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Beyond the excuses: The effect of culturally responsive pedagogy on African American male students

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BEYOND THE EXCUSES: THE EFFECT OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY ON AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Nearly 30 years have elapsed since the National Assessment of Educational Progress reported that America's public education system is failing African American male students. These widely used statistics state that compared to their White and African American female counterparts, African American male students underperform in nearly all educational measures (i.e. GPA, standardized test scores, graduation and dropout rates, etc.). The majority of the research on this academic achievement gap has focused on deepening our understanding of the barriers to educating African American males. While understanding the problem is a logical first step to resolving any dilemma, research on this topic has done very little to guide educators, politicians, and others concerned towards improving the educational experiences of these students. Current research found that some researchers attribute this problem to deficits within the students, others to systemic problems in America's schools, and others to the effect of poverty. Thus, the interplay of personal, cultural, social, and political factors involved in educating Black males are far too complex for policymakers to formulate an education policy likely to satisfy the needs of the numerous school districts across our nation. Yet, despite these limitations, culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) is proved to be one of the most

effective strategies for improving the academic performance of African American male students The purpose of this paper is to conduct an ethnographic systematic review of the literature on the use of culturally responsive pedagogy and the perceptions of African American male students about their educational experiences. It is an attempt to gauge whether or not this intervention has the ability to assuage the issues and concerns voiced by African American male students in the public education system. Implications for policy formation will be discussed.

Keywords: Culturally responsive pedagogy, African American male students, student perceptions, public education, achievement gap, academic achievement

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAQ	Child Activity Questionnaire
CPS	Current Population Survey
CRP	culturally responsive pedagogy
EPI	Economic Policy Institute
GEAR UP	Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs
GED	General Education Diploma
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NEA	National Education Association
NELS	National Education Longitudinal Study
USDE	U.S. Department of Education

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to existing research, culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) is a successful strategy for educating students of color. Kesler (2011, p.419) defines CRP as "the alignment of school curriculum with the cultural and experiential perspectives of ethnically and racially diverse students." Frye and Vogt, (2010, p.12) define it as "a learning environment that welcomes, supports, and provides all students with the best conditions for learning regardless of cultural and linguistic background" and Brown (2007, p.57) describes it as "closing the gap between students' home culture and the school's culture." Thus, the term CRP refers to a learning environment or educational curriculum that is inclusive of or accountable to each student's ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It rests upon the premise that all students can be excellent learners if lectures, instructions, and other classroom activities are relatable to the student's racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds.

The proposition that all students learn best when knowledge is introduced to them in a culturally relevant manner was pioneered by Carter G. Woodson in 1933. His book, *The Mis-Education of The Negro*, thoroughly explains how the current education system is failing African Americans and suggests remedying this problem by having schools teach students the contribution that all races have made to our society and across the world. Now, nearly 80 years later, many researchers agree that the cultural incompetence

of America's predominately White teaching force contributes to the academic underachievement of students of color (Asante, 1998; Toldson, Brown, & Sutton, 2009). Asante (1998) further explains that the best way to teach any student is to position the student's demographic group in the center of the context of knowledge that is being presented. So, given the Eurocentric focus of most American schools, Asante asserts that American schools are more conducive to how its White students acquire knowledge. By implementing CRP, schools will be prepared to appeal the ways in which its students of color acquire knowledge.

In order to effectively use CRP, it is helpful for teachers to possess a particular set of values. It is helpful if they believe that (1) they are largely responsible for their students' academic success, (2) knowledge is socially constructed and it is their job to teach students to think critically about these social constructs, and (3) the academic success of students is enhanced by their own ability to build relationships with people in the students' home communities (Hyland, 2009). Educators can achieve CRP by customizing their curricula to meet the cultural needs of students, using multiple forms of assessing students' work, demonstrating cultural caring, decoding students' cultural language, developing their own racial and cultural identities, and employing a teaching method that is integrative of all learning styles to name a few examples (Brown, 2007). Any educational initiative can be considered CRP as long as educators strive to understand the culturally rooted ways that students expect to acquire knowledge, consider the imposition of their own culturally rooted expectations for the acquisition of learning on their students, and develop strategies aimed at enhancing the educational outcomes of all students.

Another requirement for the effective implementation of CRP is for school officials and teachers to possess and demonstrate cultural competence when interacting with students. Adapted from Sue and Sue (2003), cultural competence is defined as "the ability to engage in actions or create conditions that maximize the optimal [level of academic achievement for all students]" (p.21). It consists of three primary dimensions: awareness, knowledge, and skills. While awareness refers to the level of understanding that teachers have about their own culture, knowledge refers to teachers' ability to acknowledge and respect the worldview of culturally diverse students in a nonjudgmental manner and skills refer to teachers' ability to use teaching methods and interpersonal interventions that are consistent with the life experiences and cultural norms of their students. Table 1 provides a more detailed explanation of these cultural competences.

Table 1: Multicultural Teaching Competencies

I. Cultural Competence: Awareness 1. Moved from being culturally unaware to being aware and sensitive to own cultural heritage and to valuing and respecting differences. 2. Aware of own values and biases and of how they may affect diverse students. 3. Comfortable with differences that exist between themselves and their students in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, and other sociodemographic variables. Differences are not seen as deviant. 4. Sensitive to circumstances (personal bias; stage of racial, gender, and sexual orientation identity; sociopolitical influences, etc.) that dictate placement of student with a teacher of their own sociodemographic group or to different teachers in general. 5. Aware of their own racist, sexist, heterosexist, or other detrimental attitudes, beliefs, and feelings.
II. Cultural Competence: Knowledge 1. Knowledgeable and informed on a number of culturally diverse groups, especially groups the teacher works with. 2. Knowledgeable about the sociopolitical system's operation in the United States with respect to its treatment of marginalized groups in society. 3. Possess specific knowledge and understanding of the generic characteristics of the

teaching profession. 4. Knowledge of institutional barriers that prevent some diverse students from being academically successful.
III. Cultural Competence: Skills 1. Able to generate a wide variety of verbal and nonverbal helping responses. 2. Able to communicate (send and receive both verbal and nonverbal messages) accurately and appropriately. 3. Able to exercise institutional intervention skills on behalf of their student when appropriate. 4. Able to anticipate the impact of their teaching styles and limitations they possess on culturally diverse students. 5. Able to employ teaching roles characterized by an active systemic focus, which leads to environmental interventions. Not restricted by the conventional teacher/student mode of operation.

Note: From *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice*, 5th Edition by Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, 2007, p.47. Copyright 2007 by John Wiley and Sons. Reprinted [or Adapted] with permission.

Because the implementation of CRP creates an environment whereby all cultures within a classroom are expressed, encouraged, and accepted, it is a method for mediating many of the racial and cultural barriers that inhibit some students from learning. It is founded on the belief that all students, regardless of their race, gender, or any other identifying characteristic, can succeed academically if they are given the opportunity to acquire knowledge via culturally rooted ways. And, while the current study only focusses on the use of CRP with African American males, it is important to note that CRP is not an avocation for the resegregation of our public schools. Rather, its purpose is to enhance the cultural awareness and responsiveness teachers have of students who are of a racial group different than their own. As I will discuss in detail later in this paper, many teachers are unaware of the cultural impediments to teaching culturally diverse students. Hence, CRP is a way to improve the relationships between teachers, students, and parents.

The current study found several case studies illustrating the various ways that teachers have implemented CRP with African American students and the resultant outcomes of its use on the students. The case studies were analyzed for their similarities and differences in hopes of identifying ways to systematize the implementation of CRP in public schools across the nation. It should be noted that while African American male students participated in these studies, the current research was unable to locate any studies that exclusively pertained to the use of CRP with African American males. The current study also found several case studies that reflect the perceptions of African American male students regarding their experiences in public, secondary education schools. To date, little to no research has focused on students' affinity for CRP. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the use of CRP and the perceptions of African American male students about their educational experiences. It is an attempt to gauge whether or not this intervention has the ability to assuage the issues and concerns voiced by African American male students in the public education system. The main research questions are:

1. How has culturally responsive pedagogy been implemented in classrooms with African American males?
2. Which outcomes (i.e. grades, grade point averages, dropout rates, graduation rates, academic engagement, and student-teacher collaboration) resulted from the implementation of CRP in classrooms?
3. What are African American males' own perceptions about their educational experiences?

4. What is the interplay between the implementation of CRP and the perceptions of African American male students about their educational experiences?

Since most of the studies on CRP and the perceptions of these students in the current research are qualitative, the current researcher conducted a meta-ethnography in order to answer the research questions. Developed by Noblit and Hare in the 1980s, a meta-ethnography is the synthesis of multiple qualitative studies into a comprehensive summary or a new line of thought. The syntheses in the current study were created by the researcher to explain how the findings of the studies under review are reciprocal.

The rest of this article is organized as follows. First, I provide a brief overview of the nature of this social problem. Next, I present statistics on the educational trends of African American males to provide background on the conflicting statistics highlighting this problem. Then, I will briefly review the literature on the barriers to educating African American male students. In the methods section, I will discuss the ethnographic systematic review method and the specific procedures I have used to conduct my review. The next section includes findings from this review. In the conclusion and discussion section, insights from these findings will be used to discuss implications for creating educational policies aimed at improving the educational experiences of African American males.

CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

The academic underachievement of African American males is a significant concern for policymakers. Not only does this problem have detrimental effects on African American males themselves, but also on the structure of the African American family and society as a whole. In this country, educational attainment is lauded as the key to economic success. Thus, the uneducated are thought to experience higher rates of unemployment and poverty and to rely more on social welfare programs. The dynamics of this social problem is the focus of this chapter. First, I will outline the problem and describe why underachievement is a serious policy concern. Then, I will discuss the magnitude of the problem by presenting statistics on several indicators of academic performance.

Why Underachievement Is an Important Policy Concern

According to Irving and Hudley (2008), academic achievement remains the strongest predictor of economic and social status in the United States. With advances in technology and Americans having greater access to institutions of higher learning, many blue collar jobs, often held by African American men, are being eliminated. These technological advances, increased rates of higher degree attainment, and now the economic recession, have led to higher rates of unemployment for African American men (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). A multicultural counseling and development study by Midgette and Glenn (1993) contends that these unemployment rates not only have a detrimental effect on the African American male, but also on the structure and stability of

the African American family. The unemployment rate of Black males has led to fewer Black marriages and more children being born out-of-wedlock (Bailey & Paisley, 2004; Kaba, 2005; Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). The result is single parent African American families that are more prone to endure poverty, economic instability, and hopelessness.

Another aspect of the problem is that the educational and employment disparities of Black males have been linked to increased rates of juvenile delinquency. According to Livingston and Nahimana (2006), employment difficulties have prompted many Black males to participate in drug related crimes to earn money. Consequently, many have found themselves in juvenile detention centers and prisons. In 2009, there were 10,300 Black males ages 18-19 and 85,000 ages 20-24 incarcerated in state and federal prisons (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011). Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Justice (2003) reports that approximately 44% of incarcerated Black males are high school dropouts and do not have a General Education Diploma or GED. Thus, whether it is through willful abandonment or imprisonment, many Black men fail to be integral members of their families. Thus, the survival, wealth, and health of the African American family structure is affected by the ability of African American males to graduate from high school so that they can pursue higher academic degrees and compete for adequate employment opportunities.

The Magnitude of the Gap

Statistics on the educational attainment of African American males are quite inconsistent. Conclusions about the educational accomplishments of these students have

been drawn from various reports published by the U.S. Department of Education's (USDE) National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The purpose of the NCES is to collect, track, analyze, and provide the public with information about education in the U.S. Traditionally, its statistics have been derived from self-report surveys, such as the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) and administrative and enrollment data reported by school districts to state and federal governments, and have been widely accepted as accurate and official (NCES, 2011). Among these NCES reports are the *Digest of Education Statistics, The Condition of Education,* and the *National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS).* While data in the *Digest of Education Statistics* and *The Condition of Education* is based on school enrollment and diploma data reported by local school districts to state and federal education agencies, the NELS is based on a collection of data ascertained by the tracking of individual students' educational experiences from the spring of these students' eighth grade year and beyond. Additionally, NELS data was verified against the students' actual transcripts, which were independently obtained from their schools. The survey was first administered in 1988 and continues to be administered every two years, which is well past the students' high school years.

The disagreement between these publications is about the actual magnitude of the Black-White gap and how trends in high school completion rates from the last 10, 20, and 30 years may have led to erroneous conclusions regarding the academic achievement of Black males. Prevailing statistics from the *Digest of Education Statistics* and *The Condition of Education* indicate that compared to their White counterparts, African American males have significantly lower rates of academic achievement and are dropping out of school at alarming rates. More specifically, research shows that when

compared to their White and African American female counterparts, African American male students score lower on any given educational measure, including, but not limited to standardized test scores, grade point averages, and graduation and dropout rates (Carter, Hawkins, & Natesan, 2008; Kaba, 2005). The NELS, on the other hand, purports that although the Black-White achievement gap exists, it is significantly smaller than indicated by other NCES publications. While a report by the Schott Foundation, which works to develop and strengthen a broad-based and representative movement to achieve fully resourced, quality preK-12 public education, discusses published state and/or school district data in detail, a report by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) highlights the NELS. In this section, data from the Schott Foundation report will be discussed, followed by a discussion of the EPI report.

The Schott Foundation, like the NCES, uses data obtained from state education and/or district officials. Thus, its report, *Yes We Can, The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males*, used this data to advocate for the systemic reformation of America's public education system. According to the Schott Foundation report, 1.2 million African American males drop out of school each year and are less likely to graduate high school in 33 out of 48 states (Holzman, 2010). The report further states that the national graduation rate for Black males is 47% and 78% for White males.

Yet, data in NCES reports, such as the *Digest of Education Statistics and The Condition of Education,* have been challenged by some scholars. The EPI (2006) criticizes these NCES publications for basing their statistics on unreliable data tools, such as administrative data on enrollment and diplomas and the Census Bureau's household surveys. The administrative data was criticized for its omission of students who get the

GED or obtain their diplomas through forums other than a high school while the census survey was criticized for the frequency at which it is reported to the public. According to Mishel and Roy (2006), the NCES reports CPS data every March although it is collected every month. Thus, the EPI argues that the gap in graduation rates between Black and White male students is grossly overstated. The EPI states that there is only a 15 percentage point difference in the Black-White male cohort gap in high school graduation rates. The Schott Foundation, on the other hand, reports that the difference between the cohorts as 31 percentage points.

Based on their analysis of multiple NCES publications, the EPI claims that NELS is the best tool for reporting national dropout rates. It is not only congruent with data from census surveys, but also provides information on individuals from 9^{th} grade to beyond high school. According to the NELS, only 25.6% of Black males actually dropout of school and at least half of the dropouts obtain a GED. In other words, 68.3 % of Black males in public secondary schools graduated with their high school diploma in 2002 compared to 82.8% of White males, 87.5% of White females, and 80.7% of Black females. That same year, 8.3% of Black males, compared to 6.3% of White males, 3.4% of White females, and 5% of Black females obtained their GED. Table 2 illustrates the discrepancies found between the Schott Foundation and EPI reports.

Table 2: Schott Foundation and EPI discrepancies in Black/White Male Completion Rates

Report	Race	High School Diploma	GED	Completion: Diploma or GED
Schott Foundation 2007-8 Cohort	Black Males	47%	N/A	47%
	White Males	78%	N/A	78%
	Gap	31	N/A	31
EPI 2002 Cohort	Black Males	68.3%	8.3%	76.6%
	White Males	82.8%	6.3%	89.1%
	Gap	14.5	2	16.5

This table shows that the omission of GED data accounts for the discrepancy in completion rates reported for Black and White males by the Schott Foundations and EPI reports.

The EPI also reports that in 2009, 4.8 % of Blacks, compared to 2.4% of Whites, dropped out of public and private high schools between the beginning of one year and the start of the next (NCES, 2011). The same report further states that 10.6% of Black males in this country compared to 6.3% of White males, 4.1% of White females, and 8.1% of Black females are not enrolled in high school nor has a high school diploma or GED equivalent. These statistics equate to a significant decrease in the academic achievement gap between Black males and their counterparts. The graduation rates and trends presented in this EPI report definitely provide a much more positive view of the graduation rates for African American males and are fairly new compared to the statistics reported in the Schott report. Therefore, research, beyond the scope of the current paper, is needed to confirm which set of statistics accurately reflects the academic achievement of African American male students. Nevertheless, it is important to note that even with the more conservative estimates, the academic achievement gap persists.

In addition to the gap in graduation rates, African American males face other challenges in the public education system. They also score lower any given measure of academic success, including test scores. The USDE's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) administers assessments in the following twelve subject areas: the Arts, Civics, Economics, Foreign Language, Geography, Mathematics, Reading, Science, Technology and Engineering, Literacy, U.S. History, and Writing. At the national level, these longitudinal trend assessments are administered to a nationally representative sample of public and nonpublic school students aged 9, 13, and 17 at grade levels 4, 8, and 12. However, the 2004 NAEP report focuses only on the mathematics and reading scores of public school students (NCES, 2005). There are nearly 11,000 students assessed at each age group.

According to the NCES (2005), reading and mathematics scales scores have improved for Whites and Blacks since they were first administered. Still, the achievement gap between Black and White students at each age group remains apparent. Scores from the reading assessment were reported from its 1971 inception to 2004 when it was last administered. Between this timeframe, the gap pertaining to the age 9 group decreased 18 points. Likewise, for the age 13 group, the gap decreased 17 points. And for the age 17 group, they decreased by 24 points. For example, White students in the age 9 group scored 214 in 1971, 221 in 1999, and 226 in 2006. Comparatively, Black students in the age 9 group scored 170 in 1971, 186 in 1999, and 200 in 2004.

Scores from the mathematics assessment were reported from its 1973 inception to 2004 when it, too, was last administered. Within these years, the gap decreased 12 points for the age 9 group, 19 points for the age 13 group, and 12 points for the age 17 group.

To illustrate the gap, White students in the age 9 group scored 225 in 1973, 239 in 1999, and 247 in 2004. Blacks students in the age 9 group scored 190 in 1973, 211 in 1999, and 224 in 2004 (visit http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2005/2005464.pdf.for a complete listing of scale score data).

Furthermore, according to the most recent report found by the USDE's Office of Civil Rights, African American boys, in 2006, comprised 8.71% of the national enrollment in public schools. Yet, they are disproportionately represented amongst students with intrinsic deficits and behavior problems. It has been projected that 19.21% of Black males have been diagnosed as mentally retarded, 21.99% as emotionally disturbed, 26.70% have been expelled from school, and 23.68% have been suspended from school. These classifications usually result in students being removed from regular degree-granting high school curricula and increase the probability that Black males will drop out of school or enter the criminal justice system.

The National Education Association (NEA) (2011) concurs that African American males are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than White students; two and a half times less likely to be referred to gifted programs; and are less likely to graduate from high school on time. With such negative experiences in public school, it is believed that many African American males have turned to criminal behaviors to earn money and feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. Bailey and Paisley (2004) report that one in four African American males is in jail or under court supervision and that there are more African American males in their twenties in the criminal justice system than there are in college.

As they drop out of school, they are more prone to have difficulties acquiring adequate income to support their families and to participate in risky behaviors, such as criminal misconduct and unprotected sex. If not addressed, these risky behaviors may have a detrimental impact on society as a whole as more government programs and funding will be needed to subsidize the care of impoverished families, create effective law enforcement initiatives to maintain public safety, and house criminals in already overcrowded jails and prisons. In 2009, the majority of high school dropouts were unemployed and of those ages 18-67 who were employed, $25,000 was their median income (NCES, 2011). Consequently, the average high school dropout costs society $240,000 over his or her lifetime due to lower tax contributions, health care costs, criminal activity, and higher reliance on government funded programs.

In sum, over 30 years of research has shown that Black males not only dropout of school at alarming rates, but also score lower any given measure of academic success, including test scores. Even though EPI scholars have questioned the widely varying estimates across sources and argued that, the graduation gap between Black males and their counterparts is smaller than publicized (EPI, 2006), there is still a persistent gap. Moreover, an extensive body of literature has identified barriers to educating African American male students. These barriers are the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

BARRIERS TO EDUCATING AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS

Researchers, educators, politicians, and concerned community members have offered a plethora of reasons for the educational disparities of Black males. Among these reasons are personal and emotional factors, family factors, social and environmental factors, and school factors. This chapter details how each of these factors affects the educational outcomes of African American males.

Personal and Emotional Factors

The term personal and emotional factors refer to any factor intrinsically emanating from the African American male that inhibits his own academic success. The present study found three personal and emotional factors that are barriers to educating this population. The first factor pertains to the communication difficulties displayed by African American male students when compared to other students. The second factor involves these students' perception of the elements needed for masculine identity development. And, the third factor has to do with the effect of negative peer pressure on them. Each of these factors is discussed in detail below.

Communication

Many researchers have linked the communication style of students to the students' educational outcomes. A study conducted by Hwa-Froelich, Kasambira, and Moleski (2007) videotaped the play behaviors of African American Head Start students at

their school's playground. Language spoken by these students was analyzed using Computerized Language Analysis, which is a software program that has 98% to 99% interrater agreement. Ten communication functions were selected as the coding measure in their study. The five lower level communicative functions were identified as directing, imaging, reporting, obligated responses, and self-maintaining. The five higher level communicative functions were prediction, projection, reasoning, repairs, and verbal routines. The first seven communication functions defined below were developed by Tough in 1982; the final three codes were developed by Stockman in 1996.

- Self-maintaining—communicating to meet the speaker's physical or psychological needs; for example, "Mine's bigger than yours" shows assertion of self's superiority.
- Directing—guiding or controlling the speaker's or listener's actions. An example of directing self would be "I'm takin that" and directing others would be "Come on."
- Reporting—explaining or retelling present or past experiences; for instance, "That's the grandma" communicates reporting an identity for a current role-play situation.
- Reasoning—expressing cause-and-effect or dependent relationships; for example, "cuz they make me boys" was used to justify actions during play.
- Predicting—using language to anticipate. An example of predicting is "That gon be tight" when a child was predicting how people were going to fit in a bus.
- Projecting—expressing how others might feel or describing situations not experienced by the speaker. One child expressed, "He mad," when discussing a toy figurine and explaining why the toy needed to lay down.
- Imagining—using language in the process or act of pretending. One child was pretending with people and a dog and spoke for one of the play people, saying, "Let's hop up on the dog"
- Obligated responses—answers to questions.
- [Repairs]--repairs to utterances for clarification.
- Verbal routines—songs or rhymes (Hwa-Froelich et al., 2007).

The study yields three significant findings. One, African American children only demonstrated use of the five lower level communication functions. Two, there are similarities in the way that boys communicate, regardless of race, and African American

boys tended to use lower level communicative functions than their White counterparts. Three, it also found similarities in the communication styles of African American students regardless of gender; however, it was noted that African American boys also used lower level communicative functions than African American girls.

Researchers have speculated that fatherlessness in their homes, poverty, insufficient resources, and parental inability to demonstrate higher level communicative functions, might be explanatory factors. Still, regardless of the cause for their lower levels of communication, boys of all races, especially African American boys, have been observed to become combative when they lack higher level communicative functions. Hence, they are much more likely to be misunderstood by their teachers, to have their expressed frustrations interpreted as verbal and/or physical aggressions, and to be referred for disciplinary actions. Once this happens, they are no longer in the classroom acquiring the knowledge needed to be academically successful.

Masculine identity development

Another personal and emotional factor barring the education of African American males are African American males' own beliefs about elements needed for masculine identity development. Irving and Hudley (2008) and Sheppard (2007) report that many African American males deem educational success to be more socially acceptable for girls than boys (Sheppard, 2007; Jordan, 1994). Both studies associate this perception to the notion that teachers are more sensitive and responsive to the needs of girls unknowingly at the exclusion of elements needed for masculine identity development. In fact, a 1992 study conducted by Billson revealed that some African American male

students reject academics in order to exude the persona of a strong, Black man: "calm, emotionless, fearless, aloof, tough" (Graham & Anderson, 2008, p.474). Consequently, minimizing the negative effects of gender on the education of these students hinges on helping Black males understand the connection between education and economic success. Yet, despite interest in understanding the role that gender plays in the academic achievement of African American male students, much more research is needed in this area before causal relationships can be determined. In the meantime, African American male students may continue to sabotage their own educational success due to a belief that academic success is more acceptable for females than it is for males.

Peer pressure

Finally, according to Toldson (2008), peer pressure has been identified as a barrier to educating African American male students. According to several researchers, academic success for ethnic minorities has become synonymous with "acting White" since they have assimilated to the traditional European American school environment (Graham & Anderson, 2008; Frye & Vogt, 2010; Toldson, 2008; Somers et al., 2008). Desiring a close connection with their ethnic group, many minorities feel the need to choose between their ethnic identity and academic success (Graham & Anderson, 2008; Frye & Vogt, 2010). Somers et. al (2008) state that many African American students have actually succumbed to the pressure to perform below their potential. Moreover, Toldson (2008) states that African American male students do not perform well when they feel lonely.

In conclusion, the education of African American male students can be inhibited by several personal and emotional factors. One personal and emotional factor that affects their academic achievement is their use of lower level communication functions. Research contends that teachers, oftentimes, interpret the communication style of African American males as aggressive and, consequently, refer them for disciplinary action, which removes them from the learning environment. Another factor is that some African American males deem the pursuit of educational success to be more appropriate for females and counterproductive to masculine identity development. Similarly, peer pressure coupled with a desire to maintain one's ethnic identity has resulted in many African American males performing below their intellectual ability in order to fit in with their peers. Thus, these personal and emotional factors have led African American male students to hamper their own academic achievements.

Family Factors

Family factors refer to the group of individuals who encourage, help, comfort, or guide a person towards achieving their goals. They can consist of parents, friends, neighbors, extended family members, coworkers, religious leaders, teachers, mentors, and any other caring or loyal person. Thus, the purpose of this section is to discuss how unreliable family factors are barriers to educating African American male students.

According to Graham and Anderson (2008) academically successful African American male students thrive from the guidance of their support system. Thus, parents who communicate frequently with their children, have an authoritative parenting style, and are actively involved in their child's home and school life tend to produce

academically successful children (Toldson, Brown, & Sutton, 2009; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008). Conversely, maternal hostility was found to have an inverse relationship with the development of academic skills (Toldson, Brown, & Sutton, 2009; Toldson, 2008). In other words, the more distance or hostility a child feels from his or her mother, the slower the child develops academic skills. Somers, Owens, and Piliawsky (2008) provide an explanation for why some parents fail to get involved in their child's education. They purport that these parents 1) may not realize the role they play in their child's academic performance, 2) may not feel qualified to assist their children with schoolwork, or 3) may feel that their presence is unwelcomed in their child's school. And, Toldson (2008) found evidence that African American males who live with their fathers are more likely to succeed academically than those who do not. He found paternal modeling significantly affects the academic performance of these students. Thus, parents play a huge role in the academic motivation espoused by their kids. Parental support seems to serve as a buffer for many other factors that affect a student's academic performance, including low teacher expectations and peer pressure.

Clearly, supportive persons play a significant role in the academic achievement of African American male students. Although supportive persons can be friends, neighbors, extended family members, coworkers, religious leaders, teachers, and mentors, research suggests that parents, perhaps, have the most influence over their child's academic performance. While some studies have linked maternal hostility to poor academic performance, others found that academically successful children tend to have parents who are actively involved in their home and school lives. Thus, increased parent-teacher

collaborations may improve the educational outcomes for African American male students.

Social and Environmental Factors

Social and environmental factors refer the individual and contextual characteristics that impede the academic achievement of African American males. These factors may be best understood if they were called neighborhood effects. Neighborhood effects are the ways in which "local context influences the health and well-being of individuals in a way that cannot be reduced to the properties of the individuals themselves" (Morenoff & Lynch, 2004, para. 2). Thus, the purpose of this section is to explain how the education of African American males is hindered by the characteristics of their environment.

First, research shows that many African Americans live in poverty stricken communities (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). The socioeconomic status of the residents in these communities plays a significant role in the education its students. This is because funding for public schools is primarily provided by revenue streams within the school's district. And according to Somers, Owens, and Piliawsky (2008), impoverished communities offer limited access to public goods and services, such as quality education and health care. Moreover, Toldson (2008) noted a positive relationship between the academic success of African American male students and their families' income. More specifically, Toldson found that high achieving Black male students are most likely to come from families with adequate financial resources.

Second, low income communities are also populated by the uneducated, unemployed, and gangs, which makes the crime rates in these communities high

(Strayhorn, 2008; Kaba, 2005). Schools in these communities are predominantly attended by racial minorities, employed with unqualified teachers, offer lower level curriculums, and have inadequate funding (Strayhorn, 2008; Irving & Hudley, 2008; Kaba, 2005). In fact, according to the NEA (2011), 42% of Black students attend schools that have inadequate resources and are underperforming; and, of the core academic teachers at predominantly minority schools, 28% are not certified. Together, the disadvantages plaguing low income communities have been found to lower the academic performance of students who live in these communities. Somers et al. (2008) explained that students in poor communities fail to recognize the correlation between educational attainment and income while Jordan (1994) attributes their underachievement to the notion that they do not know how to use their intrinsic abilities to achieve their goals.

Regardless, we are products of our environments. Our environments inspire us, shape our aspirations, and influence our perceptions of the world. Sadly, inspirations offered by impoverished communities tend to be limited in scope or difficult to find. Consequently, students who live in these environments are likely to have difficulty seeing all the possibilities that education makes available to them.

School Factors

School factors involve the sociopolitical elements within America's public education system that are barriers to educating African American male students. The sociopolitical elements of the school system refer to social forces, such as discrimination, prejudice, and oppression that persist as societal and institutional barriers to persons of color (Matthews & Williams, 2007; Ford & Harris, 1996). Together, these elements

negatively affect these students' academic performance. The catalyst for these negative effects has been said to be the mismatch of racial and cultural minority students with teachers of a different and dominant race (Ford & Harris, 1996) and inadequate teacher training programs (Ciccetti-Turro, 2007). Students and teachers perpetuate problems created by the racial and cultural mismatch in different ways. The cultural mismatch is discussed next, followed by a discussion on teacher training programs.

Student effects on the cultural mismatch

According to Carter et. al, (2008), parents teach children through modeling and reinforcement (Carter et al., 2008). They further state that the implicit and explicit rules that caregivers give their children regarding appropriate behaviors, morals, values, education, communication, learning, etc. set an expectation for the child that they are to execute these rules with all adults and in all settings, including the classroom. Unfortunately, replication of these behaviors in the classroom is incompatible with the European American driven pedagogy that is widely used in public schools (Klingner et al., 2005; Carter et al., 2008). Consequently, the behavior of minority students is commonly misjudged by their teachers and, oftentimes, results in them being grossly misunderstood.

Carter et al. (2008) used inferential statistics to study the relationship between verve and the academic achievement of African American students. The term Verve was coined by Boykin in 1983 to indicate the "propensity for energetic, intense, stylistic body language and expression" that is characteristic of the learning style of African Americans in general (Carter et al., 2008, p. 30). These researchers administered an 18 item survey called The Child Activity Questionnaire (CAQ) to 211 students at one urban middle

school. Of the participants, 60 were Black males, 47 were Black females, 59 were White males, and 45 were White females. Using a five point Likert scale, the CAQ measured students' perceptions of their own verve level. They found that African American students, especially African American females exhibit higher levels of verve than their White classmates. They further state that while teachers are amenable to the high levels of verve in their African American female students, they are more likely to interpret the same verve levels in African American males as misbehavior or a threat. Consequently, the pressure to fit into a traditional school environment, where the culture is determined by the European American, middle-class segment of the U.S. population, may cause African American students (particularly African American males) to struggle academically.

Teacher effects on the cultural mismatch

Similarly, teachers acquire expectations about how to appropriately interact with the world from their race and culture. Given that America's teaching force is predominately White and female, these expectations are readily enforced amongst education professionals. These professionals are the authority figures within schools and are more likely to expect students to adhere to European American cultural norms. Thus, in order to be effective educators of racial minorities, it would be helpful for teachers to confront the notion of White privilege.

White privilege is "an invisible knapsack of unearned assets that can be used to cash in each day for advantages not given to those who do not fit this mold" (Sue & Sue, 2003, p.70). While racial minorities are keenly aware of the concept, Whites remain grossly oblivious to it and reluctant to discuss it. Klingner et al. (2005) add that efforts to

use colorblind methods seem to have only strengthened the hierarchy between the races. Consequently, many educators have poorly developed racial identities and are less prepared to work in multiracial settings. Their lack of awareness for the dynamics of other races and their reluctance to discuss racism often leads to miscommunications with persons of color and poor educational outcomes for students of color. This is of particular interest since the teacher workforce is, again, predominately populated by White women (Cicetti-Turro, 2007; Kaba, 2005).

Irving and Hudley (2008) sought to definitively determine the relationship between cultural mistrust and the academic achievement of African American male adolescents. The phrase cultural mistrust was coined by Terrell and Terrell in 1981 to indicate the tendency for African Americans to distrust institutional, personal, or social contexts that are controlled by Whites and is a construct that attempts to capture the influence of discrimination on academic motivation (Irving & Hudley, 2008). They administered a survey to 115 African American male juniors and seniors enrolled at an urban high school. With a four point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, the 72 item survey was divided into the following subscales: cultural mistrust, academic outcome expectations, outcome values, cultural attitudes, and ethnic identity affirmation.

The cultural mistrust subscale measured the students' mistrust of the dominant culture. The academic outcome expectations subscale measured the benefits students expected from academic achievement and how much they value each academic outcome. The ethnic identity subscale assessed the strength and importance of ethnic group membership. And, the cultural attitudes subscale measured students' achievement

motivation and perceptions of parental and community beliefs about school. Their study yielded an inverse relationship between the academic achievement of African American adolescents and cultural mistrust. In other words, the greater the level of mistrust these adolescents harbor towards Whites, the lower their rates of academic achievement (Irving & Hudley, 2008; Kaba, 2005). Irving and Hudley (2008) also found that high levels of cultural mistrust lowers the expectations African American adolescents' have for the benefits of education and leads to an increase in oppositional attitudes towards the dominant culture.

From his literature review, Zaman (2007) surmised that current teaching methods and teacher perceptions are not equipped to adequately respond to the emotional and physical needs of any male student, especially African American male students whose classroom behaviors are often perceived as a problem. In fact, research has found that African American male students are five times more likely to be active than their White counterparts; that only 25% of African American children adhere to the Eurocentric behavioral expectations of their school; and that 75% of were out of their seats, moving around the classroom (Carter et al., 2008). As a result, African American male students are stigmatized as troublemakers, causing delays in their social and academic development since they are often removed from classroom activities (Zaman, 2007; Carter et al., 2008).

Moreover, Dobbs, Arnold, and Doctoroff (2004) using videotaped observations of preschool classrooms found that female students received more positive attention and rewards from their teachers than did the male students and that the male students received more commands than did the girls. It was explained that since boys misbehave more than

girls, teachers are more likely to command boys to control their behavior even when they are not misbehaving. This explanation is unfortunate given that Toldson (2008) found empirical evidence that the academic success of African American males is more sensitive to their emotional well-being when compared to African American females. While these studies have advanced the collection of literature on the academic achievement of African American male students, they have also raised even more questions for researchers to study. Before policy change can occur, researchers need to clearly identify the components of these programs that lead to their success, the components that were impediments to success, how to systematically implement the intervention, and which educational outcomes will improve as a result of the intervention.

Given that there is a racial mismatch between this country's predominately White, female, teacher workforce, there is a greater possibility for miscommunications to occur between them and their students of color. These miscommunications lead to many problems. One, many teachers expect boys to misbehave more than their female students. This expectation weakens the teacher's ability to effectively engage these students. Two, misunderstandings about the needs of male students often results in many African American male student being removed from the classroom and referred for disciplinary action. If they are not in the classroom, they are not acquiring knowledge about the curriculum. Thirdly, the cultural norms and expectations of these students become stifled. To further complicate matters, negative stereotypes against Black males abound in our society. These stereotypes not only shape teacher perceptions' of their African American male students, but also affect the level of mistrust these students have of their teachers. If

these problems are as widespread as the research suggests, then students of color will continue to face underachievement while teachers struggle to successfully educate them.

Inadequate teacher training programs

Schools, in addition to educating students on the curriculum, also have the added responsibility of teaching them how to be functional members of society (Jordan, 1994). Therefore, Toldson (2008), Livingston and Nahimana (2006), and Holzman (2010) state that teacher effectiveness is the most important element of a classroom. In order to be effective, (Sheppard, 2007) states that teachers should 1) be aware of their students' prior knowledge, intellectual strengths, and personal interests, 2) committed to helping students learn, and 3) be adept at finding solutions that resolve any misunderstanding that a student has. Thus, students of any race are vulnerable to poor academic performance if their teacher uses ineffective teaching methods, has poor classroom leadership, and low expectations of them.

Regretfully, compared to White men (4%) and African American women (4.8%), 20% of African American men agree that their teachers put them down (Strayhorn, 2008). Likewise, Strayhorn (2008), using data extracted from the NELS, also found that while 16% of African American men agree that their teachers expect less out of them while only 4.8% of White men and 8% of African American females have the same beliefs. School is challenging enough with students attempting to learn the curriculum, fit in with their peers, and plan their future. The last thing any student needs to worry about is their teacher's biases towards them. As the authority figure in the classroom, teachers have a bigger responsibility to confront their own biases and ensure that they are

providing every student with the best learning environment possible. Sheppard (2007) has even found that teachers who are able to transcend the negative stereotypes attached to African American males are more successful at teaching them. Toldson (2008) found empirical evidence suggesting that African American males' academic achievement is best when they feel safe.

Strayhorn (2008) blames teacher ineffectiveness on teacher training programs. He says that these programs fail to teach educators how to conceptualize the systemic factors affecting the academic performance of minority students. Cicetti-Turro (2007) urges teacher education programs to do more than teach pedagogy by inspiring preservice teachers to make themselves accountable to minority students. Sheppard (2007) recommends that preservice teachers be allowed to adjust curriculums in hopes of authentically integrating the experiences of African American males. Zaman (2007) further recommends that teacher education programs measure preservice teachers' attitudes about teaching diverse cultures and assign reflective based observations to help future educators gain self-awareness and plan to be culturally responsive teachers.

Teacher effectiveness extends beyond mastering pedagogy. Effective teachers are committed to helping all students learn, regardless of social and cultural factors that affect their academic abilities. Effective teachers hold themselves accountable for their students' success and seek ways to resolve the barriers to educating their students, including Black males. Likewise, teacher education programs are encouraged to help preservice teachers understand themselves as racial beings so that they can better relate to students of color. While researchers have recommended a variety of solutions to improving the educational experiences of African American male students, they all seem

to agree that change starts with the training of our nation's educators. Educators need to realize the weight of the role they play in their students' education and seek ways to improve themselves.

Since the majority of African American male students are performing poorly in school and peer pressure seems to only contribute to their own educational disparities, it is easy to see how negative stereotypes regarding the education of African American males proliferate. Their own actions influence their teacher's expectations of them to remain low. As previously stated, low teacher expectations lead to low academic performance in students. It is an unfortunate cycle that can be remediated if teachers and African American male students would take responsibility for their respective roles in the cycle and change themselves accordingly.

After all, not all African American male students are performing poorly in school. High-achieving, African American male students refers to students who make good grades, are in the top 10 percent of their graduating class, and/or are committed to their educational success. According to Somers, Owens, Piliawsky (2008) and Toldson (2008), these students are able to overcome the aforementioned barriers because of their personal control and motivation to achieve their future goals. Thus, the more confident a student is in his or her academic abilities, the higher his or her academic motivation. In fact, Graham and Anderson (2008) found that the high-achieving Black males in their study agreed that the real test of individuality and manhood is rooted in one's courage to hold firm to one's own beliefs in the face of adversity. In his research, Toldson (2008) found that academically successful African American male students report feeling much happier with their quality of life than those who perform poorly in school. Personal control and

intrinsic motivation has been found to buffer the challenges often faced by African American male students regardless of the nature of their school environment.

In conclusion, the use of CRP to enhance the academic achievement of Black males has not been systematically implemented throughout our nation's public education system. Despite the success of CRP based programs, existing research on this topic is still quite confusing. For decades, the academic performance of Black males, based on data from the USDE has indicated that Black males were in crisis. Yet, recent reports state that graduation rates for Black males are above the national average, meaning there is no crisis. It is important to note, however, that regardless of the existence of an educational crisis for Black males, there is still an academic achievement gap between Black male students and their counterparts. The current study found no research on the ability of CRP, the most salient suggestion for educating Black males, to adequately respond to the educational needs expressed by Black male students. Thus, understanding the relationship between the use of CRP and the perceptions of African American male students about their educational experiences will be the focus of the remainder of this report.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

To investigate the relationship between CRP and the perceptions of African American male students about their educational experiences, a meta-ethnography was conducted. A meta-ethnography is a research method used to reduce multiple qualitative studies into one argument or a new line of thought (Noblit & Hare, 1988). In accordance with all ethnographic research (i.e. case studies, interviews, observations, etc.) interpretation is the primary tool used to analyze findings of a meta-ethnography as well. Since researchers use different words and phrases to present data on the same subject, the relationship between related articles is not always apparent. Therefore, the researcher's worldview is used to create the metaphors used to synthesize or combine the data or findings within the articles into a single line of thought or a new interpretation of the data. They are the blueprint by which one qualitative study is compared or translated into another related qualitative study. Furthermore, according to Noblit and Hare (1988), the new interpretation has the ability to confirm what is already known, uncover hidden information, or correct faulty beliefs about the topic.

In addition, the data synthesis process in a meta-ethnography is unlike traditional data analysis methods. While the goal of traditional research methods is to develop broad generalizations on the topic studied, the goal of meta-ethnographic research is to simplify and synthesize multiple qualitative studies into one argument. Thus, the data in the data

synthesis process refers to the qualitative studies collected on the topic of interest. The term "synthesis," commonly used in meta-ethnographic research, signifies the translation of one of the collected qualitative studies into another. In other words, the studies collected for a meta-ethnography are analyzed for their comparative qualities and then translated into one another.

Moreover, as outlined in Bryman (2012, p.107), a meta-ethnography consists of seven overlapping and revolving phases that aid in the data synthesis process. Phase I, "Getting started," requires the researcher to identify a point of interest to be revealed and understood through the interpretation of multiple qualitative studies. Phase II, "Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest," requires the researcher to determine which of the studies under review are credible and appealing to his or her audience for the data synthesis process. Phase III, "Reading the studies," necessitates that the researcher simply reads the studies repeatedly in order to understand their relevance to the researcher's interests. During Phase IV, "Determining how the studies are related," the researcher synthesizes the studies by determining their relationship to each other and developing metaphors to signify these relationships. In Phase V, "Translating the studies into one another," the researcher decides whether the meaning within the studies are reciprocal, refutational or oppositional, or neither. Phase VI, "Synthesizing translations," is when the researcher analyzes the different translations and reveals their relation to one another. And finally, Phase VII, "Expressing the synthesis," involves the process of explaining to the audience how the studies relate to one another.

Researcher's Background

In their micro-ethnographic study of the interplay between the academic and ethnic identity of academically successful African American males in an urban high school, Graham and Anderson (2008) used an inductive research strategy to analyze their data. This process required them to identify themes common to all three of the case studies they conducted and discuss how each case study supported their identified themes. Their article included a section called "Researchers' Positionality." This section contained relevant details from their personal background, such as their race, age, upbringing, and educational experiences. They explained that it was necessity to share this information so that readers could have insight into the factors that influenced their interpretation of their data. Given that this study seeks to use this same interpretive approach to synthesize data found within the article under review, I thought it was necessary to share information about my background and worldview.

I am an African American female who was born in 1980 and was raised in rural West Alabama. I come from a very large family that is predominantly male. I have nine uncles, eight aunts, and am one of over 47 grandkids (over 50% of my cousins are male). I watched most of my male family members struggle to graduate from high school or eventually dropout. I attended predominately Black elementary and secondary education schools. The racial composition of the high school I attended was 60% Black and 40% White. In the second grade, I was referred to the special education program. My severe level of shyness was confused was delayed functioning. I was returned to the regular curriculum a week later. Until fourth grade, I did not care about making good grades. There was no adult at home to encourage me to do better. Following a personal trauma in

my life and witnessing the accolades that my peers received for their academic success, academia became my outlet and the one thing in my life that I could control. Thus, from fourth grade and beyond, I remained in the top 10 percent of my class.

Although my high school was predominantly African American, the students in my advanced or Advanced Placement courses were predominantly White. In order to fit in, I assimilated to the classroom culture as best as I could. At some point, I started to feel like I was living two separate lives: one at home and another at school. My vocabulary, pronunciations, demeanor, and topics of discussion changed depending on my environment. I was so proud of my academic accomplishments that I overlooked my family and peers calling me a "nerd" or criticizing me for "talking White." Nevertheless, I was saddened by the fact that my academic pursuits created distance between my family, friends, and I. I would have loved to display my cultural identity while pursuing my academic goals, but I did not know how. Culturally responsive pedagogy appears to be the solution to what I and many other students of color have experienced. It seems to bridge the gaps between minority students' home and school cultures.

Procedures

Several steps were taken to collect articles for this ethnographic review. First, Academic Search Premier, Education Full Text, ERIC, and Social Sciences Full Text were searched to locate articles on the use of culturally responsive teaching with African American students and the perceptions of African American male students regarding their educational experiences. The literature search was not intended to be comprehensive as only four databases were explored. Studies on the implementation of CRP with African

American students were located by using the following key words: culturally responsive teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy. To search for studies on the perceptions of African American male students, the following keywords were used: Black males, Black students, African American males, student-teacher relationships, classroom environment, and self-concept.

Studies were selected for inclusion in this study if they were peer reviewed, provided information on ways that teachers have implemented CRP with African American students, and if they exposed the perceptions of African American male students regarding their experiences in public education. On the contrary, studies on the collegiate performance of African American male students, about successful interventions other than CRP, occurring outside the United States, and investigating the preparedness of teachers to implement CRP were excluded. As a result, seven articles were selected to provide insight into the implementation of CRP with African American students (see Appendix A) and four articles were selected to provide insight into the perceptions of African American male students regarding their educational experiences (see Appendix B).

Methods for Data Synthesis

The meta-ethnography involved three syntheses. Synthesis I is the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy. Synthesis II is the perceptions of African American male students and Synthesis III is the interplay CRP implementation and student perceptions. Syntheses I and II were conducted independently of each other, and then, integrated to create Synthesis III.

For the first synthesis, strategies used to implement CRP with African American students are described. This synthesis was included in this report in order to discover how CRP has been implemented in classrooms with African American males, to display the range of creativity permissible in CRP implementation, and to identify the outcomes of its implementation on students. Thus, the descriptions of CRP methods provided in this paper required no interpretation from the researcher.

However, in order to discern the outcomes of CRP implementation, metaphors were created for the purpose of data synthesis. For example, statements such as, "[The teacher] included details and humor that kept the students fully engaged" and "The call-and-response pattern…was a familiar communication style to students and one that prompted them to participate fully" were coded as academic engagement. Statements, such as, "This experience suggests that the teacher and the students had established a caring and personal relationship" and "[Teachers] focused on their relationships with the students and on the students relationships with one another" were coded as cooperative teacher-student relationships. Parental involvement was interpreted in statements like "Mrs. Willis provided care to the parents of her students and to other parents in the school" and CRP activities requiring parental engagement. Psychological safety was coded by statements like "... she cared for her students' personal "hunger" success and physical health" and "We don't laugh at anyone in here. You can feel very secure in this classroom." Respect for authority was interpreted in statements like "the students were absolutely quiet and looked at her with respect while she spoke" and "No one moved or made any type of nonverbal gestures to indicate disagreement or anger." And, any

comments regarding what the students learned, such as "I have children who could not read at all and when they left [me] they could read" were interpreted as learning.

The second synthesis involved translating studies on student perceptions into each other. This process consisted of two phases. During the first phase, keywords and phrases that appeared frequently throughout all the studies were identified. In the second phase, those keywords and phrases were used to pinpoint themes permeating across the articles.

The third synthesis was produced through the integration of syntheses one and two. In other words, studies on the use of CRP with African American students were compared and contrasted with studies on the perceptions of African American male students about their educational experiences. This comparison was used to draw inferences about the ability of CRP to mediate the complaints that African American males have expressed regarding their experiences in America's public schools.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

The Implementation of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

How has culturally responsive pedagogy been implemented in classrooms with African American males? The studies under review revealed two primary strategies used to implement CRP in classrooms across the nation: lesson plans and classroom management. Lesson plans refer to the specific techniques teachers used to introduce knowledge to their students. These techniques ranged from having students use their home language to starting a stepping program. Classroom management, on the other hand, refers to the explicit and implicit rules that govern the environment, structure, and consequences of a particular classroom. According to the studies reviewed, CRP with African American students is best supported by a business-like style of classroom management. This style of classroom management is characterized by teachers using the first days of school to clearly define their rules and expectation to students as well as the subsequent consequences for rule violations. In this section, I will provide a description of CRP techniques discovered in this systemic review and discuss the outcomes of these CRP methods on students in those classrooms.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Action

Of the seven studies reviewed, six were written by independent researchers and one was written by the teachers who actually implemented the CRP technique. The elementary, middle, and high school classrooms observed in these studies were largely comprised of African American students. Many live in low income or urban communities and qualify for free or reduced priced lunch. The teachers varied in race (i.e. White, Black, and Asian) and years of teaching experience. While some were novice teachers, others had over 40 years of teaching experience. Most of the data in these studies was collected via observation and interviews with the teachers. The following instructional strategies were implemented by various teachers across the U.S. with African American students: home language, parent residency program, poetry, metaphors, stepping, and text talk.

The study by Ladson-Billings is a systematic review of years of research conducted by the author. The purpose of this study is to describe CRP and argue for its centrality in the academic success of African Americans and other marginalized students in our education system. Ladson-Billings has been studying CRP with African American students since the early 1990s and shared the following case studies in her review.

Home language

In a sixth grade classroom, an English teacher encouraged her students to use their home language while speaking and completing written assignments. In exchange, students were required to translate their communications to Standard

English. As a result, the students learned to improve their use of both languages (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Parent residency program

A veteran teacher of 40 years, created a parent residency program to engage her students' parents. This program allowed parents to come to her classroom for one or two hours a visit for two to four days. The parents taught students an activity related to their craft. For example, one parent known for her sweet potato pies taught students to make pie crusts. Afterwards, the students were required to conduct additional assignments on the learned activity, such as taste tests, researching requirements to become a chef, and developing a marketing plan to sell the pies. This program helped students understand the foundation of various crafts and the acquisition of knowledge. They also gained appreciation for their station in life (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Poetry

Twelve years of teaching in various public and private schools inspired one teacher to demonstrate CRP by using non-offensive, student selected rap songs to teach them about poetry. Once the students performed the song, she reproduced the lyrics on an overhead projector. Discussions on the literal and figurative meanings within the lyrics, rhyme scheme, alliteration, and onomatopoeia were facilitated. As a result, the students' understanding of poetry far exceeded the state department of education and the local school district's requirements (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Metaphors

The study by Stairs is a description of the implementation of CRP with African American students. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the value of implementing CRP in urban classrooms. The author observed two White teachers educate a predominately African American classroom of students on the Harlem Renaissance. Following her observations, Stairs interviewed each teacher about his or her experience implementing the CRP technique.

More specifically, two student teachers taught a lesson they called "Metaphor and Poetry in the Harlem Renaissance" (Stairs, 2007). They began the lesson by asking the students to define the words metaphor, simile, and renaissance. They were also asked to note what comes to mind as they consider the word Harlem. Students were asked to share their experiences with the entire class. Second, lines from rap songs were written on an overhead projector and students had to determine if the text was a metaphor, simile, or neither. Thirdly, students discussed their responses to the word Harlem. Fourth, students were given a handout of the 1920s hotspots in Harlem and a paragraph describing rebirth of the area. This lesson was enhanced by the playing of classical jazz music reminiscent of the 1920s. Finally, they studied biographies and several poems by Langston Hughes. The teachers also incorporated their own personal histories into the lesson. Consequently, the students had fun and developed a deeper understanding of the Harlem Renaissance, metaphors, and similes.

Stepping

The study by Hastie, Martin, and Buchanan is an evaluation of the praxis or combination of action and reflection used by people to understand and transform their worlds. The purpose of this study is to examine two Anglo-American teachers' understanding of their praxis as they implement CRP with African American students. The authors of this study were also the teachers of the classroom studied. The authors carefully planned the CRP curriculum and participated in debriefing interviews and reflection sessions. The classroom was comprised of 42, 6th grade boys and girls who attended a largely African American elementary school. The CRP technique was implemented as follows.

Two teachers introduced the art of stepping to a physical education class. Students were, first, shown video demonstrations of the African American dance genre. Then, they were allowed to get into self-selected groups and instructed to create a stepping routine to present before the entire class. The teachers empowered the kids by showing them steps, encouraging them to create their own steps, and helping them work as a team with their group members. This program garnered a school wide phenomenon. The students in this class gained celebrity status within the school as other students in the school as well as the school's administration admired their stepping routines. Although these routines were to be originally performed before each other, some groups were allowed to perform their routine during the graduation ceremony (Hastie, Martin, & Buchanan, 2006).

Text talk.

The study by Conrad, Gong, Sipp, and Wright, is an evaluation of tape recorded classroom room activities involving a strategy called 'Text Talk.' The purpose of this study is to link CRP with Text Talk as a means to bolster students' reading comprehension skills. While the article did not provide demographics for the teachers and students, the author stated that three, culturally diverse, 2nd grade classrooms were tape recorded. One of these classrooms was in an urban school, one was a rural school, and one was at a university-affiliated laboratory school.

Desiring to improve the reading comprehension and oral language skills of their culturally diverse students, three experienced 2nd grade teachers set out to combine Text Talk with CRP. Text Talk is a teaching technique where teachers read selected books aloud to their students and pause at predetermined points in the story to ask the students carefully planned questions and/or facilitate vocabulary activities that focus on the book's main ideas. (Conrad, Gong, Sipp, & Wright, 2004).

In order to connect the students to the book's plot, teachers were careful to avoid showing the students any illustrations that were in the books until they finished reading it. This way, they would not interfere with the student's natural ability to apply meaning to the story. To enhance students' insights, the teachers asked open-ended questions, such as "Can you say more?" or "Does anyone have anything else to add?" (Conrad et. al, 2004, p.189). In the finally step to implementing Text Talk, teachers highlighted three vocabulary words from the

story and used their words in vocabulary exercises, such as vocal repetition, using the word to answer verbal questions, and journaling. Any brief response from a student was met with encouragement to expand the response. Regardless of the school's setting, all students reportedly exhibited significant improvements in their literacy skills as well as "a deeper appreciation and respect for others and for themselves," (Conrad et. al, 2004).

Management strategies

The studies by Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, and Hambacher; Brown; and Ware provide descriptions of how various teachers created culturally responsive environments in their urban classrooms. While Bondy et al. (2007) set out to demonstrate methods teachers use to facilitate success and resilience in African American students, the purpose of Brown (2003) is to describe classroom management strategies used by urban teachers throughout the U.S. and of Ware (2006) is to contribute to the research on teaching strategies of African American teachers and to corroborate the teaching strategies of the two case study teachers with those noted in the literature on Black teachers. Although the focus of these studies varied, they all shared a common purpose: to highlight effective strategies for creating safe and successful learning environments for African American students. Thus, the classrooms observed in these studies were mostly comprised of African American students from low income communities. And despite their differences, these studies returned reciprocal results, which are discussed below.

In order to create culturally responsive classrooms where students and teachers collaboratively work together and learning is genuine, teachers in studies conducted by

Bondy et al. (2007), Brown (2003), and Ware (2006) cared for their students, used assertiveness and authority to interact with their students, and genuinely communicated with them. Care was demonstrated as teachers showed interest in building a richer relationship with students. For example, teachers asked students about their families, made efforts to interact with students outside the school setting, played social games, and developed trustworthy relationships with the students' families. Assertiveness and authoritativeness was employed to create a business-like classroom environment that facilitated actual learning. Thus, teachers made it a point to clearly state their expectations to their students, consistently hold students accountable to these expectations, and immediately corrected bad behaviors. Finally, genuine communication was achieved by being aware of the verbal and nonverbal communication styles of their students' respective cultures, accepting these communication styles, and planning classroom activities accordingly.

Moreover, Howard and Terry (2011) illustrates the strategies used by UCLA's Sunnyside GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), which were designed to close the gap between African American students and their White counterparts. GEAR UP provided holistic support to the students of Sunnyside High School via in-class and afterschool tutoring, study skills preparation, California High School Exit Exam preparation, SAT and ACT preparation, CAT-6 test preparation, and workshops educating parents about advocacy and teachers and students about college requirements. Prior to the GEAR UP program, less than 10% of Sunnyside's graduating seniors enrolled in four year universities. Implementation of the program led to several impressive outcomes for African American students. Their

enrollment increased in Advanced Placement Algebra I and II, Geometry, Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Chemistry, and Physics. For example, the percentage of tenth graders taking geometry increased 42 percentage points from 23% to 65% from one school year to the next. Likewise, 85% of African American students who received tutoring for the exit exam passed the test, contributing to the largest graduating class Sunnyside had had in ten years. In addition, the number of African American students enrolling in four year universities doubled from the previous year. Nine, including six African American males, were offered admission to UCLA despite its rigorous admissions process.

Which outcomes resulted from the implementation of CRP in classrooms? Many outcomes resulted from the implementation of CRP in classrooms. Perhaps, the most important outcome was the creation of socially and psychologically safe learning environments for African American students. With the gap bridged between their home and school lives, the students in the case studies above were academically engaged. They were able to genuinely connect to the lesson plans presented to them, which resulted in a greater understanding of the material being taught. The implementation of CRP in classrooms, also, led to enriching, mutually respectful relationships between the students and their teachers. Teachers maintained their culturally sensitive approach to these students by demonstrating that they cared for the students and expecting them all to succeed academically. They also directly communicated their expectations of the students on the first day of school and enforced their consequences with haste. In return, the students were clear about the rules to which they were to adhere and the consequences of any violation of the rules. Unconcerned with assimilating to the cultural norms of the White, middle class helped these students feel acceptance and nurturance from their

teachers. In other words, they demonstrated respect to their authority figures. Finally, African American students proved that they can excel academically if given the appropriate circumstances. In the examples of CRP methods described above, researchers mentioned that the students improved their knowledge and skills in the subject studied (i.e. reading comprehension and oral language skills). However, the specifics of these improvements were not reported. The GEAR UP program, on the other hand, with its report of empirical data, such as increased graduation rates and enrollment in Advanced Placement courses, provides a strong argument for the widespread implementation of CRP in America's schools.

The Perceptions of African American Male Students

What are African American males' own perceptions about their educational experiences? As previously mentioned, research on the academic achievement of Black males has largely focused on the barriers to educating these students and the recommended pedagogy and classroom practices for improving their educational outcomes. Consequently, research presents a solid argument for why this problem exists and how to address it; but, it has failed to cause widespread change in America's education policies or to systematize its recommendations in public schools across the nation. The academic achievement of Black males is a complex issue. Given the inconsistent national statistics on the educational attainment of Black males, the range of within group achievement amongst Black males, the socio-political nature of this problem, and the various ways to implement CRP, the development of an effective policy on educating these students seems nearly impossible. There is simply more to be understood regarding this problem.

To date, research on the perceptions that African American male students have regarding their educational experiences remains limited. Thus, the purpose of this section is to synthesize the perceptions that African American male students in four different qualitative studies expressed regarding their educational experiences (see Appendix B). Of the four studies reviewed, all were written by university professors who worked in their school's African American Studies, Counseling, or Curriculum and Instruction departments. The research participants in each study were high school aged, African American male students who were academically successful. Only one of the studies investigated the perceptions of African American males attending high school in an affluent area; the other studies focused on Black students attending urban schools. Most of the data in these studies was collected via focus groups and interviews with the students.

The study by Gayles compares two groups of high achieving African American male high school seniors and the degree to which their achievement is influenced by negative stereotypes and ideas of racial group membership. Five African American male seniors whose GPAs were in the top 10% of their graduating class participated in this study. Three of these students attended a high school in a non-affluent area and two attended school in an affluent area. Similarly, the study by Graham and Anderson examines the interplay between the ethnic and academic identities of three academically gifted African American male students. The participants were two 17 year old and one 16 year old college bound high school honor students. Their school, historically Black and low achieving, was located in western North Carolina.

Likewise, the study by Tucker, Dixon, and Griddine explores how interpersonal mattering impacts the academic achievement of urban African American males who are academically successful in high school. Nine African American male students with grades of 'C' or better and without disciplinary records participated in the study. Their school was located in a large Midwestern city. Finally, the study by West-Olatunji, Baker, and Brooks reports the attitudes of African American adolescent males regarding their schooling experiences. The participants consisted of eight, African American males, aged 14-16. Their school was located in a major southern city. Translating these studies into each other required identification of phrases and themes that appeared frequently throughout all the studies. The following themes emerged throughout the reviewed articles: school culture ignores my Blackness; my teachers do not care about me; and support from school officials is unreliable. The discussion of these themes contains the language used by the authors of the reviewed studies.

Theme I: My Blackness Is Not Always Included in My School's Culture

Each of the studies reviewed presented a discussion on whether or not its participants felt that their home culture was included in their school's culture. In Graham and Anderson (2008) and West-Olatunji et. al (2006), all of the participants reported that their Blackness is invisible to their teachers and other school officials. According to Graham and Anderson (2008, p. 484),

> [The participants in their study] were cognizant racism existed in their schools and communities, and they possessed strong beliefs educational attainment was the best way to overcome this adversity. None of the participants in this investigation contended school reinforced beliefs learned at home. They felt schools often encouraged them to be invisible and silent rather than visible.

West-Olatunji et. al (2006) reported similar perceptions from the participants in their study. The findings from their study led them to conclude that

> In the school setting, [respect for African American males] not only competes with the charge of the school where other forms of cultural capital are valued, but is often negated within the context of Western notions of teaching and learning (p. 7).

In the study conducted by Gayles, participants reported different opinions on the subject. Regarding the study participants who attended the non-affluent school, Gayles (2006) found that

> As Black students, the "racial" nature of Benjamin validated them as racialized students. Although Benjamin is clearly perceived in a racialized manner by those outside its doors, race was not as relevant for the students at Benjamin since most students at Benjamin were a member of some ethnic group (p.26).

Thus, the sense of belonging that these students felt at school with their ethnic group was comforting and pleasing to them. On the contrary, Gayles (2006) found that race was not a factor in the school life of the study participants from the affluent school. According to Gayles (2006, p. 27), these students did "not primarily regard themselves, nor do they believe they are primarily regarded, as racialized or as Black." In other words, these two participants adamantly asserted that their academic achievement has nothing to do with the culturally responsive climate within their school. They felt just as valued as the any other student in their predominantly White school.

Unlike the conclusions drawn by Gayles (2006), Graham and Anderson (2008), and West-Olatunji (2006), Tucker et. al (2010) reported that their participants felt that their "teachers and administrators and the counselor have more time to get to know [them] on an individual, personal basis" (p.139). The amount of attentiveness displayed by these school officials was found to be vital to the academic success of these

participants. However, please note that these participants were enrolled in a specially designed public school whose mission is to reduce high school drop out by engaging at-risk students in vocational and college preparatory programs.

Overall, the current investigation found that the perceptions of African American male students who attend the typical public school are consistent with existing research. They agree that their racial and ethnic identities are excluded and, oftentimes, ignored within the school setting. Clearly, this finding was obvious in the studies conducted by Graham and Anderson (2008) and West-Olatunji et. al (2006). Their participants spoke openly about the racism within their schools and the pressure to assimilate to Eurocentric norms for teaching and learning. Gayles (2006), however, returned interesting results. All participants in this study reported feeling cohesion with their school's culture. But, their rationales were quite different. In the non-affluent school, the students' Blackness was affirmed by the mere racial composition of the school, not by any effort put forth from school officials to connect their home and school cultures. On the contrary, students attending the affluent school stated that their Blackness was not included in their school's culture. They felt valued by their school as individuals and failed to comprehend the researcher's investigation into how racial mismatches in the school setting affects the academic achievement of Black males. Perhaps then, the key to enhancing the academic achievement of Black males lies not in the school's ability to incorporate their cultural and racial norms, but in helping them to feel valued as human beings.

Theme II: My Teachers Do Not Have High Expectations for My Success

Consistent with findings from recent research (Sheppard, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008), these studies found that African American male students perceived that their teachers have low expectations for their academic success. Participants in Gayles (2006), Graham and Anderson (2008) and West-Olatunji et. al (2006) spoke openly about their teachers' perceptions of them. The following statements were made by participants in Gayles (2006, p.23):

> [Participant 1]: Basically, when people think of academic achievement and Black people they think of failure because most Black people don't succeed like White people do.
>
> [Participant 2]: Being loud. Always jumping around disturbing class…or making bad grades…I get that…or they're violent, those Black guys are violent.
>
> [Participant 3]: Usually stupid, usually just good at sports, education isn't their field.

Likewise, Graham and Anderson (2008, p. 487), concluded that

> These participants understood schools were a microcosm of society and, consequently, reflected people's diverse beliefs…. These participants believed the "Academy" (i.e. academia) thought very little of them as African Americans.

And, West-Olatunji et. al (2006) reported similar perceptions from the participants in their study. In fact, one participant commented that

> [My teacher] used to call ya dumb. You know, instead of trying to help the child, she used to call you dumb (p. 7).

Contrary to the findings in Gayles (2006), Graham and Anderson (2008), and West-Olatunji (2006), Tucker et. al (2010) reported that several of these participants, when discussing their experiences at other schools, perceived their teacher to have nonchalant attitudes about their success. However, when discussing their experiences at

their current school, "all of the students mentioned feeling that the teachers, counselor, and principal at this school have high expectations for their academic success (p. 140). Again, these students attended a school specifically designed to address the needs of at-risk students. Therefore, one would expect their teachers to have high expectations for their academic success. If not, the school would fail to fulfill its mission.

The predominant finding regarding this theme is that African American male students believe that their teachers expect them to fail in their academic pursuits. Many reported feeling hurt, saddened, and angered by their teachers' negative view of them. While some participants in these studies responded to their teachers' low expectations with a heightened determination to succeed, others succumbed to the negativity by performing poorly in school. Thus, the perceptions that teachers have towards these students seem to play an important role in their academic performance. While some Black male students are resilient enough to combat the negative stereotypes placed on them, others would be much more motivated to succeed academically if their teachers believed in their abilities to learn.

Theme III: Support from School Officials Is Unreliable

Throughout this investigation, each study found that African American male students greatly appreciated the care and encouragement received from their support system. A support system refers to the group of individuals who encourage, help, comfort, or guide a person towards achieving their goals. Unfortunately, these studies revealed that teachers, principals, and school counselors were not perceived to be reliable

supporters of African American males and their educational pursuits. One participant in Gayles (2006, p. 24), for example, stated:

> I'm trying to prove that we are trying to succeed basically because we are tired of being looked at like, "Oh, they gonna do bad. Just might as well just prepare not to get any work from him. Prepare for lousy grades."

Likewise, in Graham and Anderson (2008), many of the participants identified their parents, pastors, and their own determination to succeed as their main motivators for academic success. Even the parents of these participants weighed in on the issue by pushing them to work harder than students of other races as well as Black females. The parents and students mutually agreed that due to the negative stereotypes about Black men, a) life is tougher on Black men, b) "Ain't nobody out there looking out for you, trying to help you" (p. 489), and c) individuality is vital to the success of a Black man.

Findings from West-Olatunji et. al (2006) revealed similar sentiments. One participant commented, "Well, at my school it is terrible because we have some ignorant teachers 'cause I got all White teachers. And, because we have this one Black teacher she listens to me" (p. 6). Another said that "My teacher hates me" (p. 6). And, a third participant was unsure whether he felt supported by his teachers. "Most of my teachers like me," he says. "I can't tell about my Spanish teacher. Won't know if she likes me or not. She messed up my report card though" (6).

Again, unlike the findings in Gayles (2006), Graham and Anderson (2008), and West-Olatunji (2006), Tucker et. al (2010) found that their participants were satisfied with the level of support they received at school. In fact, their participants credited the combined support they received from home and school with the performance anxiety they felt about being successful students. One participant stated that "he would probably be

much less successful in school if he did not have 'somebody I can talk to who can keep me motivated' (p. 140). Two other participants described their "counselor as being vigilant, genuine, and proactive in her intentions with them" (p. 139). And, another explained:

> If I'm ever off the mark one day, even if small stuff is off, teachers here notice. They'll ask me what's going on, why I said what I did. That's one of the main things here (p. 140).

Clearly, African American male students desire to be genuinely supported by their teachers, counselors, and principals. Tucker et. al (2006) shows that they thrive off of school support. Having a strong support system seems to assuage so many of the stressors these students face inside and outside the school setting. Still, this study found that the overriding perception of African American students is that they do not receive the encouragement, warmth, and support they would like to have from adults within their schools.

The Interplay between CRP and Student Perceptions

What is the interplay between the implementation of CRP and the perceptions of African American male students about their educational experiences? The present study revealed multiple ways that CRP has been implemented in classrooms with African American male students. Each CRP method detailed in this report was different from each other in terms of its objective, required tasks, materials, human resources, and level of creativity. Nevertheless, all of these methods were responsive to the perceptions this study found African American male students to have regarding their school experiences. Results from the comparison and contrast of the implementation of CRP with the perceptions of African American male students confirms that CRP is an effective strategy

for remedying the concerns these students have voiced about the public education system and for teaching them. I will now discuss how CRP mitigates these concerns.

Although data used in this study indicates that African American males perceive their Blackness to be excluded from their school environment, CRP, by definition, calls for schools to align its teaching methods with the home environment of its students of color. This CRP requirement was illustrated in the CRP methods discussed above. For example, given that Blacks have a particular way of communicating in their homes, the teacher in the home language method instructed her students to use this language to complete assignments. Also, lyrics from rap music, which is very popular in urban communities, were used to teach students about poetry, metaphors, similes, and much more. And, two teachers introduced the art of stepping, an African American genre of dance, to their students. Thus, CRP is respectful and inclusive of these students Blackness.

In addition, while data used in this study shows that African American males perceive their teachers to have low expectations for their success, the implementation of CRP also mandates that teachers have high expectations for their students' success. Teachers in the CRP methods presented in this report demonstrated their confidence in their students' ability to succeed academically. First, the fact that these teachers chose to implement a CRP method in their classroom implies that they believe these students can succeed if provided with an appropriate learning environment. Second, the text talk method was specifically designed to enhance the reading comprehension and oral language skills of their culturally diverse students. Teachers in these classrooms demonstrated their high expectations for their students' success by 1) being careful not to

interfere with the students' natural ability to apply meaning to the story being read aloud; 2) encouraging the students to deepen their insights into a story's plot; and 3) refusing to allow students to provide short answers to questions posed about the story. Thirdly, the implementation of the parent residency program helped students understand the foundation of various crafts and the acquisition of knowledge. Given the power that knowledge holds, these students were further challenged to expand their understanding of how to succeed in various occupations by the assignment of additional tasks, such as the development of marketing plans. Thus, the effort exerted by these teachers to implement CRP in their classrooms is indicative of the academic success they believe their students can obtain.

Finally, data used in this study revealed that African American males do not believe they get reliable support from officials at their schools. CRP, again, is dedicated to providing students of color with the support they need to be academically successful. Whether it was the CRP lesson using home language; the parent residency program, rap music to teach poetry and metaphors; stepping; or text talk, teachers in these classrooms were attentive, encouraging, and respectful of the learning needs of their students. Moreover, the aforementioned discussion on culturally responsive classroom management strategies also depict ways in which CRP excels in getting teachers to provide support to their students of color. These teachers engaged in collaborative working relationships with their students. Care, assertiveness, authority, and genuine communication are the cornerstones of these teacher-student relationships. Consequently, African American students were able to enjoy the benefits of a safe and successful learning environment.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Over 30 years of research on the educational disparities of African American male students has done very little to guide educators, politicians, and others concerned towards improving the educational experiences of these students. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to add to the knowledge that policymakers, educators, and concerned others have regarding the academic achievement gap of African American male students. The desired outcome was to describe the interplay between CRP and the perceptions African American males have towards their educational experiences in order to aid in education policy reform aimed at closing the gap. However, the current study found that formulating education policies that effectively address the achievement needs of African American male students is a complex task. There are many reasons for the complexity of this task.

One reason the task is so complex is that statisticians disagree on whether or not African American males are dropping out of school at alarming rates. Widely accepted as accurate and official, NCES publications, such as the *Digest of Education Statistics and The Condition of Education,* report that compared to their White counterparts, African American males are dropping out of school at alarming rates. In support of these NCES

publications, the Schott Foundation reports the national graduation rate for Black males is 47% and 78% for White males. Yet, another NCES publication, the NELS, purports that 68.3 % of Black males compared to 82.8% of White males in public secondary schools graduate from high school. Thus, given that the national graduation rate is 68%, regardless of a student's race, NELS statistics refute data suggesting that the public education system is failing African American male students. Still, despite these discrepant graduation rates, it is important to note that African American male students persistently underperform in any given educational measure. Without a clear consensus on the number of Black males who drop out of school, it is difficult for policymakers to define this problem and begin the policy formation process.

Another reason the task is so complex involves the interplay of personal and emotional, family, social and environmental, and school factors that affect the academic achievement of African American male students. At any moment in the school day, African American male students may be dealing with any combination of these factors. Nevertheless, research is limited in its ability to identify causal relationships between these factors and the academic underachievement of Black males. Given that the dynamics of human behavior is not an absolute science, policymakers can only use educated guesses to determine how the detrimental effects of these factors are specifically triggered by the school environment. Once the school's role in the academic performance of Black males has been reasonably identified, policies to eliminate the school's role in this problem may be created.

Please note, however, that education policy reform is not the only solution to this problem. Education policy reform will not prevent these students from sabotaging their

own academic potential. It will not eliminate the negative stereotypes that some teachers possess towards their African American male students. It cannot mandate that parents, mentors, friends, and others interested provide reliable support to African American male students' educational pursuits. Nor can it remediate some of the neighborhood effects of poverty. Education policy reform, however, does have the power to make improvements in the role that the public education system contributes to the Black/White achievement gap.

According to existing research, CRP is an effective strategy for educating African American male students. Again, it is not an avocation for the resegregation of our public schools. Rather, its purpose is to enhance the cultural awareness and responsiveness teachers have of their students of color. The more cultural competence teachers possess, the better they are able to understand, relate, teach, and express care towards their culturally different students. Yet, prior to this study, little to no research existed regarding the perception that African American males students have of CRP. Results from this study indicate that CRP is an effective strategy for remedying the concerns these students have voiced about the public education system and for teaching them. Since the results confirm that African American male students thrive best in school when they feel respected, supported, and psychologically safe, I propose that education policies be revised to incorporate the following recommendations:

1. Encourage school administrators and teachers to infuse their school environment and lesson plans with culturally responsive pedagogy.
2. Allow and support teachers in their efforts to collaborate with their students' parents on the execution of classroom activities.

3. Encourage teachers to complete a specified number of continuing education units on working with diverse populations. Perhaps, education officials can create a process whereby teachers may obtain special certification to work with racially and culturally different students.
4. Require preservice teachers to demonstrate their competency to work with racially and culturally different students prior to successfully finishing their teacher training program.
5. Mandate or support school counselors to spend 10% of their work week counseling low-achieving students on their poor academic performance.

Existing research on the achievement gap has been aimed primarily at understanding causes for the gap and finding solutions to close it. Decades of research has identified CRP as the most effective teaching method for educating African American males. Nevertheless, given the barriers involved in educating these students, advancements in research have yet to result in widespread education policy reform. The current research highlights the need for educators to be aware of the cultural cues displayed by their students so that they may better understand their students' behavior, identify their requirements for the acquisition of knowledge, and teach them. By investing in relationship building with their students, teachers will have the opportunity to show their students that they care about them. Hopefully, the aforementioned policy recommendations can assist policymakers in formulating policies that will close the gap.

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APPENDIX A

STUDIES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

Author(s)	Title of Article	Purpose of Study	Methodology	CRP Technique	CRP Outcomes	Teachers	Students	Location	Findings
Bondy, E., Ross, D., Gallingane, C., & Hambacher, E.	Creating environments of success and resilience: Culturally responsive classroom management and more.	To demonstrate methods teachers use to facilitate success and resilience in African American students	Videotape and interview data; inductive data analysis approach	Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (i.e. developing relationships, being insistent, & using culturally responsive communication)	Academic engagement, psychological safety, respect for authority, cooperative teacher-student relationships	1 European American, 3rd grade teacher, beginning her 2nd year of teaching; 1 Asian American, 5th grade teacher, beginning her 2nd year of teaching; 1 African American, 2nd grade teacher, beginning her 4th year of teaching;	90% receive free/reduced priced lunch and are African American	Not provided	Teachers used CRCM strategies to create positive psychological environments that supported resilience and achievement
Brown, D.	Urban teachers' use of culturally responsive management strategies.	To describe classroom management strategies used by urban teachers throughout the U.S.	Interviews	Classroom management (i.e. caring, getting to know students individually, assertive leadership and demeanor, effective communication	Academic engagement, psychological safety, respect for authority, cooperative teacher-student relationships	13 teachers: 2 middle school & 2 high school teachers from Philadelphia, 1 elementary teacher from New York City, 1 elementary teacher from Chicago, 1 high school teacher from Chicago, 2 intermediate teachers from San Francisco, 1 middle school teacher from Minneapolis, 1 high school teacher from Wichita, 1 elementary teacher from Los Angeles, 1 high school teacher from Los Angeles	urban students of multiple races (Black, Hispanic, Asian); economically impoverished communities	Philadelphia, Chicago, New York City, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Wichita, Los Angeles	Genuineness, assertiveness, mutual respect for students provide students with opportunities for academic success
Conrad, N., Gong, Y., Sipp, L., Wright, L.	Using text talk as a gateway to culturally responsive teaching.	To link CRP with a strategy called Text Talk as a means to bolster students' reading comprehension	Tape recorded classroom activity	Text talk (focused read alouds), Journaling	Improved reading comprehension, improved oral language skills	Not provided	3 2nd grade classrooms; student demographics unknown	1 urban school, 1 rural school, 1 university-affiliated laboratory school	Text Talk was recommended as a gateway to CRP

Hastie, P.A., Martine, E., & Buchanan, A.M.	Stepping out of the norm: an examination of praxis for a culturally-relevant pedagogy for African American children.	To examine two Anglo-American teachers' understanding of their praxis as they implement CRP with African American students	Planned curriculum, debriefing interviews, reflection sessions	Stepping	Academic engagement, teacher-student cooperation,	1 White male and 1 White female teacher as researchers	42 boys and girls	rural, K-6th elementary school, largely African American	The teachers felt uneasy about their teaching role. They suggest that teachers be concerned about sociopolitical dimension of student work
Ladson-Billings, G.	But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy.	To describe CRP and argue for its centrality in the academic success of African Americans and other marginalized students	Self-report narrative	Home language, Parent residency program, Poetry	Improvements in use of home language & Standard English, hands-on experience various crafts, deeper understanding of poetry	1 African American female, 1 White female, 1 White female described as "culturally Black"	low income, largely African American; specifics unknown	Not provided	A solid argument was made for the successfulness of CRP with African Americans
Stairs, A.J.	Culturally responsive teaching: The Harlem Renaissance in an urban class.	To demonstrate the value of implementing CRP in urban schools	observations interviews	Metaphor and Poetry	Academic Engagement, Parental inclusion, psychological safety	1 Anglo American female, 1 Anglo American male; former students of author	28, racially diverse 9th graders	Boston High School; 1200 students: 46.3% African American, 39.7% Hispanic; 8.3% White, 5.4% Asian; low income community; 75% receive free/reduced priced lunch	CRP motivates and engages urban high school students

Ware, F.	Warm demander pedagogy: Culturally responsive teaching that supports a culture of achievement for African American students.	to contribute to the research on teaching strategies of African American teachers and to corroborate the teaching strategies of the two case study teachers with those noted in the literature on Black teachers	Observations, Interviews, case studies	Warm Demander Pedagogy	Cooperative teacher-student relationships, Academic Engagement, acquired computer skills, parental and community involvement	2 African American teachers; one retired, one in midst in career	Not provided	1 inner city school in lowest SES section of district; 1 mixed income school	Both teachers studied were found to be warm demanders

APPENDIX B

STUDIES ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

Author(s)	Title of Article	Purpose of Study	Methodology	Students	Location	Findings
Gayles, J.	"Carrying it for the whole race": Achievement, race, and meaning among five high achieving African American men	To compare two groups of high achieving African American male high school seniors and the degree to which their achievement is influenced by negative stereotypes and ideas of racial group membership	Unstructured interviews and observations	5 African American male seniors with GPAs in the top 10% of their graduating class; all attended same high school all 4 years; home-school continuity	1 non-affluent high school; 1 affluent high school;	All were aware of negative stereotypes; non-affluent students were motivated to disprove the stereotypes through educational accomplishments; affluent students felt exempt from the stereotypes while at school
Graham, A. & Anderson, K.A.	"I have to be three steps ahead": Academically gifted African American male students in an urban high school on the tension between an ethnic and academic identity	To examine the interplay between the ethnic and academic identities of three academically gifted African American male students	Micro-ethnography; Case study	2 17 year old seniors; 1 16 year old high school student; all college bound honor students	Historically Black, low achieving high school in western North Carolina	Participants valued education and its associated benefits; "Blackness" is a vital part of their academic identity; persons closest to them were credited for teaching them
Tucker, C., Dixon, A., & Griddine, K.	Academically successful African American male urban high school students' experiences of mattering to others at school	To explore how interpersonal mattering impacts the academic achievement of urban African American males who are academically successful in high school	Interviews and focus groups	9 African American male students with grades of "C" or better and without disciplinary records	A large Midwestern city	Students identified mattering to others at school, family support, and having a personal drive as factors for their academic success
West-Olatunji, C.A., Baker, J.C. & Brooks, M.	African American adolescent males: Giving voice to their educational experiences	To determine African American adolescent male participants' attitudes regarding their schooling experiences	Focus group	8 African American males age 14-16 years old	A major southern city	Students communicated the lack of respect they received at school