained 10 volunteers, which accounted for possible attrition. I spoke with the principal at the public school where I am employed and asked permission to contact other school leaders in his network. He was very supportive and allowed me to contact his peers. I

began contacting them via email and setting up appointments. My first interview was in the school leader's office. I am glad he was my first interview because he was very welcoming, knowledgeable, and positive. Before we began, I gave him a consent form. After he signed, I explained to him that I would be recording our conversation and taking field notes to make sure I was accurately capturing his thoughts. He was very accommodating, and we had a productive interview. After completing the interview, I thanked him. After transcribing the notes, I sent him a follow-up thank you email and a copy of the notes. I told him to contact me if there were any inaccuracies from our conversation.

I drove to a school on the south side of town and met my second participant at his school. When I arrived, I was greeted by one of his colleagues, who escorted me to his office. He was extremely warm and very expressive during our time together. I gave him the consent form and asked if he had any questions. He answered no and signed the form. I told him our time would be recorded and that I would be taking notes to ensure accuracy, and he agreed. Once we completed the interview, I thanked him for his time, and he escorted me to my car and thanked me for allowing him to participate.

My third interview was within walking distance of my job site. We met in the school leader's office. I introduced myself because we had only talked over the phone. I gave her the consent form and allowed her time to read it. I asked if she had any questions, and she responded no. I also let her know the conversation was being recorded and that I was taking notes, and she gave me permission. The conversation was also very insightful and pleasant. She openly expressed her joys and frustration with her partnership, which allowed me to gather very useful and practical data. After our discussion, I thanked her. Later that week, I emailed her a copy of

our conversation, thanked her again, and encouraged her to make any corrections she deemed necessary.

The remainder of my interviews were conducted via phone. Before each phone interview, I called the participant and got their email address. Then I emailed each one a consent form. Thus, before we went, each had signed the form and gave me permission to conduct my study. After transcribing interviews, I emailed copies and encouraged them to fact-check my work and to add any additions or corrections deemed necessary.

Once the data were collected, I used the constant comparative method as I analyzed my data. After reading and rereading the transcript, I used open coding, which, according to Khandkar (2009), includes labeling concepts and defining and developing categories based on their properties and dimensions (p. 1). Thus, open coding was used to discover a shared theme. Attride-Stirling (2001) stated a thematic network is presented graphically as web-like nets to remove any notion of hierarchy, giving fluidity to the themes and emphasizing the interconnectivity throughout the network (p. 389). After manually coding the conversation, I used the Atlas.ti program to scrutinize my research further. By following Boeije's (2002) recommendation, after collecting and fragmenting the data, I found thematic identifications, which revealed the interrelatedness of my collected data.

Ethical Considerations

Since I was working with human participants, a proposal was submitted to the Abilene Christian University IRB to ensure all correct university and federal government protocols would be followed. Also, I had to send my research proposal to my local school district's IRB. Once I obtained permission form both boards, I conducted my study.

Osborne and Luoma (2018) stated,

The federal regulation specifies that researchers are required to follow the "Common Rule," which means all government-funded human research subjects studies must be reviewed and approved by the IRB, when the research is conducted or funded by a government agency or conducted under the leadership of a university. (p. 255)

After receiving permission to conduct this study, I took the following actions to ensure the participants' rights were protected. Parker (2018) recommended explaining to the subjects that (a) their identities are protected, (b) it is their choice to participate in the study without incurring any cost or risk, (c) the research study details (i.e., the purpose of the study and their role as a participant), (d) their rights and who they can contact for further details, and (e) since they are volunteers, they are free to withdraw at any point in the study without explanation. I adhered to the stipulations that Parker recommended.

Assumptions

I conducted the study with several key assumptions. One concern was that some pastors were not aware of the opportunities to establish partnerships with public schools. It was possible that pastors may not have understood the terminology "separation of church and state" and how the concept has impacted public school partnerships. Secondly, for school leaders, it was assumed that school officials were following standard school practices regarding community partnerships more so than district policies and that all the school leaders would be forthcoming with their answers.

Delimitations and Limitations

Terrell (2016) stated delimitations are conditions put into place by the researcher to control factors that might impact the results. For this study, I sought volunteers, pastors, and school leaders as participants. The pastor participants were contacted through a local pastor

network. Also, a stipulation for participation was that the pastors' churches were actively involved in some form of community outreach. The following were requirements for education participants: The individual must have had a leadership role in their school and their districts must have protocols in place for community partnership building.

According to Terrell (2016), limitations are constraints beyond the control of the researcher that could have impacted the outcome of this study. Thus, I prepared to encounter circumstances that were beyond my control or scope. The utilization of purposeful sampling limited my understanding of how various denominations approached partnership building. Also, the sampling was limited to a specific southeastern metropolitan area. Lastly, my own opinions and experiences as a full-time pastor and part-time educator may have prejudiced my findings.

Summary

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the reasons why there are not more church and public school partnerships, I conducted a qualitative case study with pastors and school leaders in a large southeastern metropolitan city. The pastors represented a range of various religious perspectives; however, a requirement for the pastor participants was that their church had to have some form of community outreach. Likewise, the school leaders who participated in my study had to be in a school district that encouraged partnership building. I collected data from a 4-pastor discussion panel and 10 semistructured interviews with school leaders. I followed all IRB protocols during the data collection and analysis process to protect my participants' identity.

Chapter 4 includes the description of the study, the procedures followed, and the analysis of the findings. Also, it includes the transcripts of the conversations and the recurring themes and any unique perspectives that were shared.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how pastors and school leaders can become more aware of church and public school partnerships and implement leadership strategies to increase partnerships. Also, I examined the contributing factors that prevent pastors and school leaders from creating a collaborative church and public school partnership (Gross et al., 2015; Jordan & Wilson, 2017). Researching a more comprehensive understanding of perceived problems, knowing the strength of each challenge, and identifying strategies to overcome the obstacles may help pastors and school-district leaders to develop the necessary leadership skills needed for holistic partnership building. The qualitative data were collected through semistructured interviews with school leaders and a focus group meeting with a panel of pastors.

The three research questions were as follows: How can pastors enhance their awareness of creating synergistic church and public school partnerships? What contributing factors prevent pastors and school leaders from creating an effective and collaborative church and public school partnership? How can pastors and school leaders implement leadership strategies to strengthen church and public school partnerships?

This chapter details the analysis of the research that was collected for this study. I used a qualitative case study methodology to study and to discover complex phenomena within the contexts (Lane et al., 2019). After securitizing the data, I organized the research in the following manner: The first segment consisted of themes from the pastors' panel discussion, the second segment included themes from school leaders' semistructured interviews, and the third segment shared themes from both groups of study participants. Lastly, I close this chapter with a summary.

Pastors' Focus Group

The first segment of this chapter chronicles the discussion of the pastors' focus group. The following are the demographics of the focus group: The pastors' congregation sizes ranged from 80 to 200. Two of the pastors were members of the Independent Christian Churches, and the others were nondenominational. All four pastors had attended college: one pastor said he had had "some college," two had earned their bachelor's degree, and one had earned an MDiv in leadership degree. Two of the pastors were in their 30s, one was in his 40s, and one was in his 50s. Two of the pastors were African American, one was Puerto Rican, and one was Caucasian. Two were leading predominately African American congregations, while the other two were leading racially mixed ministries. Although the pastors were diverse in many aspects, they shared common relevant community outreach programs and a passionate engagement with public school partnerships.

All the participants' congregations and partner schools were located in the metropolitan area of a large southeastern city. The panel discussion was held in a conference room of one of the pastor's partner schools. Before the forum, I reminded each participant their comments would remain anonymous, and their identities would be confidential. Before we began the discussion, one of the pastors did an opening prayer. During his prayer, he thanked God for the opportunity to participate on the panel, and he asked God to bless their public school partnership initiatives.

After the prayer, all the participants seemed more relaxed and were more willing to share their perspectives. Throughout the discussion, the word *school* was used 48 times, partners/partnerships were mentioned 25 times, and the term *needs* was used 30 times, which I

believe was indicative of the level of understanding and commitment each pastor had toward

their partners (see Appendix D for pastors' interview questions).

Ways Pastors Can Develop School Partnerships

My first research question was as follows: How can pastors enhance their awareness of

creating synergistic church and public school partnerships? The objective of my first research

question was to investigate how the pastors had developed their public school partnerships.

Secondly, I wanted to understand what particular need or situation they addressed once the

partnership was implemented.

The pastors shared from their personal experiences ways they became knowledgeable of

building a public school partnership. For example, schools reach out to local community

organizations for support. Thus, from their responses, the theme emerged that schools solicited

the support of a church or an FBO. Pastor 1 shared how his relationship with a neighborhood

school developed because the teachers were overwhelmed with discipline issues and the school

reached out to his ministry. He explained, "They wanted help with students' anger issues, and

specifically, with the football team. So, coaches were screaming like, hey, anybody have any

ideas that can help us?" The school's desire for support with disciplinary issues opened the door

for a future welcoming and affirming church and public school partnership.

Pastor 4 explained how he had developed three school partnerships. One was developed

through Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), which he had immensely enjoyed. He shared,

"As a former high school athlete, I have always enjoyed sports." So, one day a young lady in his

congregation asked him to participate in her high school's "huddle," which is an FCA devotional

for high school athletes. He did and had a tremendous experience. He contacted the regional

FCA director and inquired how he could be more involved with a high school. He was informed

that pastors could always become character coaches, meaning they were welcomed to come and support the coaching staff by helping the high school students with character development classes. Consequently, his volunteerism with FCA led to an eventual partnership with another local school. He shared, "I built a relationship with a supportive school leader, the Athletic director," who became the catalyst for his second school partnership.

Two of the pastors were married to educators; thus, they had a more heightened awareness of the needs of public schools and teachers. Another theme that developed was school partnerships can begin through a pastor's network. Pastor 2 shared how he would sometimes volunteer at his wife's school. Subsequently, in his public school partnerships, he believed it was just as important to meet the needs of educators as of students. He stated,

> So, I've dealt with both public and charter schools. And I've had different approaches for both of them. I think it's not just a partnership with the children, 'cause … it was also beneficial for the teachers because that doorway was opened for me to be a listening ear. If we know anything, is that the teachers go through a lot. They are burdened because schools are overcrowded, the class is overcrowded, and they are doing more paperwork than they do teaching. So, to be able to give them . . . in a way is a release [for the teachers] to be able to have a conversation, counsel them.

He further stated, "If you give emotional support to the staff, they will allow you to influence the student."

Pastor 3 was also married to an educator, and throughout the years he had developed a desire to help public school students. He explained,

We as a church have just celebrated our 6th year as a church, and we've had 6 years of

partnership. Actually, we collected a large offering to implement a food co-op. You talk

about the transient students; our whole goal was to address some of the hunger needs.

Consequently, the show of concern for the teachers and staff of a public school was another

opportunity a church utilized to forge a partnership with a public school.

The pastors' experiences correlated with a 2019 study conducted by Eccleston and

Perkins. They stated that a central theory in the field of community development is social capital,

which is broadly understood as "abilities to develop and sustain strong relationships; solve

problems and make group decisions; collaborate effectively to identify goals and get work done"

(Eccleston & Perkins, 2019, p. 294).

The pastors explained how they had shared their partnership building experiences with

fellow colleagues. Not one of the pastors had undergone formal partnership development

training. They all learned through an organic approach, which was through the building of

community relationships. All the pastors believed their congregations had time, talents, and

treasures to offer their communities, which is a form of social capital.

The pastors enthusiastically explained how their partnerships were developed and how

pleased they were to be in public school partnerships. Jordan and Wilson (2017) and other

researchers stated in their studies that there were relatively few public school and church

partnerships. Therefore, I wanted to understand from the pastors' perspectives if there were

possible barriers that could hinder a church and public school partnership.

Initially, the pastors were very gracious and supportive as they discussed their

relationships with public school partners. As I asked if they had ever encountered difficulties or

barriers while building or managing a public school partnership, the conversation became more

heightened. Then they began openly describing challenges they had encountered with their

public school partners. Thus, this segment of the discussion was guided by my second research

question: What contributing factors prevent pastors and school leaders from creating an effective

and collaborative church and public school partnership?

Factors Preventing Pastors From Creating School Partnerships

As districts and schools refocus their approaches to partnership, it is becoming clear that

partnerships must have real opportunities to help define this work. At a surface level, this can

facilitate buy-in to schools' goals and practices. At a deeper level, meaningful partnerships lead

to better student outcomes while also permitting schools to become centers of democratic

participation. Such community–school partnerships can be challenging to create, but they are

more than worth the investment (Davidson & Case, 2018). During our discussion, the pastors

mentioned sharing a facility, communication challenges with the administration, and feeling used

for a short-term solution more so than as a consistent partner as some of the challenges they had

encountered with their school partners.

The challenge of sharing a school facility was a mutually stated theme by a couple of the

pastors. Pastor 2 clarified that he and the principal initially agreed that he had full access to the

gym. At first, the basketball program did not have to schedule events; however, once the gym

was overseen by another staff member, the initial agreement changed, and eventually his

basketball program was stopped. He specified:

> At first the principal and I were very community minded. Man, the lady had zeal, a zeal I
>
> had never seen before! I knew she was passionate. I had a basketball program that had
>
> probably grown from 6 to 60 kids! Every summer our program grew. I mean, we
>
> projected to have 120 kids. We had open access to the facility from 8 to 5, playing

basketball, and the kids didn't want to leave. So, the principal and I had an agreement

that we could use the gym as we wished. However, she changed her mind, and she

wanted me to turn in a schedule to use the gym. I was okay with that because I assumed

we had an agreement, but eventually she was no longer available to meet. Now, I

couldn't talk to her. The principal said, "I'm too busy now. So, you need to go to this

other staff person." Then a new person started telling me no because "we don't want

nobody in our building." We couldn't use the facility anymore.

His experience was very similar to Pastor 4's experience, which can be summarized as follows:

There are challenges when a church and a school share the same space.

Likewise, Pastor 4 expressed his greatest disagreements had come when renting his

partner school's auditorium:

So, one of the challenges is when it comes to facilities and equipment … we are renting

in the school's facility. So, when problems happen … like okay … well the projector

bulb is going out. Okay, we can buy it, but sometimes we have to go through their actual

people … through people they hire or have a contract with to come fix things. And it can

take longer in that way. So you're disheartened with using their facility. It can be tough.

All of the pastors acknowledged levels of frustration when they were out of sync with the

administration, which was another theme. Pastor 3 stated:

I can think of two in our area: the change of administration. People are on the fast track

for success. We get a great principal in a school. Principals start achieving great things,

making great changes, and then they get promoted or transferred somewhere else. So

that's been a difficult thing in our area, so they really kind of goes along with what you

were saying. Also, I think a lot of times … I mean they're just treading water; they barely

have their nose above water, and you try to get a meeting with them to figure out

something, but they are too busy. It's happening right now with us with a school right

next door to us and … we've been trying to meet with that principal for about three

weeks now. You know, we have a new pastor, and I'm trying to introduce them. So, for

us, too, it's not so much having anything to do with the students but more so the

administration—not the openness of the administration [wanting to work with us]. They

are just too busy.

Unlike Pastor 3, who had experienced difficulty when trying to meet with his partner

school's administrator, Pastor 1 had an opportunity to meet with his school leader and faced

another challenge. He stated:

Lack of a common interest can be a barrier sometimes. It's wrestling and wrestling with

the issues and trying to prioritize what's important. We try to figure out what's the

important shared interest we have. Sometimes, you're trying to bring a solution to a

problem that they're not interested in solving. Or they say a problem and you offer a

solution; however it is not what they want to do.

Pastor 2 added he was frustrated with his administrative team because they refused to

validate his partnership with the students' parents. He said,

It's important for the pastor to have a relationship with parents. I was trying to find a way

to communicate to the administration that I couldn't effectively build a relationship with

a child if there was no parent involvement. However, I never received support from the

administration.

Pastor 4 added another perceived barrier occurred as he communicated with his

administrative team:

One of the barriers as we talk—it's a challenge for us pastors. We for some reason have an expectation for the school and the administrators to be Christians and act like Christians. We have our own churches, and we are able to see the benefits of relationships that impact the culture. We see the benefit of being the kingdom and serving Jesus. However, ultimately, we have to be okay with what doors God has opened. Let me do the best I can in those opportunities … let God work to see if more opportunities become available. But I have a hard time sometimes being okay with not being able to be the savior at all times. I can't do everything … in our hearts as pastors. Usually that shepherd heart wants so badly to make a difference, so it's hard for us as pastors to have limits, especially when some doors aren't opened for us to come in.

Several of the pastors expressed the feelings of insignificance as another barrier to partnership building. Some of the pastors worshipped or lived in the same neighborhoods with their school partners, and they were asked to help for a short term to solve a challenging situation; however there was no long-term commitment, which was another theme. Pastor 1 expounded:

Sometimes you are treated like a first responder, where you are great when you respond to the issue. However, once you respond in triage and everything is better, then the attitude can be "I no longer need you." Like you couldn't live without me a moment ago, but now that I have addressed whatever your needs are, all of a sudden, like, "We don't need you anymore. Why are you still here?"

Pastor 3 stated:

Sometimes the need is so great that they don't know what they need, and so that can be messy too. For example, we had promised to partner with our local middle school. So, we

took up a large offering to do that. We were trying to communicate with them about what

they needed, and it was more like what Pastor X said: There was no overall concept or no

focus on what they needed. So, I think that's one of the challenges, I think, for us has

been what are your real needs.

Before we moved on to the next question, Pastor 2 was clearly agitated by the barriers.

He exclaimed:

Sometimes the public school wants you to only do outreach. I dislike it sometimes

because I would rather be a servant than a Santa Clause. Because I just come in and just

give, give, give, and give. I give donuts to the teachers, book bags for back-to-school. I

would rather come in and serve. Like, let me come in and let me be a fixture and let me

be somebody they know all the time.

As stated earlier, I was fortunate to interview panelists who were experienced partnership

builders. Each of the pastors had been in partnerships for a number of years. They had an

average of 6 years' experience in partnership building, with the shortest being 5 years and the

longest being 7. Thus, I wanted to understand the leadership skills they utilized with their school

partners.

My third research question was as follows: How can pastors and school leaders

implement leadership strategies to strengthen church and public school partnerships? The

pastors' responses aligned with researcher Frick (2004), who explained Greenleaf's servant

leadership concept. Frick (2004) stated that "the servant-leader's primary mission is to serve: 'It

begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then, conscious choice

brings one to aspire to lead'" (p. 10). Additionally, Eccleston and Perkins (2019) argued religion

has also been shown to play a substantive role at the community level by providing resources,

support, and networks, as well as motivation, institutional resources, and justification for engagement in social issues through organizing and development.

Each pastor not only established their public school partnerships, they were volunteers as well. They all stated while at their respective public school, their primary duty was to serve. Hence, they stressed the importance of having a humble posture while creating and managing their partnerships. Research stated that leadership is crucial in building community partnerships (Krumm & Curry, 2017). The panelists unanimously declared that the essential attribute for a pastor to utilize in partnership building was the spirit of servitude.

One pastor said that some schools' websites share what is the school's immediate need. He recommended a pastor going to school and simply offer to meet the advertised need. He also stated if the need is not advertised, go into the school and help with lunch duty, which he called the "grunt work." He further clarified it was essential for pastors to be seen as individuals who did not have an ulterior motive but as individuals who simply wanted to serve. To some extent, each pastor embraced the role of a servant leader, which was another theme that surfaced.

Pastor 2 stated:

I understand not everyone in my ministry has a flexible schedule like mine. However, they support me as their pastor, and I go to schools and serve. I have helped with cleaning and serving in the cafeteria. I didn't mind doing the grunt work because I have a vision of doing more for the school. You have to be willing to do the grunt work; that's what they want you to do, that's what gets noticed. You are coming in and you clean. You speaking to the bad kids. I don't like to call them bad but misunderstood. My city … literally has a website, a list of things the local schools need, so they already have a list and you can implement yourself in that. But that's what I'm saying: They already letting you know,

"If anybody wants to come here, this is what we need." Also, you have to be persistent or you will be ignored.

Pastor 3 stated:

As a pastor, we do the bulk of the volunteering. We serve. That's what we do as a staff. The ideal situation would be to have a whole congregation that's sold on this. I would love to have the entire church involved with a school. I went to a conference with Pastor Tony Evans, and you know their church. They are heavily involved in public school partnerships. They must have a lot of retired people. Also, they have been building partnerships for a long time.

Pastor 4 shared:

For years we met at schools. We just paid rent. Since then, we learned a lot about the partnership model. I would advise, one suggestion is maybe even coming in through an organization that's already established like a Fellowship of Christian Athletes. That was helpful to us because they already had all the paperwork, they had all the approval, and they had a national, even worldwide, brand. So, we came in and said, "We're not serving you as the X church. We're serving you as volunteers to Fellowship of Christian Athletes." We partnered with Fellowship of Christian Athletes, who had the connection with the school and had capital and a brand, so if there's more trust.

Pastor 1 said:

So, it has been a great need so long it is overwhelming. It's really like we have measurable tangibles and then immeasurable intangible, and they play without boundaries. For example, the tangible need is I need a computer, I'm hungry, I need something to eat. That's the tangible measurable. We can quantify that, and we can go

back and say, "Hey, Church, we raised money. Look at the tangible things we did to help."

My leadership question was primarily asked to understand which leadership skills pastors used when working with school leaders. However, another concept was uncovered during the conversation. The pastors shared leadership skills they used to mobilize their congregations to volunteer with their partnerships.

Leaderships Skills Used to Mobilize Volunteers

The pastors did not share a specific leadership skill they utilized with their volunteers; however, after reading the transcript and comparing their actions to leadership traits, inspirational leadership was the best style to define their methodology. Inspirational leadership empowers, energizes, and galvanizes followers to participate actively in an organizational goal. Also, the inspirational leader is equipped to teach their followers how to forego self-interest and even engage in self-sacrifice for the sake of collective objectives (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001).

One pastor stated that in order for a partnership to thrive, the principal or school leader should visit the congregation and say thank you when the church had supported a school initiative. He further explained that after inviting the football team and coaches to a worship service, it was easier to receive support and buy-in from the congregation. Even though some churches may have older members and feel as though they cannot connect with school-aged students, several pastors stated that older people can still have a profound impact on children's lives. One pastor said his retirees were like surrogate grandparents. He stated, "The kids loved older adults, and the volunteers loved the kids." Thus, a church of willing volunteers can have an impact in a neighborhood school; they simply have to find their niche. One pastor said, "It is

important when establishing a partnership to underpromise and overperform, or don't commit to more than you and your church can handle."

Another theme that emerged was how pastors used inspirational leadership to mobilize congregational volunteers. Pastors shared excitedly about their church members' level of engagement with their public school partners. Pastor 4 stated:

Specifically, I bring the football team to church once a season. We have the team, and all the coaches come on stage, and we have our elders pray over them. That helps when our people see the team that we are promoting. They may not necessarily want to give to it financially, but the partnership inspires them. Sometimes we get the principal to come and share. So, our people can see the relationship. The principal, or whoever, is our connection to come to service, and sometimes they want to come to say thank you and that goes a long way. We also use our partnership as an opportunity to work hands-on with the student. Specifically, for us, its mentorship. We've also used it on our end as an opportunity to train our young leaders. Young people may have more of a flexible schedule, and so you can come after school. It gets done for an extracurricular activity such as sports. We teach our future leaders how to interact with people, how to love them, how to serve them, and how to disciple them. We have seen the school was happy when you bring in young people: young people, college students, and even young single professionals. When you're bringing young married people, they see these people are different, and they can relate to the kids.

Although Pastor 4 used a young volunteer base, another pastor mobilized his retirees to engage in volunteerism. Pastor 1 stated:

I realized sometimes we have some elderly people who are very heavily involved in

volunteering. They look like a grandfather, and the kids then love them. And the

volunteers loved the way they feel loved and appreciated. So, if you have the right core of

people in your ministry that wants to get involved, you can have a huge impact and

change both sides.

Summary of Pastor Focus Group

After the discussion was completed, I spent time reading and coding the dialogue. From

the coding process, several overarching themes emerged, and sharing resources was a resonating

concept throughout the panel discussion. The extracted concepts are known as themes. Attride-

Stirling (2001) stated that "applying thematic networks is simply a way of organizing a thematic

analysis of qualitative data. Thematic analysis seeks to unearth the themes salient in a text at

different levels" (p. 387).

Bennett and Einolf (2017) conducted research on the concept of altruism. From their

study, they hypothesized that religious individuals are more likely to help others, and this

distinction is particularly strong regarding formal volunteering and charitable giving. Religion

influences people's internal norms and values and, therefore, may help develop an internal

motivation to help others (p. 325).

Each pastor had a different explanation as to how their relationships with public schools

began. One pastor shared that a school solicited support from his church when it was

experiencing a challenging discipline situation. Several pastors' spouses were professional

educators; thus, they had a bird's-eye view of the needs public school children had. Another

pastor's passion for sports was the catalyst for one of his partnerships. During the conversation,

it seemed as though each pastor was passionate about serving their surrounding communities.

Although all the pastors' represented varying beliefs and methodologies, there was a consensus that churches should serve and share resources with their neighbors. Each pastor was convinced their congregation had the time, talents, and treasures to make an impact. They believed through tutoring sessions, character development programs, giving financially, beautification projects, or simply serving in the cafeteria, they were united in the belief that any church has the resources to help better the surrounding community. As one of the pastors stated, "Churches do a lot on a shoestring budget."

Responses From Semistructured Interviews With School Leaders

For the second part of my research, I conducted semistructured interviews with school leaders who were currently involved in a church partnership or had previous experience working closely with a church partnership. I was fortunate to interview an array of school leaders who were working in various levels of public education. My 10 interviewees consisted of an associate superintendent, an athletic director, a principal, a school office administrator, and assistant principals (one was currently a full-time pastor), whose professional experience ranged from 5 to 25 years.

The shortest interview was 13 minutes, and the longest was 40 minutes. Nevertheless, each individual contributed immensely to this research. The first three interviews were conducted at the school leaders' premises. However, after the nationwide lockdown due to the spread of the 2020 coronavirus, my dissertation chair recommended that I perform the remainder of my interviews over the phone. A few days later, Abilene Christian's IRB department sent an email recommending us not to have in-person contact. Fortunately, I was able to contact my remaining subjects through a veteran educator's network. (The school leaders' interview questions are in Appendix D).

I asked school leaders questions that were similar to those asked during the pastors' discussion panel. I wanted to capture their perceptions and perspectives to see if there were shared themes and concepts. Also, I wanted to know where the subjects differed in their ideals regarding partnerships. During the interviews, three words were used frequently—*partnership* 127 times, *church* 348 times, and *relationships* 68 times—which was an indicator that not only were the school leaders familiar with the concept of church partnerships, they were experienced working with partnerships as well.

School Leaders and Church Partnerships

My first research question was as follows: How can pastors enhance their awareness of creating synergistic church and public school partnerships? Thus, I asked school leaders to describe their experience working in partnership with a church. Each leader expressed positive experiences to varying degrees.

O'Conner and Daniello (2019) argued that given the current political context in the United States, the increased explicit and implicit othering of marginalized communities and the related societal fracturing—often along ideological lines—educators should consider advocating for school-community partnerships explicitly framed through a lens of social justice to address inequalities and injustice in education and beyond. Remarkably, many of the school leaders were either actively engaged in community partnerships, especially with churches, or had managed church partnerships at some point in their professional careers. In addition to their experience in church partnership building, they were very positive about their partnerships. One school leader used the term precious to describe his church partnership. He was also extremely grateful for churches willing to volunteer. He stated, "Unlike a business that gets a tax write-off for their volunteering, churches have nothing to gain they serve out of the goodness of their hearts." As

school leaders addressed my first interview question—describe your partnership with a church—the answers were overwhelmingly expressed with positivity and gratitude, which emerged as a theme. School Leader 7, an expert educator, stated:

> I found it best when there was a significant needs assessment, and the church was able to chime in as to how they could meet those needs. So, I think the way it can work best is to have excellent communication not just at the beginning of said school year but throughout the year, so that churches are not just coming to be present but there is a relationship. Also, there is an understanding of needs. I'm not just talking about financial needs but also any kind of human contact.

> School Leader 9 shared that his church partnership was precious. He stated:

> It's inspiring when entities choose to partner with, especially churches, because they have nothing to gain. Churches are unique partners. Because unlike businesses, which are for-profit companies that can quickly write off donations because they were tax deductible. Also, they're able to supply many volunteers from their companies, but it's just different for churches because churches don't have that luxury doing what a company does. With a church, you can certainly feel the authenticity of whatever it is it is they are trying to do or provide.

School Leader 4 had a unique and exciting experience with his church partner due to someone on his staff failing to follow through on his responsibilities. He stated:

> It has been fulfilling, a learning experience. I didn't think I would be so involved with the church, but since the custodian wasn't doing right by the church, I took over. It was a new experience for me. From my perspective, the church is doing great work in the community. I see how excited the parishioners are. The majority of the parishioners and

the church staff have class and grace. I am grateful; it has been a great experience overall. I was so thankful when Pastor X gave me one of the church's hoodies. I wear it proudly.

School Leader 1 stated:

I would say we collaborate that the church fills in gaps or voids that perhaps the school system or the school itself does not have. Volunteers serve and help with our seniors and provide meals for some of our families that are in need. Churches help with community service hours, so we do work in a dual capacity. We have true partnerships with various churches that we are also connected to.

School Leader 3 stated:

You know social media has really influenced our young ladies in a way that I think it has become a detriment to them owning their self-worth and their self-esteem as beautiful brown girls. I think it's always a challenge of validating who they are, so just to have someone to consistently counter that, I think ultimately that's what they need. They need personal interaction with positive men because they're always comparing themselves to what they see to on social media. Our volunteers have met that need. We used to have a group that came in on Valentine's Day and gave each girl a donut. We called it Dads and Donuts. Also, one year they gave every girl a pair of socks for Christmas. That was special.

School Leader 5 shared that her partnership was mutually beneficial: "I'm grateful for the relationship opportunities. I know several congregation members. They do reach out, you know, frequently to see what the needs are."

One of the reasons for the school leaders' gratitude for their church partners related to the fact that churches gave much-needed resources, which was another theme that surfaced. School Leader 10 shared:

We had a pastor who did a lot with our school, with parents' needs. He set up a food pantry, provided guidance or assistance for parents. It was okay. He wasn't overboard with coming around or anything like that. You know he would check in. He had a kid at school as well, but he wasn't pushy or anything like that. He would join different programs at our school to make sure he was a part of what we were doing in the school.

I asked School Leader 10, "So was it a positive experience?" He replied,

The pastor's work was more around the parents, but it had a direct effect on the kids in the school. He was making sure that all the needs outside of school were being met, and he made sure they had resources.

School Leader 9 shared:

I developed different incentive programs at the school for attendance, so whenever we would have a celebration, you know, the church would always make themselves available to come and help. They helped as chaperones and hall monitors. We had a lab that provided extra support for English language learners, and so they would be in that lab as volunteer staff. Some from that church came daily. Usually there were about 15 adults in the classroom to work one-on-one with the students. Mostly all the students would funnel into this one specific class for help and support. Usually, about half of the volunteers were from the church that was right down the street.

School Leader 8 highlighted another viewpoint regarding resources. He shared:

The church can provide human capital and financial support. I would imagine most

churches have some experience in work with human development such as conflict

resolution, problem solving, and team building. All of those attributes are important. It's

not only working with the kids but also working with staff. We [the school] may want a

pastor to address collaboration and team building with a few disgruntled employees by

using attributes of Christianity without mentioning God but in a social and emotional

development way.

School Leader 6 stated:

In the past, our partner church conducted summer camp on our campus. It was a math and

science STEM-related summer camp. I believe a woman on their staff would bring their

employees and host a summer camp at our facility.

I asked School Leader 4 how a church could have a greater impact with a school partner.

He stated:

The church can say something like, "We will be here on the second Wednesday. Please

come out and fellowship with us." And the church could give you a food package.

Something simple—it doesn't have to be complicated. "Hey, we're here. Come in,

fellowship with us. We got food packets for you, and God bless you." Very simple. A

listening ear is always good, even for the adults. For the staff to believe that you won't

share their conversation, that goes back to trust again. It's also good if monies are raised

and goes directly to kids. I believe strongly that adult will be okay.

The school leaders were providing positive responses. They enjoyed their church

partnerships and thoroughly endorsed the notion of more churches and public schools creating

synergistic relationships. However, I wanted to investigate what barriers they believed were hindrances to the development of more church and public school partnerships.

Factors That May Prevent Church and Public School Partnerships

My second research question was as follows: What contributing factors prevent pastors and school leaders from creating an effective and collaborative church and public school partnership? I asked what specific barriers they thought hindered the development of a church and public school partnership. Several school leaders shared that sometimes churches approach a potential partner school with their own agenda. Before meeting with the administrator or school leader, they already had a plan. A few also stated that sometimes the two entities' ideas did not mesh, and they did not have the same goals and objectives. For example, one school leader stated he had to tell the pastor, "This is a great program; however, it does not align with what the school is doing." All the school leaders named possible barriers that could hinder a partnership. Some school leaders identified organizational bureaucracy, especially background checks, as a possible barrier. School Leader 8 explained:

The typical bureaucracy of having to deal with government agencies. Of course, you have to get background checks. Also, you have to have a clear, definitive purpose that links to the vision and mission of the institution that you are attempting to collaborate with or partner with. So, you have to do the red tape of any government bureaucracy. Sometimes it can be perceived as an inhibitor by those who are trying to help.

School Leader 3 stated:

You know, a lot of times I think people view the schoolhouse or education as the know-all, be-all. Like, school leaders have all the answers; they don't need any support. It is almost an intimidation factor, and people wonder what they can offer outside of a

monetary donation. Don't realize that they can provide human capital. So, we need to create that safe space for them to come into the school.

School Leader 5 exclaimed:

Number one barrier, lack of information. They may not have the right person who can explain what's needed. I think another barrier would be whom to contact when they arrive at the building. Also, there's a stigma with outsiders coming into the building; notably, there are layers of protection that have to be put around children. Lastly, some people are nervous about a background check. You know, they don't want everybody in their business.

School Leader 7 said:

Another barrier can be personnel. Hypothetically, you have a church that wants to come and mentor, but everyone can't mentor, although everybody you have may be washed by the blood; however, that doesn't mean that they know what to do when speaking with a kid. Although the church is bringing human resources into the building, people need to know that an elementary school differs from and middle school, who is different from a high school student. So, if a church is not willing to learn from a school, that could probably be a barrier.

Several school leaders explained the term "separation of church and state" as another possible barrier that prevents more church and public school partnerships, another theme that was uncovered. I discussed the concept with several school leaders and asked their interpretations of the establishment clause and what were acceptable lines of demarcation. Interestingly, the responses varied. School Leader 6 stated:

I think there is a misunderstanding of the meaning, separation of church and state. I guess some people do feel that there can be no interaction whatsoever with a church and a public school, which is not the case. There can't be any conversion efforts; they can offer counseling services, food bank services, things like that. Another barrier is that some parents and the communities feel if they allow churches to partner with schools, they have to let other religious organizations partner with schools as well. That can get into some pretty muddy waters with all the different beliefs. Also, some parents may not feel comfortable with certain people coming onto campus and having a spiritual influence on their children. So, many schools choose not to have any religious affiliation.

I asked, "So, what do you think caused the misunderstanding of the separation of church and state? Do you believe there should be no interaction at all, a clear dividing line between public education?"

School Leader 6 continued:

There is a historical period in our country where the Bible was used to teach students how to read. However, with the plurality of different religions out now, many people are just wanting to avoid any possible proselytizing so to avoid that they prevent all church relationships.

School Leader 9 stated:

Sometimes, you know, guidelines and red tape with separation of church and state, that's usually the barrier. I think right now most of that is really not so much of an issue. There's a difference from about 10–15 years ago, when there was more of a heightened kind of nervousness. Specifically speaking of technology, people can now get

information more quickly, which helps them to gain a better understanding of controversial issues.

School Leader 1 shared, "I think some schools may feel that they're bringing religion to the campus and perhaps there will be prayers and other things that focus on the church, and it doesn't keep the separation of church and school." Out of curiosity, I asked him if he had concerns for his current church partnership. He replied, "Our partnerships are not focusing on religion or the church. But we're focusing on relationships and building those relationships with the student, the student's family, and the school. I think in that capacity, we work on supporting each other."

School Leader 8 had a unique perspective regarding his understating of the separation of church and state. He stated:

I would be willing to bring the pastor to conduct various conflict resolution workshops with the staff. I would have to be very crafty; it wouldn't be that black-and-white. Of course, the people in the inner circle, the executive board, who are spearheading this workshop would know what the intent is; however, the rest of the staff would not know.

I asked, "Aren't you concerned about the separation of church and state?" He replied:

I was told the concept of separation of church and state was designed for children and not adults. Children have impressionable minds and adults can make their own decisions. That's why at lunch, you can pray over your food and not get in trouble.

School Leader 10 stated:

I think the most significant barrier is the church and state. If you have to be willing to get churches involved by finding creative ways for them to get involved, it has to be the

dynamic where religion or church is not being pushed onto the students or pushed onto

the school. So, finding creative ways to get the church involved supporting the school.

Perhaps the most obvious barrier was the concept of the separation of church and state.

There are various interpretations of the U.S. Constitution's establishment clause (Abiri, 2020).

As a result, there have been numerous national debates regarding the role the church will play in

the public square. However, regardless of the disagreements, there was a consensus among my

research participants that schools and churches partnering can help meet children's physical

needs.

After discussing possible barriers, I asked school leaders my next research question: How

can pastors and school leaders implement leadership strategies to strengthen church and public

school partnerships? Each school leader shared how they utilized specific leadership strategies

when engaging their church partners. From their answers, it was evident that the leaders not only

comprehended the questions, but they also had developed best practices to nurture their

partnerships.

Leadership Strategies School Leaders Applied

I asked school leaders to categorize the leadership trait they used most in their

partnerships. While conducting my initial research, I learned a new leadership term: *cross-*

boundary leadership. Krumm and Curry (2017) stated cross-boundary leadership is based on the

idea that educational and social problems require collaborative approaches to leadership that

cross structural boundaries and create a network of shared responsibility among the different

spheres of influence in children's lives. Also, in cross-boundary leadership, the individuals who

hold positions within the structural component of the model create processes to invite and allow

teachers, parents, community members, and other constituents to support and advance shared educational goals (Krumm & Curry, 2017).

Many of the school leaders I interviewed were utilizing cross-boundary leadership theory in some form or fashion. Several of the leaders highlighted communication as an essential part of their leading. Their comments align with the views of previous researchers such as Jordan and Wilson (2017), who argued the school-community connection is "so close that the fates of urban schools and communities are linked" (p. 98). As a whole, churches and other faith-based institutions remain an undertapped and underresearched community resource for student learning and educational improvement. The school partnerships literature typically focuses on schools' connections to families, social service agencies, and secular organizations rather than faith-based institutions (Jordan & Wilson, 2017).

Some of the characteristics of cross-boundary leadership are the ability to build relationships, collaboration, and treating the other entity as a mutual partner. One of the school leaders commented that his partner church was not merely coming to be present, but there was a relationship, and the term "relationship" was utilized by many of the school leaders. Collaboration is another trait many of the school leaders shared that was crucial to their partnership. Collaboration had to be intentional, which was a theme that also developed. Many of the school leaders expressed the importance of intentional leadership, especially in communication. School Leader 7 believed by verbally expressing clear expectations increased the probability of creating a successful partnership. He stated,

> The main thing I've done is what I called leading with the facts. What I always like to do
> with individuals is to make sure that they, even before we start anything, are very crystal
> clear about what they are coming to do. So, it helps a great deal when you lead any kind

of relationship to do so with a clear understanding of who we are and what we stand for and also what are pain points.

School Leader 6 also echoed the same concern when he said:

It would have to be clear that any church group is at the school to offer a particular service, such as a food bank or a counseling service or a bus service. The church has to be visible and upfront about their intentions. I think those actions would put a lot of people at ease.

School Leader 2 also shared the same sentiment when he exclaimed, "Communication, communication, communication. Man, I mean, you can have all the ideas in the world, but you won't see it blossom if you don't have a team." He further declared, "I'm not perfect. I need to hear other ideas." School Leader 8 emphasized:

Communication skills are essential. You might have to guide them or write something for them that goes to the district in an acceptable language. You have to be able to articulate to the area superintendent why this partnership is right. I'll say collegiality; you are treating the partnership as a partner and not just some external entity trying to get something off of their checklist. This means they are treated as a true partnership, and they are given an organizational voice. Even though the school may have a mission and a vision, you are listening to that organization very critically to allow that organization to help fulfill that mission.

School Leader 1 said:

I think you have to be outgoing. You are going to have to consider visiting the church's worship service to try to build a relationship. You have to be flexible. You are going to support some of their events, maybe. As well you may even bring your own family to the

service or activity. You have to know where you see the connection. How will the church

support your efforts as a leader and it within your mission and vision of the school?

School leaders also expressed the importance of building mutually respectful

relationships. School Leader 3 explained, "I believe in the value of relationships. I just believe

the dynamics of relationships are the catalyst for everything else." School Leader 10 declared:

My leadership type is developing relationships with others and allowing them to do what

they do best within given parameters. I believe in allowing that individual to do their job

and do whatever their skill set is for the good of the community and the school.

School Leader 1 illustrated how he built a relationship with his church partner: "I have

been flexible. You have to know where you see the connection." School Leader 7 additionally

shared:

I consider one of my leadership skills to be building relationships; it's like a superpower.

If there is anything that I can do, I can create a relationship, so that even to this day, I still

have a good relationship with churches from the past. From years ago, the relationship is

the same.

School Leader 4 said:

You want them (the church) to do right when they come in your building, and on the flip

side, as the leader, you want to do right by them. There also is a symbiotic relationship.

In my experience, trust is built over time.

School Leader 8 added to the argument as he shared:

Relationships are quintessential to building any partnerships. For example, how can you

have to build a marriage without having a relationship? I call it a purpose-driven

relationship. When it's purpose-driven, that person knows what your intentions are, and

you know what their plans are and you are working for a common end. Now we are onto something. The objective is for both people to experience fulfillment. The goal is not just for the schools to be fulfilled, but for both parties to reach the goals together.

In this section, I discussed school leaders' perceptions and lived experiences while in partnerships with public schools. Based on a summation of the data, the school leaders expressed positive interactions with their church partnerships. Also, they identified organizational bureaucracy, obtaining background checks, and varying interpretations of church and state as potential barriers that may prevent the establishment of more synergistic church and public school partnerships. However, the school leaders shared leadership skills they have utilized as they help pastors to overcome various barriers and to build church partnerships.

Comparison of Focus Group and School Leaders' Responses

For this section, I discussed overlapping themes that emerged after a comparison of the two study groups' data. Guest et al. (2017) declared:

We found that individual interviews were highly effective at generating items in a brainstorming task and that certain sensitive and personal disclosures were more likely to emerge in focus groups. Notwithstanding, much more methodological research on qualitative methods is needed, and researchers still need to take into account a range of considerations when choosing between focus groups and individual interviews. (p. 706)

Following that line of reasoning, I presented overarching research themes that were obtained from both panel discussions and school leaders' interviews. Krumm and Curry (2017) stated that schools must reach beyond the walls of the school and engage the broader community to bring about reform that truly meets students' needs. Research also suggests that developing family–school–community partnerships to build capacity and enhance student success is essential.

Further evaluation of the research revealed that pastors and school leaders aligned in many of their partnership perceptions. Both groups believed that being in partnership should benefit the students by meeting some of their physical and emotional needs. Also, both groups identified how one expresses their faith and other issues could possibly be barriers in a church and public school partnership. Lastly, in the closing of this segment, I identify how, at times, pastors and school leaders may differ in their ideology when building a church partnership.

Children Were the Shared Priority

During the panel discussion and school leaders' interviews, the well-being of children was a common and shared theme. School Leader 4 declared:

Primarily a church and public school partnership's focus should be on helping the children in the community because that's the most significant impact. Planting the seed. A child would trust church volunteers because the principal trusts them; he let them into the building. The student can believe that the church has something good to offer.

Likewise, his comments correlated with those of Pastor 2, who believed if pastors were engrafted into the school's community, eventually the students would begin to gravitate toward them, especially since the administer had sanctioned their presence. He stated:

Because you are a preacher, kids think you're not going to say nothing to them. But once you build a rapport with them, you realize … students need a conversation with somebody who may not be in school all the time, and they feel safe because the administration backs you up.

School Leader 3 argued that it was crucial for pastors and congregants to realize their presence in a neighborhood school was vital. She explained, "I think there's always a need to have more bodies present, especially in this demographic that we serve." She further stated that

the lack of positive role models in children's lives could possibly hinder their development into productive citizens.

> You find that role models aren't present in the home as we would like them to be. It would be encouraging to have some of the males in the church to come in and do a symposium, you know, just talking to the young ladies about, you know, being young ladies and being approached by different young men that they see.

I asked both study groups what they would say if they had an opportunity to discuss partnership building with a group of community pastors and school leaders. Pastor 1 stated:

> I would say what breaks your heart breaks mine. And for us to resolve those things, we've got to come together and work together. We need to approach partnerships differently and explain to the administrator that I want skin in the game now. We are going to help now to meet the immediate need; however, we also want a long-term relationship with some longevity.

School Leader 6 recommended:

As Christians, one of our primary goals is to reproduce ourselves. It is to preach the Gospel. However, as public school volunteers, we are going to have to be very shrewd with the Gospel. We have to live the Gospel, and a way to preach the Gospel is through our service. So, having a partnership with the school doesn't necessarily mean going to the school and opening up bibles with everybody and trying to convince them of their need for Jesus. It may not be the best setting, and it might not be the most productive way to win souls for Christ. However, it probably would be better to say if you can provide consistent and high-quality service and be specific about those two. Then prove yourselves to be reliable, and if we're high quality, that gets people's attention.

Also, they believed churches and schools in healthy partnerships needed to share their victories with the broader community to possibly increase more church and public school partnerships.

Resources Needed and Resources Given

The school does what it can to help children with their physical needs, especially those who are underprivileged. However, School Leader 1 shared how he communicated with his church partner:

First, I look at my resources. However, I believe that all leaders have specific needs. It's important to assess what those needs are, being transparent with them as to what your needs are. I think, you know, seeing where the church potentially could meet those needs [and] also seeing what the school can do to help the church as well.

Pastor 1 was willing to help meet needs; however, he expressed sometimes feeling exasperated. He stated:

So, it has been a great need so long it is overwhelming. It's really like we have measurable tangibles and then immeasurable intangible, and they play without boundaries. For example, the tangible need is I need a computer, I'm hungry, I need something to eat. That's the tangible measurable. We can quantify that, and we can go back and say, "Hey, Church, we raised money. Look at the tangible things we did to help."

School Leader 4 reiterated the point that some children do not have the necessities:

There is always a need for food; however, people don't always tell you. However, the church can say something like, "We will be here on the second Wednesday. Please come out. We will fellowship and give you a food package."

Pastor 3 was also concerned that some children are wrestling with hunger. He stated:

We as a church have just celebrated our sixth year as a church, and we've had 6 years of partnership. One of the things we did was take a large offering to implement a food co-op. You talk about the transient students; our whole goal was to address some of the hunger needs.

Developing Character

The topic of character development was expressed by both groups. Pastor 4 stated that a church can help with character development. Similarly, School Leader 3 stressed there was an urgent need for mature male volunteers to visit her school to help the young ladies with their character maturity. She stated:

You know social media has influenced our young ladies in a way that I think has become a detriment to them owning their self-worth and their self-esteem. They are beautiful brown girls who need someone to validate who they are and to counter the negativity they hear. They must listen to the other side because they're always comparing themselves to what they see on social media. They need to be reminded consistently: You are beautiful.

School Leader 2 asserted,

Right from infancy, I would tell the pastor—saying you are coming to have church, it's not going to work. What you should say is, I want to build character. That's why we say "character ed." At school, through our fellowship, we are teaching how to be a great man, a great husband, and a great father in this society. When you say "church," people want to know what's going on. Pastors need to come in as character coaches with the mindset that I am here to help, that I am here to serve. I'm not here to preach.

Both Pastors and Schools Leaders Valued Their Faith

Previous research indicated that many individual Christians and entire churches believed that secular public schools are almost a lost cause (Ipgrave, 2012). However, to my astonishment, one of the pastors stressed the importance of supporting believers, who were working in public schools. Pastor 3 expressed:

I think sometimes it gets confusing when a lot of the leaders we've dealt with in the schools, they are believers. I think, you know … they're there for you and they want you at their schools … but at the same time they are hired by a government agency to do a job.

Testing Pastor 3's premise that some school leaders were believers, I asked all the school leaders if they were believers and if they felt a conflict between their spiritual convictions and their professions. School Leader 10 said:

I'm a believer, but we are still under state rule, and I am not trying to lose my job. That's why I say you got to be creative. I would talk about the church in my newsletter or robocalls and all these people in the community would get it, and that can be our way. When you get them to a church, a pastor can share whatever he wants to share with them. But a pastor can't come into the school preaching.

School Leader 1 articulated how he navigates his faith within in career:

To me, it's not about religion; it's about the relationship—for example, potentially for a school family that is coming to the church event and maybe want to get more information or learn more about that particular church. But I don't see it as a conflict.

School Leader 3 stated:

It's funny because, you know, in the church that I attend, I see both sides as a Christian woman. However, I believe that you got to step outside of the four church walls. You know, it's good to talk about outreach on Sunday morning, but what does that look like today? It's about serving. I want to see everyone do well, and I'm here to help to serve; that's what Jesus talked about.

She then paused and asked, "During the week, where are the churches?" School Leader 5 stated: "I understand the whole separation of church and state; however, I recognize the value of prayer. I mean, we can't pray directly with the students technically, but we can pray for them." This aligns with Pastor 3's comments:

Teachers and schools need prayer. Once a year, we focus on praying for all of the schools, and we do, actually, for a week put our hands on the buildings of every school in our area and pray for them.

School Leader 6 stated:

I think Christians in education bring a higher level of accountability as a believer. I'm not just accountable to my principal or governing board; I'm responsible to God. I might be able to pull the wool over the eyes of men, but serving God requires me to have a higher level of integrity. Some may not feel that level of responsibility or accountability. Also, I understand how important my position is at school. Furthermore, when working with fellow Christians, you can expect a higher level of accountability. So, there are significant benefits, and lastly, Christians should be continually growing to become more like Christ into the workplace.

Even though Pastor 4 commented: "One of the barriers, as we talk about, it's a challenge for us pastors. We for some reason have an expectation for the school and the administrators *to*

be Christians and *act like Christians*." After I interviewed the school leaders, it was apparent

they were believers, and many were very expressive about their faith. Ironically, School Leader 9

had recently transitioned from public education into full-time ministry.

The final comparison that emerged from the data highlighted the differences in

partnership perspectives. Several of the pastors seemed to have a more defensive posture. It

appeared as though they felt a burden to convince school leaders that a church partnership was

needed. This is understandable with the decades of debates regarding lines of demarcation

regarding the church and public institutions. However, the school leaders overwhelmingly

stressed the importance of church partnerships and how much they valued and appreciated their

partners. According to research, educational leaders recognize that community contexts,

especially in urban districts, present extraordinary challenges for school effectiveness. For

example, increasing numbers of students living at or below the poverty level (Eugene, 2020),

fragmented or nonexistent families, and cultural issues such as violence, substance abuse, and

unsafe neighborhoods make the challenges of educating students more complicated than in

generations past (Krumm & Curry, 2017).

School Leaders on the Offensive Versus Pastors on the Defensive

Pastor 2 shared, "Not everybody's a believer. You have to figure out who is a believer or

who is going to try to test your faith? Sometimes the public school wants you only to do

outreach." Pastor 3 added to the discussion by stating, "So, for us, too, it's not so much having

anything to do with the students but more so the administration—not the openness of the

administration [wanting to work with us]. They are just too busy." Pastor 1 cautiously shared,

"Sometimes you're trying to bring a solution to a problem that they're not interested in solving.

Or they say a problem, and you offer a solution; however, it is not what they want to do."

Conversely, the school leaders shared a more optimistic view of their church partnerships. For instance, one school leader expressed, "Whether it would be hosting an activity for the church at our building or them using the auditorium for a program, it's a dual relationship. It's not one-sided." School Leader 2 shared his relationship with the pastor.

I'm saying that partnership, that relationship, doesn't mean you have to change who you are; there is mutual respect. We laugh and talk, and the boys see our relationship. He shares his life from when he was a teenager; we understand where he was coming from.

In jest he shared, "I tell him he's a pastor and I am not, so sometimes I can say the things that he can't."

School Leader 3 added her advice to volunteers:

Show up, especially if you are a male pastor. You know, we have a lot of young ladies that are raised in single-mom homes, so the father isn't as prominent as we would like for him to be. We used to have Dads on Duty; they would come on Valentine's Day and give every girl a donut. I think one Christmas they gave every girl a pair of socks, so just things like that. But it went away.

School Leader 4 stated: "For my current partnership, the previous principal vouched for the church. He said, 'I know you haven't met them, but they're good people.' It was important that he gave me that verbal letter of recommendation."

School Leader 5 described her partnership as a "mutually beneficial partnership. I'm grateful for the relationship and the partnership opportunities. I know several congregation members they reach out to you know frequently. It's a beneficial partnership." School Leader 7 stated: "Even though the school may have a mission and a vision, I listen to our partner organizations very critically, to allow that organization to help fulfill that mission."

Conclusion

After comparing the research from both groups, it was apparent that community leaders (e.g., pastors and school leaders) desired to serve and uplift their neighbors by meeting the needs of public school students. All of the school leaders and pastors either resided or worked in areas that are socially and financially underprivileged. Thus, there was a census among the group that the separation of church and state was not an important barrier that would prevent a church and public school partnership. However, from in-depth scrutiny of the research, it can be argued that pastors appeared to be more guarded and apprehensive of school partnerships than school leaders, who were more inclined to be affirming and supportive of a church partnership.

The findings from my research revealed that the participants in this study were experienced in either building or managing a church and public school partnership. The pastors' panel and semistructured interviews with school leaders also revealed there was a shared passion and concern for meeting the needs of public school students. Even though both study groups articulated the possible barriers that a church and public school could encounter, such as sharing space, navigating public school bureaucracy, and maintaining healthy lines of demarcation, there was a consensus that both entities still desired to build partnerships together. The pastors and school leaders both shared that the implementation of leadership skills such as servant leadership, inspirational leadership, and cross-boundary leadership could possibly increase the probability of more church and public school partnerships.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations and Findings

The problem of this study revolved around how pastors can enhance their awareness of creating church and public school partnerships, the contributing factors that may prevent the formation of public school and urban church partnerships, and the need to identify leadership strategies that could be implemented by school leaders and urban pastors to overcome those obstacles (Gross et al., 2015; Jordan & Wilson, 2017). Researching a more comprehensive understanding of perceived problems, knowing the strength of each challenge, and identifying leadership strategies to overcome the obstacles may help pastors and school leaders in developing the necessary leadership skills for holistic partnership building. The qualitative data were collected through semistructured interviews with 10 school leaders and a discussion panel of four pastors.

The ensuing summary is derived from a thorough literature review and my research findings. My research was guided by the following definition of partnerships: a coequal interdependent relationship that is established and developed over time with the primary purpose of working together toward a mutually determined set of goals and objectives (Cowen & Swearer, 2004).

In this study, all the participants stated partnership ideology aligned with my CREDO's definition of partnerships. Not only did they have a theoretical grasp of partnerships, but also pastors and school leaders alike were experienced in building partnerships, many of whom were actively engaged in a church and public school partnership. Among the pastors, the average partnership experience was about 6 years. For the school leaders, many were veteran employees who had at least a decade of professional work experience and managing church partnerships.

Thus, they were very familiar with the concept, theory, and practicality of a church and public school partnership.

Data were collected from 14 participants: four in a pastors' focus group and 10 semistructured interviews with school leaders. From the research, I was able to identify themes and practices participants utilized while building partnerships (see Appendix E). This chapter includes a summary of the findings, the implications of the findings, limitations of this study, recommendations based on the data, and a discussion for the direction of future research.

Discussion

I used the following research questions for this study.

RQ1: How can pastors enhance their awareness of creating synergistic church and public school partnerships?

RQ2: What contributing factors prevent pastors and school leaders from creating an effective and collaborative church and public school partnership?

RQ3: How can pastors and school leaders implement leadership strategies to strengthen church and public school partnerships?

Discussion of Findings

The first research question was as follows: How can pastors enhance their awareness of creating synergistic church and public school partnerships? After synthesizing the data from the panel discussion and school leaders' interviews, a consistent expressed concern was that the well-being of children was a priority. Peer-reviewed literature highlighted examples of community partners, such as pastors and school leaders, who worked collaboratively to meet the needs of public school students. Reece et al. (2013) argued it was necessary for a principal or school leader to lead the charge in church and public school partnership building, especially in

urban communities. They theorized in many lower-income neighborhoods the recognized authority figure's validation of community partners will create an environment of trust and mutual respect. The first finding from my research aligned with the literature. For example, one school leader expressed, "Primarily, a church and public school partnership's focus should be on helping the children in the community because that is the most significant impact." All the pastors on the panel echoed the same sentiment; they shared how they had served and continued to serve public school children, especially those who attended schools near their church buildings. Another school leader explained that his local church partnerships filled in "gaps and voids" that were beyond the school's ability, and several of the pastors shared experiences that correlated with his statement. A pastor shared that one of his partnerships was developed when a local school contacted him to help with discipline issues. He stated, "They needed help with their interaction with the football team."

Likewise, another pastor had a similar example. One of his school partnerships began because of his love for sports. He was invited to speak at an FCA Huddle, a Fellowship of Christian Athletics devotional that is held in local high schools, by a young lady in his congregation. After conducting the devotional and having an enjoyable experience, he inquired how he could be more involved with high school students.

The regional FCA director explained that pastors could serve as character coaches, meaning their primary responsibility would be helping student athletes to channel their emotions constructively. Once the pastor agreed to adhere to the requirements, he was introduced to a local coach who had just taken a position at a high school as the head football coach and athletic director. Coach X expressed in his interview, "I told the principal that I would not start spring practice until I had a character coach from FCA, and Pastor X was introduced to him that

spring." Coach X further explained that during his collegiate years he personally experienced the benefits of FCA, and he believed, if implemented, his students would reap similar outcomes. The partnership created by the head coach and pastor character coach resulted in many of the young men becoming more dedicated to their sports teams, improving their academics and behavior. Also, a number of the unchurched high school students were baptized and became members of the pastors' church. The pastors' and school leaders' lived experiences were crucial to furthering the discussion of church and public school partnerships.

The topic of character development was an additional finding that was vital to both pastors and school leaders. One of the pastors expressed that churches are equipped to help schools with character development programs, which was a belief shared by more than one school leader. During her interview, she urgently stated the need for mature Christian male volunteers to volunteer at her school so they could provide guidance to young ladies as they matured. She explained:

> You know social media has influenced our young ladies in a way that I think has become
> a detriment to them understanding their self-worth and negatively impacting their self-
> esteem. They are beautiful brown girls who need someone to validate who they are and to
> counter the negativity they hear. They must listen to the other side because they're
> always comparing themselves to what they see on social media. They need to be
> reminded consistently: You are beautiful.

An additional finding was that pastors and school leaders became more aware of the promise and possibility of partnership by using their personal networks. Toledano and Maplesden (2016) stated the importance of the organizational leaders understanding the inner workings of a traditional network. They further argued that a leader must leverage their

professional and social capital for collaboration and community development when building or fostering relationships between churches and public schools.

A couple of the pastors became more aware of church partnerships because they were married to educators. One pastor shared how he volunteered so much at his wife's school that they eventually gave him the access code to the school. From that experience, he gained the conviction that a church partnership would benefit his local school, especially since he had grown up in that neighborhood. Eventually, he developed partnerships with some of those schools. However, he added another facet to his partnership matrix. He believed church and public school partnerships were just as beneficial to the teachers as to the students. He stated, "Some schools are overcrowded, and the teachers are overworked. Sometimes they just need someone to talk to." He shared, "If you take care of the teachers, they will allow you to influence their students." The next pastor, also married to an educator, explained how his congregation periodically collected offerings to establish a food pantry for one of his local schools. He believed some neighborhood school children were in food distress because they did not have daily access to food.

His comments regarding food distress led to another finding. Both pastors and school leaders believed collaboration was the key to sharing resources. Dryfoos (1998) stated, "Schools should become the locus for health and social services intervention as an intervention to improve classroom experience" (p. 10). Many schools do what they can to help students with their physical needs, especially those that have underprivileged students. However, School Leader 1 disclosed how he approached receiving support from his church partners. He stated, "First, I look at my resources. It's important to assess what I have because it is important to be transparent with stakeholders as to what my needs are." He believed by openly communicating his needs to

his community partners, especially church partners, that the church could potentially meet those wishes. Likewise, the pastors explained when they had clear communication from the administrative staff regarding the physical or emotional needs of the students, they could relay the information to the congregations. For example, Pastor 1 stated, "It helps to know specific physical needs such as a computer or food. Once I know, I can share these tangible items with the members, and they usually donate money to take care of those needs."

A consistent concern expressed by a number of school leaders and pastors was food distress, which also correlated with current academic research. In the school district, I conducted my study; many of the schools were located in food deserts. Coffino and Hormes (2018) explained,

> An unhealthy diet is a modifiable risk factor for chronic conditions such as diabetes, cancer, and CVD, and has been highlighted as a major public health problem. Although widespread across the USA, an unhealthy diet is more common among low-income populations, particularly those who reside in low-income neighborhoods in which access to healthy, affordable foods is lacking (i.e., "food deserts"). (p. 691)
>
> School Leader 4 stated:
>
> There is always a need for food; however, people don't always tell you. However, the church can say something like, "We will be here on the second Wednesday. Please come out. We will fellowship and give you a food package."

Another school leader expressed his gratitude for their church partner because they were also able to meet an important need: "We had a pastor who did a lot with our school, with parents' needs. He set up a food pantry, provided guidance or assistance for parents."

Data from my study revealed that pastors and school leaders were able to build collaborative and productive partnerships by having a shared concern for public school children and identifying what resources were lacking, how to best meet those needs, and how their professional networks were potential avenues for creating social capital.

My second research question was as follows: What contributing factors prevent pastors and school district leaders from creating an effective and collaborative church and public school partnership? This question evoked the most response from my research participants. Each group clearly identified barriers they believed hindered the development and growth of church and public school partnerships.

While numerous researchers have advocated for church and public school partnerships, many shared concerns about building partnerships between churches and public schools (Bindewald, 2015; Perkins, 2015). Geier (2014) and Green (2015) identified the following factors as possible challenges that negatively impact church and public school partnerships: the misunderstanding regarding lines of demarcation, a pastor's philosophical mindset towards volunteering, and the organization's leaders lacking network building skills. Scholars questioned if a church or public school leader had adequate training or the skill set to build and manage community partnerships. In this section, the findings from my study agreed with the existing literature and extended the conversation regarding possible barriers that hinder partnerships.

One of the barrier findings from the pastors' perspective was challenges experienced when using partner school's facilities. One of the participants shared that he and the principal had come to an understanding that he had full access to the gym. Thus, the pastor started developing a fruitful basketball league. He explained how the neighborhood kids were coming and bringing their friends, hence the program was growing and was projecting more growth.

However, the principal directed her focus to other school matters and gave the gym scheduling to another staff member. That change resulted in the pastor having limited access to the gym and eventually no access at all. Unfortunately, the basketball program was eventually cancelled.

Another pastor shared in frustration how he used the school's auditorium, for worship services and that he used media to enhance the church's worship experience, which meant he needed the projector. However, the projector bulb blew out, and he was trying to get someone to replace it. Although his media team found solutions to remedy the situation, the church had to work through the school's network, and he shared, "Sometimes waiting on the school's contractors takes a long time." Their experiences were challenging and sometimes disheartening because they were not meeting at a random facility but at a school partner's building. Davidson and Case (2018) recommended a refined approach to partnership. They stated that it is clear that true collaboration begins with equal stakeholders having a say in the way decisions are made.

Another barrier that pastors and school leaders expressed was the frustration of not being in sync with the school's administration. One of the pastors stated that he had developed a productive partnership with a principal; however, the principal was transferred and the church partnership was no longer prioritized. The partnership agreement was primarily between the principal and the pastor. A school leader also addressed the important nuances of church and school partnerships. He shared it was imperative for a pastor to be a school partner, not just a partner with the principal, because if the principal is transferred, the partnership may possibly end. An additional school leader also addressed the challenge of not having an identified staff member to manage the volunteers. Although some researchers stated, in some cases, it may be essential for the principal to initiate the partnership, it is not always advantageous for them to manage the partnership. A pastor expressed that if the principal is the primary partnership

developer, sometimes they are too busy with school operations that they do not have the time to communicate with their volunteers. He shared in exasperation, "I have been trying for months to get an appointment with the principal so she can meet our new pastor, but she's not available." A school leader validated his concern. During this school leader's interview, she shared, "Sometimes volunteers come to serve, and there isn't a designated staff member to help them. So this causes frustration and confusion."

Pastor 1 detailed another challenge he had experienced while building a partnership: lack of common interest. On the one hand, he stated, "It's wrestling with the issues and trying to prioritize what's important." Pastors and administrators try to figure out what is the critical shared interest they have: "Sometimes, you're trying to bring a solution to a problem that they're not interested in solving. Or they say a problem, and you offer a solution; however, it is not what they want to do." However, on the other hand, several school leaders expressed how some pastors and churches come with their set agendas. A veteran school leader stated,

> I have had churches show up and say, "We are here to mentor the school's other needs," however. Then he added not everyone is equipped to meet students' needs. There is a difference between working with elementary, middle, and high school students, and just because you have been washed in the blood of the lamb does not make you qualified to be a mentor!

Several of the pastors expressed the feelings of insignificance as another barrier to partnership building. Some of the pastors worshipped or lived in the same neighborhoods with their school partners, and they were asked to help in the short-term to solve a challenging situation; however, there was no long-term commitment. Pastor 1 used very descriptive language

as he articulated the frustration that he and several other pastors had experienced in their partnerships. Pastor 1 detailed:

> Sometimes, you are treated like a first responder. Where you are great when you respond to the issue. However, once you respond in triage and everything is better, then the attitude can be "I no longer need you." Like, you couldn't live without me a moment ago, but now that I have addressed whatever your needs are, all of a sudden, like, "We don't need you anymore. Why are you still here?"

Pastor 2 was also agitated with the concept of a short-term partnership versus a continuous partnership. He shared,

> At times, the public school wants you only to do outreach. I dislike it sometimes because I would rather be a servant than a Santa Claus. Because I just come in and just give, give, give, and give. I give donuts to the teachers, book bags for back-to-school. I would rather come in and serve. Like, let me come in and let me be a fixture and let me be somebody they know all the time.

Similarly, Pastor 3 explained that he and his church were proactive in trying to anticipate the needs of their local school; however, the school had not taken time to do a needs assessment. He shared:

> Sometimes, the need is so great that they don't know what they need, and so that can be messy too. For example, we had promised to partner with our local middle school. So, we took up a large offering to do that. We were trying to communicate with them about what they needed, and it was more like what Pastor X said: There was no overall concept or no focus on what they needed. So, I think that's one of the challenges, I think, for us has been what are your real needs.

Likewise, school leaders admitted that organizational challenges of perception and bureaucracy create additional problems for volunteers. One school leader expressed her concern for the lack of an inclusive and inviting culture for volunteerism. She stated,

> You know, a lot of times, I think people view the schoolhouse or education as the know-all, be-all. Like school leaders have all the answers; they don't need any support. It is almost an intimidation factor, and people wonder what they can offer outside of a monetary donation.

The leader's response connected with research from Pérez White and López Levers (2017), who argued that many schools, especially urban schools, often struggle with involving parents in the children's schooling, pointing to the difficult relationship between school and home (Pérez White & López Levers, 2017).

Another barrier school leaders verified was their vetting process. A few leaders shared their concerns for the long process of clearing individuals so that they could volunteer. Although they communicated the importance of the volunteer going through the vetting process, they believed the length of time to clear participants was probably a deterrent for some individuals. They believed some got discouraged and changed their minds about serving. One school leader explained, "Although they want to serve, some people are uncomfortable with officials looking into their past because they do not want anyone looking at their business."

Several school leaders expressed that the concept of separation of church and state was another possible barrier that can hinder the development of more church and public school partnership. Historically, the U.S. government has had varied opinions regarding church and public school relationships. Although the Founding Fathers included the First Amendment, freedom of religion, in the U.S. Constitution and the establishment clause, which states:

The Establishment Clause prohibits the government from making any law respecting an

establishment of religion. This clause not only forbids the government from establishing

an official religion but also prohibits government actions that unduly favor one religion

over another religion. (Beschle, 2018, p. 1)

Many citizens adhere to Thomas Jefferson's interpretation of the establishment clause, better

known as separation of church and state, which was President Jefferson's opinion (Bridge,

2017). As a result of Jefferson's interpretation, numerous cases have been tried before the U.S.

Supreme Court arguing the acceptable lines of demarcation between churches and public schools

(Bennett & Foldesy, 2013).

I asked school leaders to explain their understanding of the establishment clause and also

what were acceptable lines of demarcation. Interestingly, the responses varied. School Leader 6

stated:

I think there is a misunderstanding of the meaning [of] separation of church and state. I

guess some people do feel that there can be no interaction whatsoever with a church and a

public school, which is not the case. There can't be any conversion efforts; they can offer

counseling services, food bank services, things like that. Another concern is that some

parents and the communities feel if we allow churches to partner with schools, we have to

let other religious organizations partner with schools as well. That can get into some

pretty muddy waters with all the different beliefs. Also, some parents may not feel

comfortable with certain people coming onto campus and having a spiritual influence on

their children. So, many schools choose not to have any religious affiliation.

I asked, What do you think caused the misunderstanding of the separation of church and state? Do you believe there should be no interaction at all, a clear dividing line between public education? He continued:

> There is a historical period in our country, where the Bible was used to teach students how to read. However, with the plurality of different religions out now, many people are just wanting to avoid any possible proselytizing, so to avoid that they prevent all church relationships.

Another school leader stated:

> Sometimes, you know, guidelines and red tape with separation of church and state— that's usually a barrier. I think right now, most of that is not so much of an issue. There is a difference from about 10–15 years ago when there was more of a heightened kind of nervousness. Specifically speaking of technology, people can now get information more quickly, which helps them to gain a better understanding of controversial issues.

> One more school leader added, "I think some schools may feel that pastors are bringing religion to the campus, and perhaps there will be prayers and other things that focus on the church. And it doesn't keep the separation of church and school." Out of curiosity, I asked him if he had concerns for his current church partnership. He replied, "Our partnerships are not focusing on religion or the church. But we're focusing on relationships and building those relationships with the student, the student's family, and the school. I think in that capacity, we work on supporting each other."

One of the school leaders had a different interpretation of the separation of church and state. He shared:

I would be willing to bring the pastor to conduct various conflict resolution workshops

with the staff. I would have to be very crafty; it wouldn't be that black-and-white. Of

course, the people in the inner circle—the executive board, who are spearheading this

workshop—would know what the intent is; however, the rest of the staff would not know.

I asked if he was concerned about the separation of church and state. He replied:

I was told the concept of separation of church and state was designed for children and not

adults. Children have impressionable minds, and adults can make their own decisions.

That's why at lunch, you can pray over your food and not get in trouble.

Even though school leaders had a variety of understandings and interpretations of the

establishment clause, there was a consensus that the church and state were not their main worry.

They did not fear pastors and churches interacting with their students. All the school leaders

acknowledged the importance of having church partnerships to help mitigate the needs of

children. Although the U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly struck down specific policies, for

example, that required the reading of Bible passages during school hours or the recitation of

prayer during sports events organized by schools. Church people are still wanted as school

volunteers (Bennett & Foldesy, 2013).

The last research question was as follows: How can pastors and school leaders implement

leadership strategies to strengthen church and public school partnerships? According to research,

community organizations that are in co-operation are positioned to have a tremendous impact in

their neighborhoods:

Given the dwindling amount of state-sponsored resources being provided to public

schools, it is essential for the field of educational leadership to examine how educational

leaders serving within challenging socio-political contexts perceive and realize the benefits of learning how to engage their communities. (Bukoski et al., 2015, p. 412)

Likewise, Blankstein and Noguera (2015) argued more school leaders must become 21st-century leaders and bring new perspectives and opportunities to their school. For example, pioneering school leaders are bringing community organizations, such as health care providers, to the students during school hours.

Since all my participants were leaders in their respective fields, I wanted to investigate the leadership skills they felt were crucial in partnership building and the skills they applied. A finding from my data was that the pastors utilized at least two distinct leadership styles. All the pastors emphasized the importance of entering the school not as pastors or leaders but as community citizens who simply wanted to serve the students. The pastors' leadership style with school leaders can be classified as servant leadership. Frick (2004) portrayed the servant leader as someone who naturally serves first and then makes a conscious choice to aspire to lead. Such an individual is different from the person who first has the desire to lead, establishes their leadership, and then chooses to serve because of a moral sense or because that service is expected. This principle provides us with an excellent benchmark with which to compare and understand personal motives for aspiring to be a leader (Giorgiov, 2010).

Every pastor shared an experience that illustrated the importance of assuming the role of a servant as they developed partnerships. One pastor's congregation was contacted to help with severe discipline issues, and he and his congregation answered the call. Another pastor wanted to serve in his local school, so he communicated with the principal and made himself available to meet that school's needs. His advice to fellow colleagues was as follows:

Go into the school and do the grunt work such as monitoring the halls or taking out the

trash. Do whatever needs to be done, use that as an opportunity to prove yourself. Serve,

but have a partnership goal in mind.

Another pastor developed his partnership by serving as a character coach for FCA. He loved

sports, and he wanted an opportunity to influence young adults. Finally, the last pastor studied

the demographics of his neighborhood and realized many of the students were transient. He

decided his church could offer a food pantry as a resource.

During the pastors' focus group, two of the participants added another dimension to my

research by sharing how they motivated their congregations to become volunteers. They

emphasized it is not a pastor and school partnership but a church and public school partnership.

The pastors did not share a specific leadership skill they utilized with their volunteers; however,

after reading the transcript and comparing their actions to leadership traits, inspirational

leadership was the best category to define their methodology, which was an added finding.

Inspirational leadership empowers, energizes, and galvanizes followers to participate actively in

an organizational goal. Also, the inspirational leader is equipped to teach their followers how to

forego self-interest and even engage in self-sacrifice for the sake of collective objectives

(Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001).

The first pastor shared how, periodically, he invited principals from his partnerships to

come and thank the church for donations and services that were rendered. Also, through his FCA

partnership, he urged the school's football and basketball teams to attend a church service. When

they came, he brought them on stage before his congregation and asked the elders to pray over

them. He stated, "Coaches don't mind having a church pray over them." After the teams had

visited a few times, more Christians started going to the school as volunteers. Having the teams

come to the worship service and interact with the church members allowed the pastor to gain more buy-in from his members. The next pastor shared that he had encouraged his retirees to volunteer. At first, he was not sure if the older members would feel comfortable working with school-age children; however, to his surprise, it went well. He stated, "The older folks loved the students, and the students loved them." Their experiences tie into a study conducted by Bennett and Einolf (2017), who discoursed on the concept of altruism. From their study, they hypothesized that "religious individuals are more likely to help others, and this distinction is particularly strong regarding formal volunteering and charitable giving. Religion influences people's internal norms and values; therefore, it may help develop an internal motivation to help others" (p. 325). The pastors believed their people were willing and eager to share their lives with others through volunteering.

The school leaders also shared leadership strategies they used when formulating church partnerships. Similar to the pastors' responses, they did not give their specific leadership style a name; however, they were all practicing a form of cross-boundary leadership, which was a key finding. Krumm and Curry (2017) stated:

> Effective 21st-century educational leaders must understand how to develop partnerships that will withstand the challenges of a multitude of obstacles including deficit thinking, competing priorities/understandings, lack of resources and fragmented reform efforts that promise limited sustainability. (p. 101)

Several of the leaders highlighted communication as essential to avoid competing priorities and misunderstandings. They believed it was necessary for the school leader and the pastor to articulate clear goals and expectations. One school leader believed healthy discourse increased the probability of a successful partnership. He stated,

The main thing I've done is what I called leading with the facts. What I always like to do

with individuals is to make sure that they, even before we start anything, are very crystal

clear about what they are coming to do. So, it helps a great deal when you lead any kind

of relationship to do so with a clear understanding of who we are and what we stand for

and also what are pain points.

Another school leader also echoed the same concern when he said before any partnership started,

it was necessary to outline specific expectations for the partnership. Ironically, his methodology

was a concept one of the pastors appreciated. He said, "When building a public school

partnership, listen well, take good notes; however do not overpromise."

School Leader 2 was adamant that communication was vital. He exclaimed,

"Communication, communication, communication. Man, I mean, if—you can have all the ideas

in the world, but you won't see it blossom if you don't have a team." He further declared, "I'm

not perfect. I need to hear other ideas."

School leaders also expressed the importance of building mutually respectful

relationships, which relates to research from Krumm and Curry (2017), who further argued

cross-boundary leaders create relationships with other leaders beyond traditional boundaries and,

as a result, have a more significant impact on students' lives. Curry and Krumm (2016) also

stated that cross-boundary leadership is synonymous with transactional leadership. Transactional

leadership has some of the following characteristics: (a) a style of leadership that rewards its

followers with mental or material rewards, (b) a leader who supervises a project to achieve set

goals and objectives, and (c) a leader who gives the team the freedom to explore options but

intervenes to avoid detrimental mistakes.

School Leader 3 explained, "I believe in the value of relationships. I just believe the dynamics of relationships are the catalyst for everything else." School Leader 10 declared:

My leadership type is developing relationships with others and allowing them to do what they do best within given parameters. I believe in allowing that individual to do their job and do whatever their skill set is for the good of the community and the school.

School Leader 7 additionally shared,

I consider one of my leadership skills to be building relationships; it's like a superpower. If there is anything that I can do, I can create a relationship so that even to this day, I still have a good relationship with churches from the past. From years ago, the relationship is the same.

Another school leader emphasized the importance of treating the church partner as an equal. In his particular case, he and the church partner were sharing the same school. Although this leader could have easily acted as an authoritarian, he believed that the church was not his tenant but a vital stakeholder. He shared:

You want them (the church) to do right when they come in your building, and on the flip side, as the leader, you want to do right by them. There also is a symbiotic relationship. In my experience, trust is built over time.

Another school leader added to the argument and added a new terminology of mutually respectful relationships; his term was "purpose-driven relationships." He explained:

Relationships are quintessential to building any partnerships. For example, how can you build a marriage without having a relationship? I call it a purpose-driven relationship. When it's purpose-driven, that person knows what your intentions are and you know what their plans are, and you are working for a common end. Now we are onto

something. The objective is for both people to experience fulfillment. The goal is not just

for the schools to be fulfilled but for both parties to reach the goals together.

After assessing the data from the ideology and practices of the pastors' focus group and

the semistructured school leader interviews through the eyes of cross-boundary leadership, it was

apparent that implementation of the right leadership skills can result in more synergistic church

and public school partnerships. Neighboring churches and public schools share the same

geographical area, and they serve the same residents. Churches partnering with schools seek to

rebuild communities by comprehensively influencing the lives of youth and their families in

addressing the education, health, economic, and social needs of hurting people by leaving the

four walls and interacting with the people. In essence, they are operating in the mission that Jesus

commanded to look after the less fortunate (Gaitan, 2012).

Limitations

There were limitations with both study groups. In the pastors' focus group, all the pastors

were from independent nondenominational churches, meaning they did not have an overseeing

ecclesiastical governing body. It is possible a more traditional denominational church may had

revealed another set of barriers. Also, the oldest congregation was 14 years old, which gave me a

limited perspective versus having a more "traditional" and older congregation as a research

participant. For the semistructured school leader interviews, I was only able to conduct three in-

person interviews before the outbreak of COVID-19. The remainder of my interviews were

conducted on the telephone, which did not allow me to read their facial expressions or body

language to better understand their reactions to some questions.

Interviewing the participants in person could have given me another opportunity to utilize

my observation skills to understand better what they were or were not communicating. Another

limitation is I depended on individuals who were employed as professional educators to give an honest evaluation of their school and district partnership policies. While I emphasized all the data would be confidential, I could not guarantee that every interviewee was as forthcoming as they could have been.

Finally, I have spent over three decades as a pastor and over 15 years as a professional educator. While researching or processing the data, I could have infused preexisting assumptions and or ideas. While my unique experiences give me insight into my chosen field of study, it is possible that some of my lived experiences could have influenced my findings. Measures were taken to limit my personal opinions while conducting this study; however, I must admit these are potential factors.

Implications of This Study

The findings of my study have the following suggestions for how pastors and school leaders can work in collaboration to meet the needs of a community. Both pastors and school leaders agreed that a church and public school partnership should develop strategies to address the following: (a) the well-being of children, (b) working together to help students with character development, and (c) collaboration to identify students' needs and finding resources to meet those needs. Because community leaders, such as pastors and school leaders, are uniquely positioned in the community, they have had and are having success in helping lives to transform.

However, if the two most notable entities within the urban community—the church and a school—combine resources, underprivileged children could have the opportunity to develop additional support and life skills that would make them competitive in our global community. I believe the rapid changes in urban neighborhoods due to gentrification prioritize the conversation of community partnerships, especially between a church and public school.

However, another finding disclosed barriers that must be addressed before mutually synergistic partnerships could be formed. According to the research, both sets of leaders must have an honest and in-depth discourse about (a) the sharing of facilities, (b) lack of cohesion between the pastor and administrator, (c) lack of common interest, (d) the volunteer vetting process, and (e) developing a unified definition of the concept church and state. Without leaders addressing these crucial issues, it is doubtful there will be more successful church and public school partnerships formed.

Therefore, it is incumbent for those leaders who possess the skills to create collaborative environments for community organizations to lead the charge. According to my final finding, there are individuals within communities who possess the organizational leadership skills to create a win-win situation for all entities that desire to build a partnership. The implementation of cross-boundary leadership principles may be a solution to help create sustainable community partnerships.

Implications for Future Research

The world as we know it has changed. This current nationwide pandemic is challenging the very fiber of rugged individualism. Therefore, future researchers can explore how churches were impacted during this season. Due to the ever-increasing unemployment rate and projected food shortages, more congregations may have to reposition themselves to meet basic needs within their communities.

Secondly, a future researcher could explore the relational dynamics between a church and school in the more secular region of our country. Since this study was conducted in the southeast, all of my participants claimed to be Christians, including every school leader. Thus, it would be interesting to see if a church partnership would be welcomed with school leaders who do not

profess to be believers. Lastly, I recommend future researchers to dive more deeply into the concept of cross-boundary leadership, especially since more organizations may have to partner to have a community impact and to survive.

Reflection

What a ride this has been. I started my journey toward a PhD over 35 years ago. After graduating in the spring of 1985 from Florida State University, I enrolled in a graduate program the following fall. Although I struggled through most of the undergraduate years, a kind and encouraging history professor saw something in me, and he started challenging my poor academic performance. Because of his compassion, concern, and consistency, I embraced the challenge and started growing intellectually. I completed my first semester of graduate school with a couple of As and a B. During that period, I had recently become a disciple of Jesus, and I was becoming more and more enamored by the Bible. My campus ministry at the University Church of Christ inspired me to develop spiritual dreams. Those dreams eventually led me to relocate to the South Bronx in New York City. I was a 23-year-old country boy living in one of the greatest cities in the world. Although New York was a violent city, especially since the urban communities were in the midst of a crack cocaine epidemic, I was not afraid because I was there for a purpose. I wanted to teach people about Jesus.

As an urban missionary, I was able to witness so many miracles that I don't have enough to write about. I was a part of a growing ministry in the Bronx, and I eventually led the group of about one thousand disciples. Perhaps the highlight of my ministry was preaching in Harlem. During the late 1980s and through the 1990s, Harlem was not gentrified. It was dangerous and people were barely surviving. I told my minister colleagues that New York City transformed once you passed 96th street in Manhattan. In essence, that's when you entered a more Brown and

Black community. I was given that ministry assignment to lead a struggling group of Christians. Initially, I was too proud and self-righteous to see the beauty of my assignment.

However, after repenting of my pride and embracing the people, I fell in love with Harlem. God did the unimaginable. We watched a small group of people mature spiritually and numerically. We met in schools, hotels, conference spaces, and eventually the world-famous Apollo Theater.

I have so many precious memories: getting married, having children, witnessing my in-laws baptized into Christ, and seeing my spiritual dreams fulfilled. I thought God wanted me to spend the remainder of my life in New York City. However, I learned in the early 2000s that when God interrupts our lives, it is usually for a higher purpose. It would take over a decade to embrace God's new call for my life. Through two relocations, the loss of my older brother, reconnecting with my college buddy-turned-principal Dr. Jones, I slowly began seeing that God was positioning me to fulfill another lifelong passion: becoming a doctor. I am fortunate to still have my mother with me, and she recently reminded me that when I was a kid, I said I wanted to be a doctor. Through the struggles, tears, frustrations, and financial challenges, God has still been with me, and I look forward to embracing this achievement. I am so grateful for the support of the ACU family and the numerous individuals who have availed themselves to me. I hope and pray to be an inspiration to future pastors. It is never too late to pursue dreams.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how urban pastors and public school leaders could address contributing factors that prevent church and public school partnerships (Gross et al., 2015; Jordan & Wilson, 2017). Researching a more comprehensive understanding of perceived problems, knowing the strength of each challenge, and identifying

leadership strategies to overcome the obstacles may help pastors and school leaders in developing the necessary leadership skills for holistic partnership building.

The qualitative data were collected through semistructured interviews with 10 school leaders and a discussion panel of four pastors. Data were collected from two groups of participants, a pastors' focus group, and semistructured interviews with school leaders. The findings from this study yielded many themes that correlate with current literature, and there were additional findings that add to the conversation of church and public school partnerships. The themes highlight how pastors could become more aware of church and public school partnerships, and I examined possible barriers to building church and public school partnerships. The study concluded with leadership strategies that can be implemented to build more synergistic church and public school partnerships.

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Appendix A: Abilene Christian University IRB

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103

February 18, 2020

Michael Patterson
Department of Graduate & Professional Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Michael,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled
"Church and Public-School Partnerships Creating Educational Equity",

was approved by expedited review (Category 6 & 7) on 2/18/2020 (IRB # 19-158). Upon completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Request Form within 30 days of study completion.

If you wish to make any changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel, number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall methodology, please complete the Study Amendment Request Form.

If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Unanticipated Events/Noncompliance Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

ACU IRB # _____

SIGNATURE AND ASSURANCE FORM

**FORM MUST BE READ AND SIGNED BY THE STUDENT INVESTIGATOR AND THE FACULTY MENTOR. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OUTLINED BELOW MUST BE ACCEPTED BY THE STUDENT INVESTIGATOR AND THE FACULTY MENTOR

Title of Project: Church and Public-School Partnerships Creating Educational Equity

Date of Request: 11/24/2019

Review being requested:	Type of Review being requested:
☒ New Study X	☒ Exempt X
☐ Amendment	☐ Exempt Limited Review
☐ Continuing Review	☐ Expedited
☐ Unanticipated Problem/Noncompliance	☐ Full Board
☐ Inactivation	
☐ Other: _____	

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR'S ASSURANCE

By signing this form, the Investigator assures that [check all]:

☒ The Investigator understands ACU's and the IRB's policies on human research and will oversee the research to ensure that it is conducted in accordance with these policies and with the federal regulations (45 CFR 46 and CFR Title 21)

☒ The Investigator will supervise all study personnel and ensure that they are adequately trained on all study procedures

☒ The Investigator will protect the rights and welfare of the study participants, ensuring that the study is conducted in accordance with the IRB approved protocol

☒ The Investigator will ensure that all participants give informed consent, and that this consent is documented, unless a waiver or alteration is approved by the IRB

☒ The Investigator or research team will not make any changes to a non-exempt study protocol without prior approval by the IRB unless necessary for the immediate welfare of the participant

☒ The Investigator will report to the IRB promptly, according to the policies and procedures set forth by the University and the IRB, any unanticipated problems or events of noncompliance

☒ The Investigator will report to the IRB and to the participants any new information that may change the participants' willingness to participate in the study

☒ The Investigator will ensure compliance with HIPAA and FERPA laws, as appropriate

☒ For studies requiring full-board review and any other study deemed to require continuing review, the Investigator will submit a continuing review at least 30 days prior to the study's
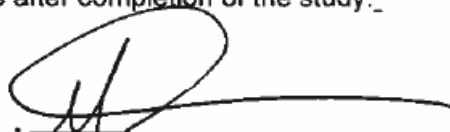
ACU IRB # _____

expiration date. Otherwise, the Investigator will halt all research activity should study approval lapse until the extension is granted or unless it is determined by the IRB that it is in the best interest of the active participants to continue participation during the lapsed time

☒ The Investigator will submit an inactivation request at the end of the study or if the study is being discontinued

☒ The Investigator will maintain study data and records for the required time, in accordance with the University, the law and/or the funding agency, whichever is longest, but at minimum 3 years after completion of the study.

Principal Investigator Signature   Date
12/7/2019

Michael L. Patterson   *Michael L. Patterson*
Principal Investigator Printed Name

The faculty mentor is responsible for the supervision and assurance of compliance for this project. The faculty mentor should review protocols as often as needed to ensure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institutional policies and any respective regulations.

By signing below the faculty mentor agrees to monitor the project and ensure the student is meeting the above responsibilities. The faculty mentor agrees to maintain study records, in paper or electronic form, on ACU campus for the minimum required time as outlined above.

Wade Fish
Faculty Mentor Signature   Date

Faculty Mentor Printed Name

Appendix B: Public School IRB

PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

March 5, 2020

Researcher/Principal Investigator: Michael Patterson
Institution: Abilene Christian University
Study Title: Church and Public-School Partnership: Creating Educational Equity

Greetings,

Your request to conduct research in ▮▮▮ Public Schools has been **approved** by the ▮▮▮ Public Schools Research Screening Committee. This letter grants you permission to seek approval from ▮▮▮ Public Schools High School Principals to participate in interviews for the purposes of this study through May 22, 2020.

Study description: "The purpose of this qualitative case study is to investigate how urban pastors and public-school leaders may address contributing factors that prevent church and public-school partnerships. This study seeks to answer the following questions, (1) how can urban pastors and public-school leader's address contributing factors that may prevent church and public-school partnerships (2) what leadership strategies can urban pastors and public-school leaders implement to overcome contributing factors that may prevent the formation of urban church and public-schools partnerships?"

A few things to consider as you begin your research:

1. The principal of the proposed schools must give approval for you to conduct the planned research activities. This letter of permission does not in any way guarantee approval from the principal.
2. No research activities may be conducted in schools during the administration of standardized tests. Please review the 2019-2020 Assessment Calendar for a list of ▮▮ assessment dates.
3. If you make changes in the implementation of your study, please notify the Office of Research and Evaluation prior to the beginning of your study.
4. Your assurance of maintaining confidentiality of the participants and the selected schools must strictly be followed. Pseudonyms for individuals and schools, as well as references to ▮▮ as "a large urban school system," are required in the title and text of your study before publication or presentation.
5. Please submit a completed copy of the final research study to the Office of Research and Evaluation.

▮▮ Research and Evaluation staff are available to answer questions regarding research policies and practices across the District. However, R&E staff will not be able to support recruitment and communication with school staff. Please contact Dr. ▮▮▮▮▮ at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ if you need any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Executive Director – Data and Information Group
▮▮ Public Schools

Appendix C: Participant Request Letters

Dear (participant)

We are conducting a research study to increase our understanding of how church and public schools can build partnerships that will benefit the students, parents, and teachers by providing support beyond the schools' current ability.

For pastors: the focus group is an hour-long informal discussion. We are merely trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives as pastors who are in partnerships with community organizations. Each participant will be assigned a number code to help ensure there are no personal identifiers during the analysis and review of the findings.

For school leaders: the interview is a very informative hour-long conversation. We are merely trying to capture your thoughts and perceptions as a school leader who manages community partnerships. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interviewee will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and review of the findings.

There is no compensation for participating in the study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to our research and findings of the possibilities of church and public school partnerships can create.

If you are willing to participate, please suggest a day and time for our meeting. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask

Appendix D: Interview and Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

1. How do you, as an urban pastor, address contributing factors that may prevent you and an urban public school leader from creating church and public school partnerships?

2. Discuss barriers that you have encountered or witnessed others experience that may have prevented school leaders and urban pastors from creating church and public school partnerships (ask both target populations).

3. How long have your partnerships existed and how has your collaboration evolved since its inception (ask both target populations)?

4. Why do you believe church and public school partnerships necessary from your perspective as a church leader? How does your perspective differ or complement the general perceived partnership needs of your congregation?

5. What leadership strategies can you, as an urban pastor, implement to overcome contributing factors that may prevent the formation of urban church and public school partnerships?

Following the last existing interview question about leadership, these are best practice probing components that revolve around Cross Boundary Leadership: collaboration, building relationships, shared vision goals. Ask participants how they incorporate each of these four components if not addressed within original response.

School Administrators Interview Questions

1. How do you, as a public school leader, address contributing factors that may prevent you and urban pastors from creating church and public school partnerships?

2. Why do you believe church and public school partnerships are necessary form your perspective as a school leader?

3. How do you believe urban public school leaders can address contributing factors that may prevent you, as an urban pastor, from creating a church and public school partnership?

4. How do you believe urban pastors can address contributing factors that may prevent you, as a public school leader, from creating a church and public school partnership?

5. What leadership strategies can you, as a public school leader, implement to overcome contributing factors that may prevent the formation of urban church and public school partnerships?

Appendix E: Code Category and Theme

Code: Community partnerships

Category: Relationship between church and public school

Theme: Church and public school partnering to better meet the needs of children.

Code: Community program

Category: Helping children to develop socially and emotionally

Theme: Churches and public schools can partner to help children with character development.

Code: Pastors' network

Category: How church pastors can engage in public school partnerships

Theme: A pastor can use his personal network to build school partnerships.

Code: Collaboration

Category: Churches and public schools working together

Theme: Churches and public schools can share resources to meet the needs of underprivileged

  children.

Code: Sharing a facility

Category: Public schools and churches sharing the same facility

Theme: Sharing a facility is a possible barrier for church and public school partnership.

Code: Relational dynamics

Category: Poor communication between church and public school leader

Theme: Poor communication between a pastor and school leader is a possible barrier to a

  partnership.

Code: Vetting Process

Category: Church members volunteering at a school

Theme: Sometimes the vetting process to clear volunteers may be a deterrent for a partnership.

Code: Separation of church and state

Category: Acceptable lines of demarcation

Theme: Misunderstanding of the Establishment Clause is a possible hinderance to a partnership.

Code: Pastor's Leadership Skills

Category: The pastors' ability to manage the partnership and volunteers

Theme: The pastors utilizes two key leadership skills, Servant leadership and Transactional

leadership in partnership building.

Code: School Leader's Leadership

Category: The school's leaders' ability to manage partnership

Theme: School leaders uses cross-boundary leadership to manage partnership.