The Effects of Ethnic and Gender Specific Curricula When Used as a Targeted Reform Strategy to Improve Academic Achievement and Promote Post-Secondary Matriculation of African American Male Adolescents

Ona R Powell
The Effects of Ethnic and Gender Specific Curricula When Used as a Targeted Reform Strategy to Improve Academic Achievement and Promote Post-Secondary Matriculation of African American Male Adolescents

Ona Powell
Spring 2011
Final Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Academic Scholarly Requirements for CI 5390
The Effects of Ethnic and Gender Specific Curricula be Used as a Targeted Reform Strategy to Improve Academic Achievement and Promote Post-Secondary Matriculation of African American Male Adolescents

With the passing of Brown vs. the Board of Education and the subsequent Civil Rights Movements of the 1960’s, it was perceived that African Americans would be afforded the inalienable right of an adequate and equal education. Although many African Americans took advantage of this right, and excelled both educationally and economically, others fell prey to erosion of the African American community and persistent stereotypical mental model of American society. Since garnering those monumental achievements, the academic achievement levels of African American boys have been in a steady decline, as those of African American girls have soared. To a certain degree the rationale behind this phenomenon remains an uncomfortable mystery, however, to those heavily invested in the future of the African American community it represents the slow erosion of an entire ethnic group. In recent years this perpetual downward spiral has prompted some school districts, and communities to take action in stopping this cycle by creating ethnic and gender specific curricula that segregate African American boys and integrate African American culture with traditional education.

Statement of the Research Question

The problem of this study was to identify reform strategies used in public education as a means of raising the motivation and academic achievement levels of African American male adolescents. Four research questions guided this study.

1. What factors, societal and educational, are contributing to the lack of educational motivation of African American adolescents?

2. What programs were put in place to assist African American adolescents who displayed a lack of academic motivation and low academic performance?
3. What types of professional development programs were used to support or train teachers working with the above-mentioned group of students?
4. What methods of teaching were designated best at assisting the above-mentioned group?

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was two-fold, with the first being an attempt to evaluate the body of knowledge regarding self-esteem and cultural mistrust among African American adolescent males, as well as, those issues that impact their academic motivation and academic success. The second purpose of this study was to evaluate the body of knowledge regarding education programs designed to promote cultural self-esteem, academic success, college preparation and secondary matriculation into post-secondary education for African American adolescent males.

Statement of Terminology

For the purposes of this paper, the primary author created the African American Outcome Expectancy Inventory. The African American Outcome Expectancy Inventory consist of two sections and 10 questions, which were used to measure what African American male adolescents expected to gain from completing school. The questions ranged from expected income potential, self and ethnic identity, and racial discrimination avoidance (Hudley & Irving, 2005). The instrument was designed to gauge how young African American males perceived their place in society, and how that perception guided their life decisions. Additionally, the instrument gave validity to their feelings of disenfranchisement and the marginality in both academia and society.
Much like the above mention instrument, The Cultural Mistrust Inventory was also used to give credence to residual effects of societal oppression and its impact on the psyche of African American male adolescents. This instrument consist of a 48-item measure, which assess the degree to which African Americans trust both the intentions and actions of whites and majority culture institutions (Terrell, & Terrell, 1981). This instrument was used to quantitative and qualitative weight to a formerly undocumented phenomenon within the African American community. In using this instrument, the authors were able to articulate the thought process, in terms of outcome, to those outside of the African American community.

Chaos Theory holds that the behavior of dynamical systems are highly sensitive to initial conditions, and small changes to the initial conditions would yield widely divergent outcomes, rendering long term prediction impossible. This phenomenon is also referred to as the butterfly effect (Polite, 1994). Originally used in the sciences, this theory gave voice to the chaos engulfing African American male adolescents in academia. For the purposes of this study, the author was able to chart a trajectory for academic failure for African American male adolescents warehoused in marginal schools.

**Review of Literature**

The literature used in this review focuses on four key topics regarding targeted reform strategy to improve academic achievement and promote post-secondary matriculation among African American male adolescents. These topics were (a) factors, societal and educational, are contributing to the lack of educational motivation of African American adolescents,(b) programs in place to assist African American adolescents who displayed a lack of academic motivation and
Factors, societal and educational, are contributing to the lack of educational motivation of African American adolescents

In the article, The Trouble with Black Boys: The Role and Influence of Environmental and Cultural Factors on the Academic Performance of African American Males, author Pedro Noguera (2003) conducted a ground theory design study in which he hypothesized that structural racism, fueled by negative stereotyping of African American males negatively affects their academic performance. According to Noguera (2003), the decline of academic achievement among African American males began in 1977, on the post-secondary level, and thus created a trickle-down effect on to the secondary level. Their educational decline parallels the decline of the African American community as well. With the collapse of the African American family, and subsequently, the African American community, these boys were essential left without same gender role models. Thus, society was left to teach them what is expected of African American males. This left them as prey for stereotypical thinking and institutional marginalization (2003).

It was then assumed that school should provide a safe haven for these boys; however, the opposite has proven to be true. Rather than countering the effects of society’s outdated mental models, and provide a nurturing, secure environment, traditional schools tend mirror the society, in which they are constantly victims of stereotypical thinking and institutional marginalization (2003). Thus, their disinterest in the educational process and their rebellion against authority is to be expected, and the cultural mistrust is allowed to flourish. However, the author does suggest that there is hope for African American males, and with careful consideration, and the cultivation
of a culturally nurturing environment. The author suggest that school districts, and communities can work to elevate low academic achievement amongst African American male adolescents by implementing ethnic and gender specific programs, which will also work to raise the self-esteem of the students in the process (2003).

The strength of this study was the fact that the author used multiple, related studies to reinforce his predictions and correlations. The threat to internal validity as found in the article was the lack of instrumentation. In lacking instrumentation, the study cannot be used as a primary source in research; however, it does work well as a secondary source to be used to as an opinion piece as to the causation of low academic performance amongst African American male adolescents. No threats to external validity were found in the study. Further literature review is needed to locate study related to the low academic performance and external factors that contain assessment data. No threats to internal or external validity were found in this study.

In 2005, authors Miles Anthony Hudley and Cynthia Irving published their findings in the study Cultural Mistrust, Academic Outcome Expectations, and Outcome Values among African American Adolescent Men. The authors conducted a correlational study to measure the relationship between outcome between cultural mistrust, academic outcome expectations and outcome values among African American male high school students. The study was conducted with a sample population consisting of a group of 75 African American male high school students, ranging from ninth to 12th grade, in attendance at an urban, multiracial Southern California school. The school was selected, not only for its multi-racial, but also for the diverse socio-economical and educational population makeup and its location in a lower-income community. In terms of instrumentation, Hudley, & Irving( 2005) used Francis and Sandra
Terrell’s 48-item measure, called the Cultural Mistrust Inventory, which assessed the degree to which African Americans trust both the intentions and actions of Whites and majority culture institutions. In an effort to tailor the instrument, the authors used the Jackson Social Desirability Scale, to remove items that would exemplify systematic bias ((Hudley, & Irving, 2005). In addition to removing said items, the authors also altered the language of the original four subscales, in favor of terminology that would be better understood by the sample population.

In order to assess outcome expectations and values, the authors used an adapted version of the African American Career Outcome Expectancy Inventory, designed by Irving. The authors divided it into two sections, each consisting of 10 questions, which were used to measure what the students expected to gain from completing high school (2005). The questions ranged from expected income potential, self and ethnic identity, and racial discrimination avoidance (2005). The questions were scored on a 10-point scale, from very unlikely to very important, with higher scores indicating a more optimistic expectation and a positive valuation (2005).

In accordance with ethical research procedure, the author obtained written permission from the students and their parents. Participants were then divided into groups of 10 to 15 students, and giving the assessment in a single 30-minute session, in a closed classroom. All data were collected by Irving.

In analyzing the data, the authors proved their hypothesis, that cultural mistrust was negatively related to both outcome expectations and outcome value (2005). They also proved that cultural mistrust and outcome value both predicted educational outcome expectations (2005). The authors were able to prove that a high level of cultural mistrust toward Whites and the majority culture institution were related to low outcome expectations and outcome values.
The authors suggested that cultural mistrust maybe used by African American male adolescents, and their adult counterparts, as a defense mechanism when faced with the threat of structural racism. Thus, in mistrusting the White power structure, African American males lower their expectations, as a means of protecting self-worth, when faced with the threat of failure resulting from structural racism and stereotype threat.

The strengths of this study were the use of multiple assessment, that were proven to be accurate in other related studies, the authors adjustment of the assessments to fit the sample population, and the strategies of inclusion of African American cultural values into the curriculum. Additional literature review is needed to examine the correlation between cultural mistrust and low expectation and academic outcome. No threats to internal or external validity were found in this study.

Vernon Polite (1994) conducted this longitudinal ethnographical study to better understand the phenomenon of low academic achievement that continues to African American adolescent males. This qualitative study was performed at a high school, for which the name was withheld, located in a predominately working-class suburb, located in the outskirts of a major metropolitan city. At on start of the article, the author give a brief history of the integration of the school, starting in 1970, and provides a short time line representative of the schools decline. Prior to integration, the school was predominately white and Jewish, as was the surrounding community, and was known for its academic excellence (Polite, 1994). As time went on a growing number of African American moved into the community, and in response, an equal amount of whites relocated out of the district (Polite, 1994). With it, the growing African American student body brought with it demands for cultural education, and protested until their demands were met (polite, 1994). The students were successful; however, the school acquired a
reputation of violence and discord. Within a 16-year time span, the school became predominately African American, and lost its status as a top tier school within the state (Polite, 1994). Given the schools swift spiral into chaos and it reputation; the author used the school to further investigate the growing trend of educational disfranchisement of African American male students. The author drew on elements of the chaos theory to explain how the actions, policies and procedures used by the school, parents and students contribute to the low academic achievement of African American adolescent males. The author, who was also an administrator and African American, used his bias to gain entrance into the environment as a non-obtrusive observer. From a population of 1,000 or more students, 115 African American male students in the 10th grade were choose to participate, as were their parents, and various members of the faculty and staff. After securing his sample population, author followed established research studies of Bogdan and Bilkelen, and preformed 600 hours of on-site observation, attended various African American sponsored cultural events and social activities within he school community (Polite,1994). The author continued followed the sample population through the remainder of their high school years, and then preformed a follow up at the 3rd year mark, during the populations first year of transition to adulthood.

In that three-year period, the author learned that although the student body was predominately African American, the majority of the teaching and administrative staff were white. The author also learned that the relatively small white population of the school, 9 %, represented the bulk of the honor students at the school. This led the author to devise interview questions, which included how the students perceived the teachers attitudes toward them, the availability of academic assistance and guidance (Polite, 1994). The then preformed a semistructred interview with 65 of the students, 35 teachers and staff, and 35 parents for a total of 242 interviews (Polite, 1994). In the article the author, give brief yet telling samples of some
of the interviews he conducted. During the course of the interviews, the author learned that the
students were allowed to choose their own course, without benefit or assistance of guidance
counselors, teacher or at times, parents. The author went on to find that school policy dictates
that the students would not be tracked into post-secondary or vocational classes, but left the
responsible on the students and their parents. In interviewing counselors and teachers, the author
found that they contributed not toward the education of African American male students, but
instead took a hands-off approach, in essence they practice avoidance schooling (Polite, 1994).
When he interviewed various parents, he found that many of the parents assumed that the
teachers were responsible for assisting the students in meeting graduation requirements, and
charting their post-secondary educational pursuits (Polite, 1994). Thus, it appeared that the
children were being left to their own devices, and were only taking the minimum requirements to
graduate, forgoing educational pursuits that they deem to hard or would place them on the post-
secondary tract (Polite, 1994).

In essences the parents relinquished their responsibilities concerning their sons’ education
to teachers and guidance counselor, who when interviewed by the author admitted to avoiding
schooling in that they did little if anything to assist these young men in obtaining high school
diplomas or attend college (Polite, 1994). They justified there incompetence, or rather lack of
concern by stating that policy allows the students and their parents to create class schedules, as
they do not want to be blamed for tracking African American students (Polite, 1994). Thus, the
blame is then shifted to students, parents and administrators.

In completing the study, many things were made evident to the author, and essentially his
hypothesis of method in madness was proven. African American adolescent males in urban
schools were using educationally detrimental tactics to survive chaotic school environments.
Avoidance schooling was directly affecting the educational environment of this group of African American male adolescents, as well as, placing their futures in jeopardy, as they were not academically prepared to enter college or attain professional employment (Polite, 1994).

The author found that several factors correspond to dissipating structures outlined in the chaos theory. The author outlines the break dissipating structures in the following way: parents of the students relinquishing their responsibility to the teachers and counselors, who then failed to demonstrate compassion, guidance and caring, to the administrators who failed provide appropriate leadership and internal control of their subordinates. Finally, it shifts to the students who, faltered to peer pressure in resisting schooling instead of seeking alternative support (Polite, 1994). This chain of unfortunate events set in place a disastrous outcome for these students and created a hostile, chaotic school environment, and ensures imminent failure.

A possible threat to internal validity was the author’s position as an administrator and the investigator, as this bias could have jeopardized the study, due to policy violations observed during his observation, and the potential for the subjects to modify their behavior in his presence. In this case, he was able to use his bias to gain access to the educational environment, and that he may not have had he not been an administrator. No threat to external validity were found, this phenomenon could occur in a number of public educational settings in a number of cities.

Programs in place to assist African American adolescents who displayed a lack of academic motivation and low academic performance

Like, Noguera, other education researchers, such as Bailey & Paisley (2004), believe that low levels of academic achievement among African American boys are directly linked to social
and economic problems within their communities, as well as, the stereotypical thinking of teachers and administrators. They also agreed that the school has the power to bolster their self-esteem and ignite their interest in education again, if the schools implement creative strategies to reverse this cycle (2004).

To illustrate their point, Bailey & Paisley used the grassroots initiative put forth by a community in Milwaukee, Wisconsin that grew tired of the low academic achievement rates of African American boys (2004). Along with the assistance of the Milwaukee school district, the community developed the African Immersion Schools, which focus on cultural identity development (2004). Along with the African Immersion Schools, they also implemented a number of ethnic and gender specific programs, to reach students at predominantly white schools, as have other school district around the United States (2004).

The strength of this study was the authors’ use of a strong example of gender and raced based education to reinforce their hypothesis. The threat to internal validity as found in the article was the lack of instrumentation. In lacking instrumentation, the study cannot be used as a primary source in research; however, it does work well as a secondary source. No threats to external validity were found in the study. Further literature review is needed to locate study related to the low academic performance and external factors that contain assessment data.

As in all intellectual matters, there is an opposing view. In the case of underachievement amongst African American boys, many researchers will agree that African American boys have been socialized to view themselves as inferior, however many researchers, such as Cooper & Jordan (2003), do not believe that ethnic and gender specific curricula can improve the academic achievement levels of African American boys. They believe that the achievement gap between
African American boys and other races and genders, have been exploited (2003). They believe that the educational system of this county has failed all children, with African American boys suffering slightly more due societal issues, which are out of their control (2003). Yet, instead of creating separate curricula for African American boys, school systems should invest comprehensive reform and in the recruitment of African American male teachers, who could serve as role models for the boys (2004).

The strengths of this study was the authors use of multiple, related studies to reinforce his predictions and correlations. The threat to internal validity as found in the article was the lack of instrumentation. In lacking instrumentation, the study cannot be used as a primary source in research; however, it does work well as a secondary source. No threats to external validity were found in the study. Further literature review is needed to locate study related to the low academic performance and external factors that contain assessment data.

As stated before, the rationale behind the low level of academic achievement among African American boys remains an uncomfortable mystery. Although all of the authors included in this review agreed that African American boys are at risk due to stereotypical thinking on the parts of teachers, administrators and society at large, they have varying opinions in terms of how to handle the situation. Thus, it will take further research to gain a clear and concise prospective on before reaching a viable solution.

Threats to internal validity for this study lie within the fact that the authors failed to provide data to support their claim of the exploitation of the underachievement of African American male adolescents. Thus, this article is largely an opinion piece, some suggestions about educational reform. No apparent threats to external validity were found.
In this article, authors Yasser Arafat Payne and Tara M. Brown hypothesized that African American adolescent males use street-life as a site of resilience in school as a survival tactic in low-income urban high schools. This study conceptualizes street life as a “site of resilience” in street-life-oriented African American adolescent males (Payne, 2008). A sites-of-resilience theoretical analysis argues that the streets offer particular psychological and physical spaces that operate in tandem to produce a site of strength, community, culture, and ultimately resilience for street-life-oriented Black men. Resilience in the context of sites-of-resilience theory is understood in terms of how the streets organize meaning around feeling well, satisfied, or accomplished as well as how the young men choose to survive in relation to adverse structural conditions. Street life is a phenomenological term essentially viewed by the young men as an ideology centered on personal and economic survival (Payne, 2001, 2006a, 2006b, 2008; Payne et al., 2009; Payne & Gibson, 2008). In order gather data for the this qualitative study the authors used a sample pool of 156 students chosen randomly from the streets of Harlem, New York City and Paterson, New Jersey. In accordance with the Internal Review Board, the researchers only included subjects ages 16 to 19, ranging from the 9th grade to the 12th grade and inclusive of all academic tracks offered in public school. In order obtain data for the study, the authors organized a monetarily compensated team of four African American men into the street team called the Participatory Action Research (PAR) team (Payne & Brown, 2010). After selection, the PAR team underwent a research methods workshop that consisted of four, three-hour session and training on literature reviews, data collection, qualitative analysis, writing contributions and professional presentations (Payne, & Brown, 2010). Upon successful completion of the research methods training class, the PAR team mapped out communities of interest, an classified them into three types: cool sites-low street activity, warm sites- moderate street activity, and hot sites-high street activities (Payne & Brown, 2010). Once the team completed labeling of the
community, they, along with the Payne and a community gatekeeper, went out to five zones classified as hot sites, to gain permission from the community and to begin data collection. The set up data collection centers on available street corners, schools, barber shops apartment buildings and participant residences. Each participant completed the Opportunity Gap Survey, a 142-item survey, which was designed to assess their attitudes on educational and economic opportunities in the United States, which included an additional 12 open-ended items to which the subjects supplied a written response, and completed either a personal interview or a group interview (Payne & Brown, 2010). Upon completion of the survey and an interview, the participates were compensated, ten dollars for the survey and twenty dollars for the interview, in addition to receiving an informed consent form and a resource package with employment and educational information (Payne & Brown, 2010).

After collecting the data, the principle investigator, Payne, and two members of the PAR team used content analysis to generate codes for this study. They developed the following five domains: Education/School, Socioeconomic, Social Structural, Attitudinal Affect and Phenomenology/Positionality. However, for this article only one domain, Education/School and its core codes, Student-Teacher and School-to-Prison Pipeline, were focused on. The coding session met twice a week over a three-week period, during which the principle investigator would review the dimensions of sites resilience and grounded theory frameworks and the beginning and end of the sessions. Four undergraduate African American students, with formal experience with PAR, interrater reliability and at least one criminal justice class, centered on urban African American males, as raters for the study (Payne & Brown, 2010). The raters met and went over the five transcripts each. Each rater was instructed to highlight all passages they deemed to be related to the codes given them. The transcripts were then averaged out against a
master copy, and reliability codes were then generated to create a subset of six codes and corresponding reliability alpha coefficients for core codes (Payne & Brown, 2010).

The results of the study were organized into a three-part holistic perspective on the educational experiences of street-life-oriented African American adolescent males enrolled in large low-income urban high schools (Payne & Brown, 2010). The authors found that although the young men in the study did participate in street-life culture they place high value on education, both secondary and post-secondary, as well as, attainment of professional occupations. Research also found a degree of cultural mistrust toward teachers and law enforcement stationed at school. An overwhelming amount of participants in the study found felt as though the punishments doled out to African American male students were excessive, and with regards to law enforcement, often physically violent. Thus, many of the participants felt as though school was not a place of safety, nor one of academic nurturing. The male participants felt that gender, in combination with their race, garnered a lack of respect and care from teachers, administrators and law enforcement. They young men felt that they were deemed uneducable, ignorant and inherently violent. Thus, the young men felt as though they were not prepared for post-secondary educational pursuits and professional occupational success (Payne & Brown, 2010). It would appear that the young men use skills learned outside of the school are being used as a coping mechanism.

Authors suggest that the background of African American adolescent males in urban environments be taken into account when researchers are seeking ways to promote academic engagement among the group. They go on to suggest that instead of focusing on punishment of the young men, educators should be looking for ways to intellectually engage the students, and in essence cut off the school to jail pipeline (Payne & Brown, 2010). The authors suggest that
educators utilize PAR as a methodological approach to empirical research by which subjects directly affected by the problem being studied engage in all stages of research as coresearchers (Payne & Brown, 2010). The authors believe that if educators utilize PAR they will gain a better understanding of why African American male adolescents appear to academically disengaged and seeming drawn to engage in street-life activities (Payne & Brown, 2010). In doing so urban African American male adolescent are provided a set of learning opportunities that can help offset poor academic performance and criminal background that many may have acquired, by helping them develop reading, writing and analytic skills need for post-secondary education and professional employment (Payne & Brown, 2010). Additionally, utilization of PAR can serve to create a venue by which professional educators can constructively frame and better understand the experience of group (Payne & Brown, 2010). No threats to internal or external validity were found.

Types of professional development programs were used to support or train teachers working with the above-mentioned group of students

Author Gloria Ladson-Billings used philosophical research to highlight the lack of preparedness for teachers teaching African American students. Ladson-Billings insist that with increasing diversity of the school population and a lack of positive, adequate literature regarding African American learners strategies must be implemented to improve the education of teachers entering the modern classroom (Ladson- Billings, 2000).

The author states that teacher preparation is culpable in the failure of teacher to teach African American students effectively (Ladson-Billings, 2000). In surveying the available literature on multicultural teacher education, Ladson- Billings states that most preservice
approaches rely on individual courses and diverse field experience to satisfy state legislation and professional association requirements concerning the needs of diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 2000). The author believes that this does not prepare teachers for the diverse classroom; rather they need a more systematic, comprehensive approach (Ladson-Billings, 2000). The author recommends the following strategies for preparing teachers for teaching African American learners: autobiography; restructured field experiences; situated pedagogies; and returning to the classrooms of experts (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

In using autobiographies for preparation the teacher, Ladson-Billings believes that teachers will recognize their own subjectivity when they recognize similar or different outlooks and experiences, in both courses and field experience (Ladson-Billings, 2000). With restructured field experiences, it is believed that the in placing teachers in diverse communities, as oppressed to traditional student teaching will allow them to better understand the backgrounds of African American students. Thus, they will more be equipped to connect with the students (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

In addition to restructuring field experiences, the author believes that situated pedagogies and returning to the classrooms of experts will also provide teachers of African American students with the training they desperately need. With situated pedagogies, educational anthropologist suggest that teachers attempt to make the school and home experience of diverse learners congruent (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Teacher will need to address the specifics of the community in which they teach, and avoid generic pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Teachers of African American students are advised to adopt what the authors term as culturally relevant pedagogy, which encompasses academic achievement, cultural competence and sociopolitical critique (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Teachers must not lower the standards, out preconceived
notions of the capabilities of African American learns, but to have expectations for the students, and challenge them academically, perhaps by breaking from traditional teaching philosophies. The teacher should then support cultural competence, by acknowledging the legitimacy of African American culture and home language, and use that as a bridge to American Edited English (Ladson-Billings, 2000). In addition to incorporating the above-mentioned elements into their curriculum, teachers of African American students should view their curriculum from a sociopolitical standpoint, to ensure that it is cultural competent and relevant, in addition to helping the students understand the ways that social structures and practices help reproduce inequities (Ladson-Billings, 2000). After suggesting various strategies to aid in the preparation of teachers of African American students, the author then turns back to the teacher education programs and their lack of desire to institute anti-racist teacher education.

By incorporating this into teacher education programs students would have to have an open dialogue about racism, in essence they will have to admit that it exist and can impact their teaching. By incorporating it into teacher education and development, a restructuring of the program itself may result. The author suggest that the admissions procedures be reassessed to eliminate those candidate that have no desire to teach diverse student bodies, and the reexamine course work (Ladson-Billings, 2000). In reexamining course work, education programs can eliminate methods that continue to depict African American culture as the antithesis of white culture. Thus, teacher will have more academic exposure to material related to African American learners’ total experience, aside from the usual problem category where most coursework places African American students (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Lastly, the author states that education in this country should mirror the democratic nature of our government. That ever culture be provide an adequate education, including African American students who are suffering at an alarming
As Ladson-Billings did, authors Joy Banks, Kathryn Young and Francesina R. Jackson focused their research on teachers. The authors noticed a trend in the overrepresentation of African American boys receiving special education services for emotional and behavioral disabilities versus their European American counterparts (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). This led the authors to not only question the disproportionate representation, but to question whether there was a difference in the treatment of the boys by both African American and European American teachers (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007).

In order to study the perceptions of the different racial groups of teachers, the author performed a focus group study. This qualitative study was performed by collecting data from African American teachers, European American teachers, and African American male students, ranging from second to seventh grade in an urban school district in North Carolina (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). From this school district, 16 African American teachers and 11 European American teachers, both general education and special education teachers, were chosen to participate in the study. Of the 27 teachers chosen, 15 were women and 12 were men. They were chosen after school personnel provided the names of the 19 students enrolled in EBD classes, as they also taught the students. The teachers were broken down into seven, 90-minute focus groups based on race, and each given a set of 25 open-ended questions developed to gather ideas and reflections on factors contributing to the over identification of African American boys...
in EBD classes, and interviewed by a faculty member of their own race (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). The questions were designed in such a manner that they allowed the participants to elaborate and openly discuss their answers with the group and each group (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). After collecting the data from the study, the authors performed an initial review based on the following categories: effective teachers, relationships and communication (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). After which, the categories were revised to be more specific, and reviewers then coded all comments into subcategories.

The interrater reliability for coding of comments was .91 and was based on five selected teacher interviews (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). The interviews were read by two university faculty members, one African American and one European American (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). Two teachers, one African American and one European American, read each category, noted significant themes and ideas found (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). The then all met as a group to identify common themes with the data (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007).

For the study, the authors only chose the themes evident to or validated by all four readers to include in the results after peer reviews were used to further validate the findings (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). The results were then presented to 26 of the participants, and at that time 21 of the teachers said that the results reflected their own experience in the schools and opinions they have heard or expressed themselves (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). Three of the teachers said the results were somewhat reflective, and two teachers felt that it was inappropriate to consider race in a discussion of classroom management (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007).
The perspectives obtained from all of the teachers were used to develop convergence of themes across groups, and were finally broken down into the following three broad categories: good and caring teachers, relationships with students and communication styles, and each emergent theme for each category was presented by group (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007).

Concerning good teachers, the African American felt that good teachers showed that cared about students by getting personally involved, by advising students about their education and societal barriers (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). They also believed that those types of teachers provided extra help and assistance to ensure a student’s success; they also push students beyond their fear of failure and encouraged them to take risk in a supportive learning environment (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). They also felt that good teachers prepared their students life beyond the classroom (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). European teachers had a different perception of what made a good teacher, and viewed those who have clear expectations and consequences, make the class work interesting and know and teach the curriculum as good teachers (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). In addition to emphasizing curriculum knowledge and effective teaching, European American teachers believed in creating a safe environment, which they believed motivated students to learn and to a lesser degree the believed in getting personally involved in students’ lives (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). Both groups did agree that good teachers provided appropriate instruction (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007).

The teacher-student relationship was another major theme of the study. When broken down, it was found that African American teachers believed that a lack of caring relationships with students cultivated misbehavior, and believed in forging strong, protective personal
relationships with students, even getting involved with the children's home life, and preventing bullying (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). European American teachers also believed in forging personal relationships with students, but believed that by support student endeavors, but placing limits on the relationship with students (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). European teachers also commented on angry disruptions from African American boys when they appeared not to get the attention they wanted and expressed the opinion that African American teachers, particularly female teachers, had a different relationship with their students than they could have (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007).

The last category focused on communication. European American teachers believe that African American teachers communications styles as culturally different from their own, viewing that of African American women as effective and culturally relevant for the students (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). African American teachers were not as complementary of their counterparts, viewing their communication style with students as problematic, as they seem to have lower standards for African American students, oversympathized with students and seemed to be afraid of the African American students (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). European American teachers believed that African American female teachers could communicate in ways that are not effective for European teachers, such as raising their voice. European American teachers viewed this as yelling and felt that in using the same methods of communication that African American teachers employ would jeopardize their positive relationship with students (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007).

In all the authors were able to show how effective teaching, relationships with students and communications styles between African American and European American teachers differ (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). Both groups of teachers seem to be concerned with
the education of their students and showed similar concern for learning and support, even when they had different approaches to the same situation. However, the authors’ findings led them to believe that African American boys may be getting mixed messages, and may feel disengaged or disenfranchised by European American social mores that differ from that of African American culture (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). The authors state that the children must perceive that all teachers care for them and will enforce high expectations for their behavior and academic achievement (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). To do so, the authors believe that teachers and students must strive to engage in conversations about culturally responsive teaching practices, caring relationships with students and differences in cultural communication patterns (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007).

Implications as stated by the authors focus on that fact that both groups need to find common ground on academic and behavioral expectations (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). The authors suggest that European American teachers, and some African American teachers, need learn more personal ways to communicate explicit and implicit caring to African American students (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). Additionally the authors suggest that that the two cultural approaches be merged to provide culturally responsive teaching that combines explicit and implicit caring with clear expectations and consistent consequences (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). The threat to internal valid was race based. Only two races of teachers were included in the focus group. This is not an accurate depiction or race in this country. The authors should have included other races, to gain a more accurate reading of how African American male students are perceived, such Asian American teachers or African Hispanic teachers, or African Caribbean teachers. All of these above mention groups have preconceived notions about other races and genders, so perhaps more will be done in this arena, as racism in not just a white and black problem. No Threats to external validity, however, the
article failed to directly approach the need for more training for teachers of African American students, particularly African American male adolescents. Therefore, more research will need to be done to find information that speaks directly to the research problem.

**Methods of teaching were designated best at assisting the above-mentioned group.**

Where Cooper & Jordan call for the recruitment of more African American male teachers, Noguera, Bailey, & Paisley agree on the creation of alternative learning environments, and Ladson-Billings calls for restructured field service for teachers, Laura Varlas contends that both methods be used as needed (2005). In the cases where academic achievement is extremely low, create an alternative learning environment, such as the one in Milwaukee, and in case where the achievement is low, but not abysmal, recruit more African American male teachers (2005). Varlas suggest that the school system act upon the needs of their students, as did the Orange County Public School System (OCPS) did in Orlando, Florida (2008). When faced with the remarkable low academic achievement levels of African American boys and Hispanic boys, the OCPS decided to not only implement ethnic and gender specific programs and curricula into the school district, but they also implemented diversity training for teachers (2005). Therefore, they created a situation in which both students and teachers learn about one another, and together they all can work to bridge the achievement gap. No threats to internal or external validity were found, as this article simply outlined a district's decision to foster a conducive learning enjoinderment for minority male students by requiring specialized training for their teachers.
Statement on Conclusions

In reviewing the literature related to this problem, the following conclusions were identified. The first conclusion identified was the ability for many of the authors to clearly outline many of the societal problems plaguing African American adolescent males in this country, and how they impact the education. The authors clearly proved that this phenomenon is now becoming an epidemic that needs to be address on multiple levels. Additionally, they prove that more research is needed to combat this problem. The second conclusions identified various suggestions leveled by many of the authors, and in turn the lack of decisive action sought to remedy the problem.

In addition to discovering the lack of available programs on a nationwide scope, was the need for adequate teacher education programs to train teachers of African American students, and more specifically African American male adolescent as suggested by Ladson-Billings (2000). In recent years it was discovered that some city school districts, such as, Cook and Milwaukee county have allowed for the creation of gender and race specific charter schools to tackle the problem, and in the case of Orange county schools, they, have at least began to take steps in educating their teachers and staff in dealing with African American male students. Although these heartfelt attempts are endearing it does not directly approach the problem, but rather forces teachers to swallow, or hide their perceptions and become color and culturally blind for the sake of the children run the risk of further isolation of the students. As before, more research will need to be conducted to locate researcher that confronts this problem head-on.

As stated before, the rationale behind the low level of academic achievement among African American boys remains an uncomfortable mystery. Although all of the authors included
in this review agreed that African American boys are at risk due to stereotypical thinking on the parts of teachers, administrators and society at large, they have varying opinions in terms of how to handle the situation. Thus, it will take further research to gain a clear and concise prospective on before reaching a viable solution.

**Statement of Recommendations for Further Research**

In order to gain a clear understanding of the issues contributing to low motivation and low academic performance of African American adolescent males, further research will need to preformed in order to better understand how their gender comes into play with regards to their marginalization in both society and academia. At this time, few programs have been initiated on a nationwide scope to combat this growing epidemic. Perhaps the scope can be narrowed to focus on regions that have made an effort to create programs that specifically target this at risk group, and have a proven that they have the ability to not only motivate these students, but to also prepare them for post-secondary matriculation.

Additionally, few programs were found that about teacher education programs that offer specific training for teachers of African American students, specifically male students. Given this research will be altered to locate programs that specifically deal with training and recruiting teachers that specialize in working with African American learners, i.e. Minority University programs or historically black universities. As there are few programs in place to train teachers of African American students, specifically male students, there are few methods available as well. For this the scope will be narrowed
down to focus on districts that offer, or require training for teaching African American learners, specifically male adolescents, such as the Orlando Public School System.

Statement of Implications for Classroom Instruction

Teachers should be aware that African Americans in general have a differing cultural experience in this country, especially African American male children, who are often targets of stereotypic behavior and maltreatment. With this in mind, teachers should understand that there will be cultural difference with these children, which are very different from the majority culture, and should be taken into context when creating educational structures.

Again, as research has only begun to breach the “troubles” with this group, research based on assisting them academically in this country is almost nonexistent. Therefore, those currently involved directly with this group will have to fill the void. It is now largely up to these current educators to supply the information that is needed to create programs to assist these students and prepare them for post-secondary matriculation. These teachers must become action-researchers as they are on the ground, and have the access to the students and the community to start grassroots projects that speak directly to the problems that plague this group.

At this time, few programs have been found that legitimately train teachers to teacher African American learners, specifically African American male students. Nor have many teacher development programs been found that support or train current teachers of African American learners, specifically African American male students. In
researching this topic, the majority of the information regarding teacher training revolved around multicultural training, which accentually lumps the education non-white and non-English speaking students together in one undistinguishable stew. Thus, current teachers and teachers-in-training, with the support of expert educators who have continuously advocated for this at-risk group, must make demand that changes be made to the current, but dated, educational philosophy that still abound in public education.

Educational researchers have noticed a difference in the teaching methods of African American teachers and white teachers who African American students, and more specifically those who teach African American male adolescents. The researchers have then highlighted the different approaches, and suggested that the two groups combine their methods in order to create consistence in the academic lives of these students. Yet again, the suggestion side steps the true problem, and offers a quick fix for class management. This is another instance where those on the ground, teacher currently in the field, must fill the growing void. Teachers must become action researchers, and used their access to these students to develop and perfect methods to assist these children in becoming academically successful and to create curricula that encompasses the culture of these children and their community.
References


Varlas, L. (2005). Bridging the widest gap: Raising the achievement of black boys. *ASCD, 47*(8).