

Black Male - White Teacher:
The Voices of African American Males in a Suburban Middle School

By Roderick Wayne Harden, Sr.

B.S. in History, May 1988, The University of Texas Tyler
M.Ed. in Special Education, December 1990, Coppin State University

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Dissertation directed by

Abebayeha Tekleselassie
Associate Professor of Education Administration

The Graduate School of Education and Human Development of The George Washington University certifies that Roderick Wayne Harden, Sr. has passed the Final Examination for the degree of Doctor of Education as of July 22, 2016. This is the final and approved form of the dissertation.

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Roderick Wayne Harden, Sr.

Dissertation Research Committee:

Abebayehu A. Tekleselassie, Associate Professor of Education Administration,
Dissertation Director

Arshad I. Ali, Assistant Professor of Research Methods, Committee Member

Jocelyn G. Drakeford, Visiting Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership,
Committee Member

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Dedication

"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns.

Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life."

Philippians 4:6-7 (The Message)

*And we know that God causes everything
to work together for the good of those who love God and are called
according to his purpose for them.*

Romans 8:28 (NIV)

The document is dedicated to my Father, **Richard James Harden**.

Rest in Jesus Daddy! I Love you!

January 7, 1940 – August 14, 2015 Acknowledgements

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*When I think of the goodness of Jesus and all that he has done for me;
my soul cries Hallelujah! Thank God for saving me.*

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Abstract of Dissertation

Black Male - White Teacher: The Voices of African American Males in a Suburban Middle School

Because African American males are being educated in suburban environments where they are not performing as well as their White peers, this study sought to understand how these males make meaning of being educated with primarily White teachers in suburbia and to understand how they perceive their teachers' efficacy and expectations.

Therefore, ten African American males participated in semi-structured interviews to inform this discourse. Participants appeared to be in a learning environment with high teacher- efficacy and expectations for their African American male students; however, this study, grounded in Critical Race Theory and conceptualized through teacher-efficacy and teacher-expectation, exposed subtle issues of institutional racism manifested in the form of unconscious perpetrators.

The findings suggest that participants have come to compliantly accept their educational environment because it has become their "normal"; however, participants voiced their experiences revealing an environment of unconscious institutional racism which included: stereotyping, unfair treatment, racial profiling, and many other acts of unconscious racism. However, participants demonstrated resilience largely due to active parental involvement.

Participants were able to mitigate the inimical environment and meet with a modicum of success. Although the sample size was small and cannot be used to make generalizations, this discourse provides policy makers and instructional leaders with

plausible recommendations to contemplate while attempting to alleviate the adverse conditions the participants in this study consistently encounter. If African American males are to reach their fullest educational potential, thus closing the achievement gap, issues of race and racism must be addressed at all levels of government: local, state, federal, and district school boards.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

According to Ladson-Billings (2006), the achievement gap, with 11 million citations, has become one of the most common phrases used in education literature. The term achievement gap is a commonly used term among academicians and policy makers. The National Governors' Association views the achievement gap as an issue of race and class with the gap existing between minority students, disadvantaged students and their White counterparts (National Governors' Association, 2005). However, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) describes the achievement gap as occurring when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant, larger than the margin of error (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). Regardless of the definition, the story of the achievement gap is a familiar one in the United States. African American males and students of color continue to lag behind all other racial subgroups in their achievement (Blanchett, 2006; Chavous, Smalls, Rivas-Drake, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Irving & Hundley, 2008; Wright, 2009).

Although the second half of the past century witnessed some gains in educational attainment in the United States, African American males continue to lag behind other students in high school completion and overall achievement (Center on Educational Policy, 2010). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2009), the total percentage of students graduating from high school has risen from 53% to 83% between 1950 and 2009. However, the percentage for White students increased from 56% to 93% whereas African Americans rates increased from 24% to 86%. Thus, African American students continue to graduate at lower rates than their White counterparts.

Additionally, gains in reading and mathematics achievement have been reported on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). Mathematic scores were at their highest levels in 2007 and reading scores have shown continual increases since the 1990s (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). The National Center for Educational Statistics continues to report that African American males score below their White peers regardless of socioeconomic status (National Center of Educational Statistics, 2009).

Likewise, a similar trend can be found with the first administration of the 2011 NAEP computer-generated writing assessment (National Center for Educational Statistic, 2011). The computer-generated writing assessment was administered to 24,100 eighth-graders and 28,100 twelfth graders to test their ability to use written language in order to communicate effectively with others. The writing assessment focused on writing situations common to both academic and workplace settings and required students to write for several purposes and communicate to different audiences. Using a new scale for student achievement, ranging from 0 to 300 with a mean of 150, White students had a scale score of 158 while African American students had a scale score of 132 (National Center for Educational Statistic, 2011). Subsequently, African American students scored lower than Whites in reading, math, and writing with African American females scoring higher than African American males. More importantly, African American males performed lower than any other subgroup. (National Center for Educational Statistic, 2011).

In the 1960s, Hess and Shipman (1965) suggested that students of color were

victims of pathological lifestyles that hindered their ability to benefit from schooling. The 1966 Coleman Report further reinforced this notion by suggesting that African American students should be placed in racially integrated classrooms to counteract their pathological lifestyles (Coleman, 1966). However, the achievement gap continued to persist which caused scholars to believe that little could be done to increase the achievement of African American children (Ladson- Billings, 2006). Subsequently, other researchers argued that stereotyping, curricula, pedagogical practices, genetics and a variety of other school process factors contributed to the gap (Franklin, 2007; Oakes, 2005; Ogbu, 2003).

Nevertheless, the gap remains persistent and pervasive. This research explored how African American male students make meaning of their education in a predominately White suburban teaching environment. This discourse was grounded through Critical Race Theory(CRT) and Resilience Theory and conceptualized through teacher efficacy and teacher expectations.

Therefore, this research enhanced knowledge that centers on how schools can close the gap between African American males and all other subgroups.

Overview

Although it has been 62 years since the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), scholars and urban education leaders continue the struggle to promote academic excellence in African American students (Love & Kruger, 2005). Subsequently, many studies have focused on African American males in urban settings (Baker, 2005; Brown & Jones, 2004; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Decker & Driessen, 2000; Jenkins, 2006; Morales, 2010; Robinson, 2007; Yoe, Ang, Chong, Huan, & Quek, 2008). Thus, these studies have provided educators and policy makers with rich sources of

information over the past several decades; specifically, these studies have linked inadequate human, social, and economic capital as primary factors in the lack of achievement for African American males in large urban areas.

Even though African Americans have made significant educational and academic gains since 1959, public education in America still remains separate and unequal for many students of color, particularly African American males (Ladson-Tate & Tate, 1995; Ortiz & Jani, 2010). African American males are more frequently identified for special education, placed in nonacademic vocational classes or classes where they are not intellectually stimulated or challenged (Burriss-Corbett, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008; Oakes, 1985). Subsequently, education for African American male students is riddled with low expectations, a feeling of inferiority and a sense of defeat in their academic pursuits.

Many researchers found that African American students disproportionately attend large, urban comprehensive or zoned schools with a high concentration of low-socioeconomic students (Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Gibbs, Fergusson, & Howard, 2008; Pollard, 1993). In these schools, many African American males are educated in a system where teachers lack experience, motivation, resources and/or enthusiasm to effectively engage them in the learning process. Because of these process factors, graduation rates for African American males tend to be lower in comparison to the national averages (Pollard 1993; The Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012).

Despite the fact that 30% of all African American students attend predominately White suburban public schools, most of what we know about African American males has come from comparative studies on ethnic differences with low-income African American students (Carter Andrews, 2009). According to Carter-Andrews (2009), the comparative

studies mostly use national survey data, contrasting racial groups across a variety of school outcomes with the assumption that there is equal educational opportunity and shared ecological context between the racial groups. Additionally, these studies usually focus on low-income students who are generally considered at-risk for school failure. However, African American students, similar to all other racial/ethnic groups, are present at all levels of the socioeconomic strata.

According to Sirin and Sirin (2004), the majority of African Americans live in neighborhoods that are not low income in terms of socioeconomic status; however, those neighborhoods are mostly populated by African Americans. Yet, much of the research continues to focus on urban, low socioeconomic students and generalizes these experiences to the whole ethnic group by depicting the typical African American male as educationally at-risk. These studies are limited in their ability to draw conclusions about the performance of African American males in general, and more importantly, suburban African American males. Therefore, a body of research, which is dedicated to African American males in a predominately White suburban educational setting is emerging as educators and researchers attempt to address the biases in sampling which contributes to the overall negative depiction of African American males and fails to recognize within-group differences (Braun, Chapman, and Vezzu, 2010; Carter Andrews, 2009; Sirin & Sirin, 2004).

Researchers have provided some insight into multiracial or desegregated educational settings (Ford & Webb, 1994; Jenkins, 2006; Lewis, 2001). Although meaningful, much of the current research focuses on interracial relations rather than on racial meaning (Brown & Jones, 2004). Furthermore, these studies often acknowledge that

race is important in an educational setting where there is a racial minority. Cooper (1996) argued that researchers have marginalized the processes of racialization and given it meaning only when the subjects are African American. He further argues that society continues to be stratified by race/ethnicity and class (Copper, 1996). Subsequently, being an African American male continues to have negative connotations and consequences.

In summary, researchers consistently conclude that disparate learning opportunities result in differing achievement outcomes for students (Boykins, 1983; Decker & Driessen, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Pollard, 1993). The lingering achievement gap between all subgroups and African American males has prompted scholars and educators to examine the relationship between student achievement and a variety of school process factors. Therefore, researchers irrespective of socioeconomic status or urban and rural settings, have linked the achievement gap found between African American males and their White counterparts to teacher efficacy and teacher expectation (Burriss-Corbett, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008; Tyler & Boelter, 2008; Seyfried, 1998). Teacher efficacy and teacher expectation have been shown to have a particular negative impact on the achievement of African American males (Chavous, Smalls, Rivas-Drake, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Jackson & Moore, 2008). This discourse examined teacher efficacy and teacher expectation in a predominately suburban White middle school setting in order to ascertain the effect of these processes on the achievement of African American male students.

In this chapter, the statement of the problem and research questions will be presented along with the potential significance. Subsequently, the theoretical framework will be established followed by the research methodology, delimitations, limitations and

defining of key terms.

Statement of the Problem

Traditionally, the achievement of African American males has been viewed from a deficit model; however, this model fails to offer a plausible explanation when applied to African American male students who bring the same cultural, social and economic capital to the schoolhouse as their White counterparts (Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010, Halawah, 1992; Jackson, 2006; Jackson & Moore, 2008; Jenson, 1969). This research investigated the persistent and pervasive problem which exists between African American males in suburbia who bring the same advantages to schooling as their White counterparts but continue to lag behind in achievement (Beard & Brown, 2008; Condrón, 2009; Ogbu, 2003). More importantly, the historical discourse recognizes that the problem of educating African American children in the United States is as old as the presence of African Americans in this country.

Subsequently, many notable scholars such as Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Dr. W. E.B. Du Bois, Dr. Janice Hale, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. have acknowledged this omnipresent and importunate issue (Saddler, 2005). According to Saddler (2005), these notable scholars and many more have asserted that an *effective* education is fundamentally important in the progress of a people. However, historically, African American male students have been filtered into lower educational tracks that suggest that the dominant culture has a different definition of effective education (Ford, 1998; Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Oakes, 2005; Saddler, 2005). This system of filtration suggests an effective education for an African American male is one in which he is not challenged and may not be viewed as intellectually capable. Thus, an effective education for African American males is realized only when the expectations and outcomes are at a lower standard than for

other students.

In an effort to combat this system of filtration and segregation, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the side of African Americans by enacting into law the historic *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka (1954)*. In this ruling, the court overruled a Kansas statute permitting separate schools for African Americans and Whites. *Brown vs. The Board of Education* signaled the end of legalized segregation; however, change did not come easily. The nation paid full price for this change with murders, riots, school closings, and other acts of resistance (Baker, 2005). The concept of equal education was further modified with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the establishment of the U.S. Department of Education in 1979 (Garibaldi, 1992; Gill & Reynolds, 1999).

Although the passage of these statutes promised to improve the performance of African American students, research does not totally support this notion (Brown & Jones, 2004). In 2003, students of color comprised approximately 40% of the total school population in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Furthermore, these students represented over 70% of the population in large cities located in California, Michigan, New York, and Texas (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Many researchers have documented the persistent and pervasive achievement gap in urban areas (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Brown & Jones, 2004; Chavous, Smalls, Rivas-Drake, Griffin, and Cogburn, 2008; Decker & Driessen, 2000; Jenkins, 2006; Oswald, Countinho, Best, & Singh, 1999). Given the above statistics, educators are seeking to understand how to support the academic development of students of color.

This disparity in educational achievement between African American males and

White students has been well documented in urban schools. Condron (2009) posited that these disparities in students' own family background (non- school factors) generate achievement gaps and shifts the blame for the inequalities within and between the schools themselves (school factors). Subsequently, other researchers contribute the lack of achievement in urban areas to poor and working class families, resulting in a disproportionate number of black students, which precipitates social class differences and inequities surrounding household resources, educational resources, parents' childrearing approaches, children's health and nutrition, and families' residential mobility and quality of housing (Condron, 2009). Despite what happens at school, social stratification produces class and racial disparities in learning; therefore, school reforms will have minimal impact on the achievement gap (Blanchett, 2006; Karen, 2005; Rothstein, 2004).

In addition to African American males lagging behind their White counterparts in the last decade, there is evidence of a growing gender gap in the educational achievement of African American students (Gibb, Fergusson, & Howard, 2008). Although there have been significant gains in the rates of high school completion for African American students over the past thirty years, there is an increasing divergence in the academic outcomes of African American males and females (Saunders, Davis, Williams, & Williams, 2004).

Furthermore, educational statisticians have indicated that African American females are outperforming African American males (Decker & Driessen, 2000). Historically, males graduate at a lesser rate than African American females. African American females graduate at a rate of 56% as opposed to 46% for African American males (Carter & Wilson, 1993; Hawkins, 1996). Subsequently, Newton and Sandoval

(2015) found that African American females graduate at a rate of 81% while African American males graduate at a rate of 72%. The disparity in educational achievement is a persistent trend spanning two decades, encompassing all racial and ethnic groups in the United States; however, the difference between the percentage of African American males in comparison to African American females continues to be twice the size of other racial and ethnic groups (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

According to the Center of Educational Statistic (2015), the 2013-2014 adjusted four-year cohort rate for all students was 82% which suggests that 4 out of 5 students graduated with a regular high school diploma within four years of the first time entering 9th grade. However, when the adjusted four-year cohort graduation rate was reported by ethnicity, African American students graduate at the lowest rate 73%, with Latinos graduating at 76% and Whites and non-Latinos graduating at 87%. Although the national adjusted four-year cohort graduation data for African American males increased from 42% in 2001-2002 to 73% in 2013-2014, African American males continue to lag behind other ethnic groups with a 59% adjusted four- year cohort graduation rate whereas Latino males are graduating at a rate of 65% and White and non-Latino males at a rate of 80% (The Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015)

In urban settings, African American males are faced with many challenges because of their socioeconomic status. More importantly, these urban schools are usually below standard and lack appropriate curricular materials which harkens back to funding (Robinson, 2007; Rothstein, 2004). Additionally, most often urban schools are staffed with teachers who lack training and are inadequately prepared to teach African American males. Many of these teachers do not recognize or refuse to acknowledge the cultural

capital that African American males bring to the educational process (Rowley & Wright, 2011; Yosso, 2005). More importantly, teachers are often influenced by the negative images and stereotypes of African American males that are portrayed in the media (Jenkins, 2006; Noguera, 2003). Therefore, these teachers often enter the classroom with low efficacy and expectations which in itself is a self-fulfilling prophecy (Baker, 2005; Hetty, Bosker, & Geert, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Long, Monoi, Harper, Knoblauch, & Murphy, 2007). Therefore, the disparities in many urban schools are due to economic, social, and political capital. Moreover, socioeconomic status supports a deficit model which is often at the heart of any discourse relative to academic achievement and the Black-White achievement gap in an urban setting (Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010).

However, this deficit discourse becomes almost irrelevant when applied to African American males who live in the suburban communities. African American males who live in the suburbs also lag behind their White counterparts in graduation rates, advanced course placement, and on standardized tests (Oakes, 2005; Pringle, Lyons, & Booker, 2010). Thus, the causal relationship between the disparities in achievement is far more insidious than socioeconomic and class because African American males in suburban areas often bring many of the same privileges to the educational setting as their White counterparts.

The 2000 Census data revealed that the number of African Americans who live in the suburbs increased by five percentage points, to nearly 14 million people between 1990 and 2000 which means that 39% of African Americans live in suburbia (Wasserman & O'Leary, 2010). Furthermore, due to demographic shifts in the 2000s, the number of African Americans living in the suburbs increased from 44% in 2000 to 51% by 2010;

therefore, half of minority groups now live in the suburbs (Wasserman & O’Leary). It is critical that researchers investigate the educational disparities in suburbia in order to ascertain why these disparities exist. Many researchers associate the educational disparities with race (Bonillak- Silva, 2001; Duncan, 2002; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wright, 2009; Young, 2011).

If African American males in suburbia come to school with the same social, economic, and cultural capital as their White counterparts, students should be achieving at the same rate; however, research suggests that African American male students are not (Beard & Brown, 2008; Condrón, 2009; Ogbu, 2003). Therefore, the dilemma for educational researchers is why African American males continue to lag behind White students in the suburbs. This research investigated this phenomenon to understand why this gap continues to exist when all factors are equal and how African American males navigate this educational terrain.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to understand how suburban middle school African American males make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers in a suburban environment. Using a basic qualitative research design, which seeks to understand the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved, this study attempted to understand how African American male students consciously develop meaning out of their social interactions with predominately White teachers in a suburban learning environment (Merriam, 2009). Secondly, this study sought to understand African American male students' perception of their teachers' efficacy and expectations. Because teachers are often the “gatekeepers” in a child’s education, it is critical to understand their impact on the educational experience of African American males through giving these

children an opportunity to tell their own unique stories.

Therefore, a participant group of ten African American male middle school students were interviewed to determine the impact of teacher-expectations and efficacy on their education in a suburban school setting. Participants were asked a series of questions to ascertain how they make meaning of being educated in the targeted environment. Through the stories of each participant, the researcher gained insight into their lived experience. Furthermore, the analysis of the participants' interviews enlarged the understanding of the achievement gap in suburban African American males and the way in which teacher-efficacy and teacher-expectations differentially influence the achievement gap.

Thus, this research offered plausible recommendations for mitigating the achievement gap in this specific group of African American males. Finally, engaging in interactive dialogue with these young men, in order to hear their voice, was to learn how they have come to understand and know the world around them including their disappointments and their resilience as they struggled to overcome the many obstacles, challenges, and complex situations before them.

Research Questions

The primary research question the study answered is how do suburban African American male middle school students make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers. Additionally, the study sought to answer a secondary research question: How do African American males perceive the efficacy and expectations of their teachers.

Statement of Potential Significance

The research literature suggests the greatest and most persistent achievement gap is between African Americans males and all other student categories (Decker & Driessen,

2000; Downey, 2008). The achievement gap is recognized during the middle years and foreshadows bleak outcomes in high school and college (Davis & Jordan, 1994; Mickelson & Greene, 1998; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). In urban and suburban settings, educational statistics consistently reveal that even when compared to African American females and all other groups, African American males continually cluster at the top of the distribution of virtually every indicator of school failure, including dropout, absenteeism, suspension, and expulsion and low academic achievement (Jenkins, 2006; Osborne, 1999; Taylor & Foster, 1986). Thus, this study has practical significance to practitioners by way of implications for staffing and professional development; personal significance because voice is given to participants; professional significance in terms of the way African American males are taught; and a profound personal significance because the participants' stories mirror my own.

First, the study's practical significance was to understand the impact of teacher expectation and teacher efficacy on how African American male students are making meaning of being educated in a suburban predominately White middle school environment. Also, there were practical implications for practitioners in the area of staffing and staff development as the stories of these students were heard. The voice of failure, risk and resilience was heard through the voices of the students providing a forum for school policy related to staffing, staff development, and creating a school culture which is truly diverse in all aspects.

Additionally, this research had personal significance for the study's participants. This study gave voice to a group of African American male students and brought to the forefront how these students are experiencing their education in a suburban middle school

taught by White teachers. In telling their stories, educators will understand their plight and improve in-school process factors that enhance the educational environment for all.

Moreover, this study highlighted teacher-perceptions which offered a better understanding to African American male students as to why their teachers formed stigmas that centered on their lack of academic achievement that ultimately informed the ideal of curriculum/course assignments for African American males. Because of this study, students and their parents better understand the environment in which the students are being educated in. Research has shown that students' perception of their environment can ultimately shape their educational achievement (Brady & Woolfson, 2008; Brown & Jones, 2004; Kennedy, 1992).

Furthermore, this research has professional significance because it adds to the body of research on teacher-efficacy and teacher-expectation with specific focus on the stories of African American male students during the middle years. The research identifies the middle years as the point at which the achievement gap begins to presage student achievement in later schooling (Davis & Jordan, 1994; Mickelson & Greene, 1998; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). In understanding students' stories, improvements can be made in the way they are perceived and taught.

Because schools are a place for amenable interventions, this research provides data that will contribute to the development of educational policies that are equal, equitable, and accessible resulting in closing the achievement gap for African American males. Furthermore, it provides district leaders with data to inform school board policies relative to hiring, staffing, funding, school boundary practices, and for teachers' professional development.

Finally, as an African American male, who was educated in a similar system, this research has profound personal significance. During my schooling, I longed for someone to ask me how I felt about the environment in which I was being educated in. It was steeped in institutionalized racism and White privilege. Through telling the stories of my fellow African American males, I am reflecting on the failures and successes of my own story. All in all, the stories of these African American male students have made me more keenly aware of the needs of all of my students as an educator.

Theoretical Foundation

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Resilience Theory are the theoretical foundations for the exploration of teacher- efficacy and teacher-expectation which are in-school process factors shown to affect the achievement of African American male middle school students. CRT began in the legal arena with activists such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado all of whom worked to transform the relationship between race, racism and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Sherman, 2008). Additionally, educational scholars have begun to view issues of curriculum and instruction through the lens of critical theory (Sherman, 2008). Furthermore, Sherman (2008) posited that, "CRT makes use of legal indeterminacy and allows for the recognition that not every case has one correct outcome (i.e. equity is not necessarily equated with equal treatment for students) a basic premise of critical legal studies (p. 683)."

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), CRT questions the neutral principles of constitutional law, and the foundations of the liberal order which includes equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment and rationalism. CRT attempts to not only understand our social situation but to change it. Additionally, it attempts not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it

for the better.

According to Ortiz & Jani (2012), CRT finds its genesis in critical postmodern theory. Postmodern theory attempts to, “understand the oppressive aspects of society in order to generate societal and individual transformation” (Ortiz & Jani, 2012, p. 176). CRT in education is explicated by five basic assumptions which include: 1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, 2) the challenge to dominant ideology, 3) the commitment to social justice, 4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and 5) the interdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano, 2001).

The first assumption, the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, suggests “race is a social construction and race permeates all aspects of social life and race-based ideology is threaded throughout society” (Ortiz & Jani, 2012, p. 176). Through CRT educators recognize the intersection of race and racism and how these structures have shaped schools and schooling whilst intersecting with other forms of subordination such as sexism and classism; therefore, one is forced to acknowledge the many layers of subordination based on gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent and sexuality (Yosso, 2005).

The second assumption challenges the dominate ideology by calling into question the “universality of the White experience/judgment as the authoritative standard that binds people of color and normatively measures, directs, controls and regulates the term of proper thought, expression, presentment and behavior” (Calmore, 1992, p. 2160). This assumption recognizes the system of education in the United States as socially inequitable and questions dominate social and cultural assumptions which include culture and intelligence, language and capability, personality or character, and physical appearance

which often manifest in racial and ethnic stereotypes.

According to Ladson-Tate & Tate (1995), the third assumption, the commitment to social justice, analyzes social systems such as laws, education, and media, then it suggests how those systems reproduce and normalize racism. This assumption seeks to decrease the achievement gap by exposing inequalities and inadequacies in the process practices in public education by connecting race and property as a central construct in order to understand the inequalities and inadequacies (Ladson-Tate & Tate, 1995). Moreover, the centrality of experiential knowledge, the fourth assumption, gives voice to the marginalized through hearing their stories and drawing on the lived experiences that students bring to the classroom.

The final assumption, transdisciplinary perspective, opposes ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus which is the focus of most traditional analysis (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). This perspective allows educators to draw on research from all disciplines and perspectives. This research methodology allows researcher to establish a multidimensional view.

Despite the challenges of race and racism found in America's schools, some students are successful due to their resilience (Ahern, Ark, & Byers, 2008; Masten, Herbers, Cutuli, & Lafavor, 2008). According to Condly (2006), resilience should be perceived as a label which "defines the interactions of a child with trauma or a toxic environment in which success, as judged by societal norms, is achieved by virtue of the child's abilities, motivations and support systems" (p. 213). However, educators have redefined resilience in terms of academic success (Finn & Rock, 1997; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). This redefining includes passing grades, acceptable scores on

standardized achievement tests and graduating from high school on time, assuming that students have obstacles they must overcome in order to attain academic success (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Regardless of the definition, the achievement gap, as measured on standardized tests and graduations rates between African American males and other racial subgroups, urban and suburban students, as well as low and high-socioeconomic status, remains a nationwide reprehensible reality (Harris & Herrington, 2006; Morales, 2010). Therefore, resilience is about cultivating an environment which allows African American males to thrive academically.

According to Pianta and Walsh (1998), the source of problems and successes of children in schools is centered on three components: the child, the family or the school. Many researchers have focused on one or more of the protective factors in each of these places; however, these factors must be viewed with an emphasis on the interactions, transactions, and relationships among these components (Morrison & Allen, 2007; Pianta & Walsh, 1998). These protective factors must be viewed in the context of total development (Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2003). Mechanisms which are responsible for successful development involve multiple systems acting in concert (Pianta & Walsh, 1998; Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2003).

Furthermore, the protective factors, characteristics of the child, relationships, and contexts identified by many authors mirror the child, family and school as sources of blame. Researchers suggest that locating resilience in a child, or family, or school is not a single-location. However, resilience is a three strand model that creates an invidious triangle in which attributions about failure and success could rest on one of three triangular points (Morrison & Allen, 2007). Therefore, it is critical that promoting

resilience does not fall into the trap of single- factor explanation for success under conditions of risk. Researchers argue that success under conditions of adversity is clearly not reducible to a single set of circumstances and it is clearly not located solely in children (Morrison, Brown, D'Incau, O'Farrell, & Furlong, 2005). From a developmental systems perspective, resilience is complicated. From this view, resilience is a process that involves multiple systems interacting over time, which occasionally precipitates success in a particular developmental domain or function (Morrison et al., 2005; Pianta & Walsh, 1998). Subsequently, actions needed to sustain resilience may be different from those to initiate a path to success.

These systems of perspective resilience are often steeped in race and racism. Although this has been called the “Age of Obama,” when many African American families have moved to middle-class suburban neighborhoods, the prerogative conceptualization of African American males has become commonplace in American education (Gordon, 2012). This conceptualization produces and perpetuates a racist, deficit-based understanding of African American males which has become normalized (Gordon, 2012; Rowley & Wright, 2011). Several studies indicate that middle-class African American students are not fairing as well as their White counterparts in the same suburban schools (Beard & Brown, 2008; Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010; Gordon, 2012; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; The Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012). Sample (1997) and Swain (2006) attributed this deficient academic performance to pervasive social ills such as crime, violence, drug abuse and illegitimacy. Because this image has infiltrated education so completely, African American male students continue to mitigate the powerful impact of race, regardless of socioeconomic status (Jackson &

Moore, 2008; Leonardo, 2012; Morrison & Allen, 2007). Therefore, teacher-efficacy and teacher-expectation, key in school process factors, have a direct impact on the academic resilience of African American males.

Teachers with high efficacy and expectation capitalize on protective possibilities for students in their classroom (Morrison & Allen, 2007; Rutter, 1987). These teachers create an environment where African American males build academic self-confidence. In this environment, students become more engaged and invested in their learning, developing autonomy and independence through student-centered practices (Alfassi, 2004; Masten, Herbers, Cutuli, & Lafavor, 2008). These practices include tailoring instruction to individual needs, using experiential approaches to learning and emphasizing individual choice and autonomy. Teachers with low efficacy and expectations for African American males often have classrooms that are teacher-centered with little differentiation for students (Kivilcim, Turhan, Mehmet, & Fikret, 2013). These teachers often look to the deficit model to explain the lack of achievement in African American males (Gordon, 2012; Jackson & Moore, 2008).

More importantly, teachers with high efficacy and expectations ensure that the curriculum is important, interesting and culturally relevant, particularly to African American males (Irving & Hundley, 2008). African American male students must be provided with learning activities that are flexible allowing for each individual to find a way to participate meaningfully and experience the utmost success. Additionally, teachers with high efficacy and expectations create a classroom environment where students develop social skills and respect for individual differences. Team work and cooperative groups are structured with mutual goals and equal status participation for all members.

Finally, maintaining high expectations for African American males is critical in the development of motivation and a positive academic self-concept (Harris, Rosenthal, & Snodgrass, 1986). Additionally, complementary to high teacher expectations and efficacy is positive engagement which fosters a caring and supportive relationship with each student.

In addition, to building protective possibilities in the classroom, teachers must build opportunities for African American males to participate in school-wide activities which bring students together who do not share similar cultural bonds or schedules (Reinke & Herman, 2002). School-wide activities can strengthen a student's bond or connection to the school. Also, teachers with high expectations seek to create meaningful relationships between the school and families (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). Family involvement is critical in academic resilience (Halawah, 1992) because parents are often the best source of information about student's strengths and skills, their insight is essential to understanding the child. Therefore, Henderson and Milstein (2003) argued that schools should encourage parents to share their child's strengths and challenges with the school.

In summary, this research uses CRT to expose the inequalities and adversities faced by African American male students while focusing on their academic resilience. More importantly, the participants in this study did not face the traditional conditions of poverty and the accompanying risk factors (Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010; Brown & Jones, 2004; Cooper, 1996; Finn & Rock, 1997). However, the risk factor in this study was the educational environment. The environmental risks factors included teachers with low efficacy and expectations which presented as stereotyping, low expectations, special education students not receiving the required assistance, placement in less rigorous

courses, the lack of effective communication with parents, the absence of cultural relevance during instruction and other acts of unconscious racism.

Therefore, teachers must focus on their day-to-day interactions when building resilience in African American males by recognizing the full range of characteristics these students bring to the educational setting in order to reduce risk factors and enhance academic resilience. These protective factors must be systematic and developmental in nature (Pianta & Walsh, 1998). In order to sustain academic resilience, protective factors, such as teacher-efficacy and expectations in the classroom, relationships with peers, both individually and school-wide, and in partnership with the students' families, must work in tandem. According to Harvey and Hill (2004), formal prevention and intervention programs provide a valuable scaffold for the development and reinforcement of resilience. However, teachers play a critical role in academic resilience through their day-to-day interactions with African American male students which are governed by their personal efficacy and expectation.

Conceptual Framework

Because schools are a pliant place for intervention, teacher-efficacy and teacher-expectation was used as a conceptual framework within the theoretical frameworks of CRT and Resiliency Theory. Since teachers exert influence on the achievement of students, researchers have consistently shown that teacher efficacy has a powerful and direct impact on achievement among African American male students (Gill & Reynolds, 1999; Tucker, Zayco, Herman, Reinke, Trujillo, & Carraway, 2002; Yoe, Ang, Chong, Huan, & Quek, 2008). Additionally, researchers suggest that teachers with lower expectations have fewer interactions with minority children (Garibaldi, 1992; Hetty, Bosker, & Geert, 2000; Hudley, 2005; Osborne, 1999). Therefore, these findings necessitate a closer examination of efficacy relative to teachers' instruction of students

from diverse backgrounds, specifically, African American males. Teacher-efficacy has been linked to teachers' beliefs about challenging students and the decisions made regarding students (Kivilcim, Turhan, Mehmet, & Fikret, 2013; Love & Kruger, 2005).

According to Sodak and Podell (1994), teachers who believed in their ability to reach even the most difficult students were more likely to make teacher-based decisions to meet the needs of their students. As expected, teachers with low personal efficacy were more likely to refer students to special education or other curricular placements; however, this is particularly true for African American male students (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). Furthermore, teacher-efficacy has been linked to race (Pang and Sablan, 1998). Pang and Salban (1998) found that teachers felt unprepared to teach students from culturally different backgrounds; more specifically, teachers felt they could not effectively teach African American males. In light of the known influence of efficacy on student achievement, these findings further support the growing achievement gap.

Additionally, teacher-expectations have shown to impact the achievement of African American students (Noguera, 2003; Rubie-Davis, 2006). Subsequently, studies concluded that African American male students are more likely to be misjudged by teachers and less likely to receive educational encouragement and information than their female counterparts, largely due to teacher- expectation (Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010; Jackson & Moore, 2008; McKown & Weinstein, 2003; Pollard, 1993; Pang and Sablan, 1998). Subsequently, Hubbard (2005) found that teachers' low expectations had significant and long-term consequences, particularly for African American males. Hubbard describes a cycle of disengagement whereby teachers' low expectations caused students to disengage from academics, which in turn, prompted teachers to have even

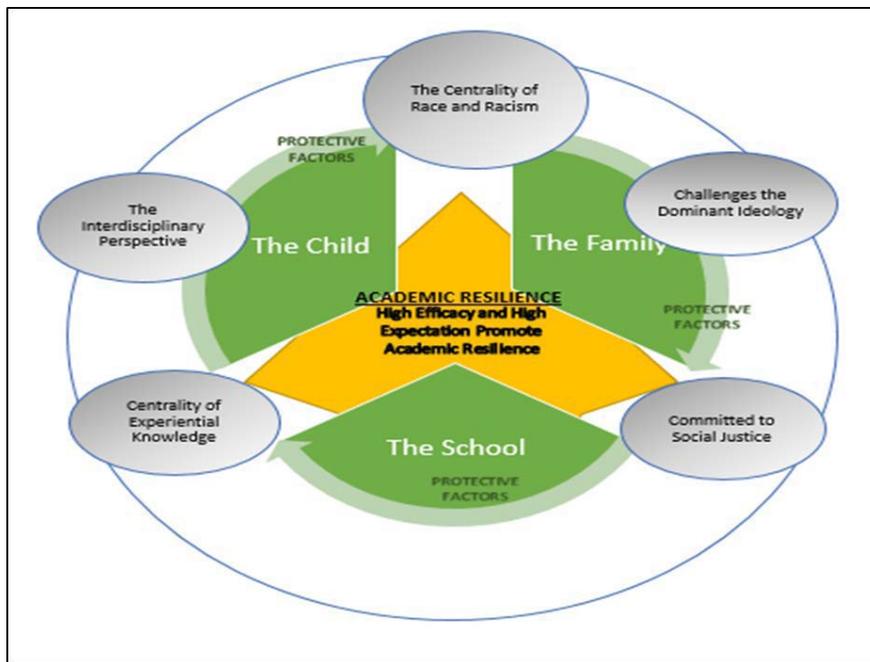
lower expectations of their abilities (Hubbard, 2005). Because of low teacher-expectations, African American male students are often targeted and assigned to lower level ability groups (Burriss-Corbett, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008; Ford, 1998; Oswald, Countinho, Best, & Singh, 1999).

Thus, ability grouping is one of the most influential school processes that African American males face throughout their education (Mickelson & Greene, 2006). In theory, ability grouping sorts students into differentiated curricula based on specific measures of prior performance for purposes of teaching them in ways targeted to their abilities and prior knowledge (Lucas, 1999; Oakes, 2005). This practice usually begins in elementary school, but becomes more visible as students move into the middle school years where academic classes are often differentiated into standard, gifted and talented, and special education. Lucas (1999) suggested that ability grouping serves to maintain and perpetuate educational inequalities because students in lower tracks, such as special education and other low ability tracks, receive an inferior education. The results show that ability grouping is a school process that directly impacts African American males because they are most often referred and placed in special education and are less likely to be referred for placement in gifted education programs (Ford & Harris, 1995; Gayles, 2005; Jordan, 2001; Pringle, Lyons, & Booker, 2010).

In summary, African American males are found to be held in lower esteem by teachers in general; subsequently, African American males generally achieve at lower rates than all other subgroups (Saunders, Davis, Williams, & Williams, 2004). Similarly, ability grouping has resulted in African American males being assigned to less rigorous classes—special education—which causes a lag academically while students in gifted

courses propel forward (Blanchett, 2006; Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Hosp & Reschly, 2004; Whiting, 2009).

Figure 1. represents the interaction of the theoretical frameworks and conceptual framework to produce academic resilience. This figure demonstrates the systematic interaction in each of the theoretical frameworks. Teachers with high-efficacy and expectations provide an environment which mitigates the pejorative conceptualization of African American males that is uncovered by CRT. However, when protective factors are introduced into the system academic resilience is possible. The child, the school, and the family must work simultaneously to sustain resilience.



**Figure 1. Interactions of the Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Framework
Race and the Conceptual Framework**

The research indicates that in order to fully understand and mitigate the achievement gap, consideration should be given to the intersection of race and social class and how these factors intersect to sustain the achievement gap (Chavous, Smalls, Rivas-

Drake, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Coleman, 1988; Goldsmith, 2004; Lopez, 2003).

Although race is socially constructed, racial categorization supports several symbolic meanings which enhances, legitimizes or reduces the social status of people found within a particular racial group (Lopez, 2003). Historically, power and influence have remained with the White, elite middle-class; therefore, educational decisions are made within that framework marginalizing other racial groups (Blanchett, 2006; Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Lopez, 2003; Standerfer, 2006). The White privilege phenomenon has become ingrained in American history and prevalent in all aspects of society including education (Blanchett, 2006; Sherry, 1999).

According to Blanchett (2006), White privilege in American education is defined as any phenomena, whether individual, structural, political, economic or social that serves to privilege Whites. White privilege has been associated with racism which is defined as individual, structural, political, economic and social forces which serve to discriminate against or disadvantage people on the basis of their race for the purpose of maintaining dominance and power (Bell, 1992). Subsequently, race becomes a powerful component in understanding schooling in America and mitigating the achievement gap.

Conversely, to investigate the achievement gap, Bourdieu's (1986) study can be used to elucidate the phenomena of White privilege or the privileged dominant class through social and cultural capital a student brings to the educational process (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Staton-Salazar, 1997). Bourdieu (1986) viewed social capital as an investment in the dominant class to maintain and reproduce group solidarity and to preserve the group's dominant position through the networking of resources and information. According to Bourdieu (1986), people who are successful have the resources

to continue being successful. Thus, social capital can be converted to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Furthermore, Bourdieu (1986) suggested that the reason for inequality in academic achievement rests in the lack of human capital by the less dominant class.

Because of the way schools are organized in the United States, the social capital of White middle-class is more conducive to school success than the social capital of students of color (Lopez, 2003). Therefore, students of color who lack the cultural and social capital to successfully navigate the parameters of the middle class, inevitably fail in school (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). This is the basis for the construct of race which ensures that people of color are viewed less than equal, therefore, less entitled to equal access and equal resources (Lopez; Jennings & Lynn, 2005).

Although the Brown decision and other legislation attempted to bring equality, access and equity to the schoolhouse, racism has become institutionalized in America's schools due to the dominant class' desire to remain privileged. As a result of this institutionalized privileged mindset, teacher preparation programs do not develop pre-service educators to teach children of the non- dominant class (Siwatu, Frazier, Osariemen, & Tehia, 2011). Therefore, teachers' attitudes and perceptions are often biased towards students of color, particularly African American males (Standerfer, 2006). Research indicates that teacher preparation programs do not prepare teachers and school administrators to be responsive to African American males, rather the programs prepare educators to teach and administrators to function from a White middle- class perspective (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Siwatu, Frazier, Osariemen, & Tehia, 2011). Hence, educators who graduate from teacher preparation programs are not prepared to teach African American males (Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Siwatu et al., 2011).

Similar to all children, African American male students begin school excited and interested in learning; however, by the time they reach the fourth or fifth grade, the effects of White privilege emerge diluting their interest in learning (Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Harmon, 2002). Researchers indicate that new teacher graduates often feel that African American males are less prepared, intellectually inferior and lack parental support which in turn creates a learning environment tattered with low expectations and poor achievement (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Siwatu et al., 2011). Low teacher efficacy fosters an environment of low expectations which results in students being placed in less rigorous programs and tracked into special education (Pringle, Lyons, & Booker, 2010). When teachers feel that African American males are less capable, it becomes a “self-fulfilling” prophecy and students will not demonstrate success which further sustains the gap (Guskey, 1987; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Hargrove & Seay, 2011).

Because political power rests with the White upper and middle-class America, decisions regarding educational policies are formulated to benefit and maintain the status quo (Blanchett, 2006). Thus, policies often support insufficient funding to schools largely attended by African American students in urban areas perpetuating culturally inappropriate and unresponsive curricula which inadvertently disenfranchises students of color (Lopez, 2003). Finally, according to Lopez (2003), educational policy makers and practitioners must consider issues of race, dominance and power to address the issue of inequitable educational resources allocation, inappropriate curriculum and pedagogy, and inadequate teacher preparation in order to successfully mitigate the achievement gap.

Summary of Methodology

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to primarily examine how African

American male middle school students make meaning of their education when taught by predominately White teachers in a suburban middle school. Additionally, the second research question sought to understand students' perceptions of their teachers' efficacy and expectations. In order to understand how these African American male students make meaning of their education, data was gathered from students who were tracked into each of the three academic programs: gifted and talented, standard and special education in a suburban Maryland county.

This basic qualitative study was approached from a constructivist perspective. A purposeful sampling technique was used to obtain participants with semi-structured interviews serving as the primary method of data collection. In addition to using field notes from the interview sessions, this study utilized three standard qualitative coding techniques: Structural Coding, In vivo Coding, and Pattern Coding. These codes were organized into themes which were textualized in order to construct meaning.

Delimitations

This study primarily focused on how African American male students make meaning of their education in a suburban school taught by primarily White teachers. Therefore, African American males who were in this school setting, from one to all of their middle school years, were interviewed. In addition, this research was conducted in a bound system, in a suburban Maryland county. Furthermore, this study focused on the lived experiences of African American male students and did not attempt to hear the voices of teachers or parents.

Limitations

There were many limitations to this study. First, this study was limited to a small purposeful sample of African American male students from a large suburban middle

school. Although the researcher anticipated having at least twenty participants from a pool of fifty, only ten parents consented to having their children take part in this study.

However, the researcher believed saturation was reached as responses became redundant.

Because of the sample size, this study is not generalizable which was not inherent in its design. Nevertheless, participants' voices were heard through semi-structured interviews.

Although interviews were the means of gathering data in this basic qualitative study, the interviews must be viewed in the context for which they were given (Seidman, 1991).

Subsequently, a major limitation to this study was, as with most qualitative studies, results are not generalizable to another context (Merriam, 2002).

Another limitation to the study was that the researcher was the primary collector of data and served as an administrator at the school for several years. Subsequently, the researcher, being an African American male, had an inherent bias because the stories of the young men mirrored the researcher's own experiences which influenced assumptions (Appendix A). Therefore, in an attempt to limit bias, interviews were recorded and transcribed by a separate company. The researcher did not ask leading questions or make leading statements when clarifying open-ended interview questions for participants. More importantly, participants were asked to not exaggerate answers to the interview questions to avoid the Halo effect; consequently, many participants were resolute in their responses. In conclusion, to further limit bias, the researcher retained antidotal notes of the verbal and nonverbal body language of each participant and used the annotated notes to inform the data analysis.

Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are operationally defined below.

Ability Grouping: grouping students according to their perceived abilities, IQ or achievement level in order to provide them with a curriculum that is most appropriate.

Achievement Gap: occurs when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant (that is, larger than the margin of error).

Academic resilience: the process and results that are part of the life story of an individual who has been academically successful, despite obstacles that prevent the majority of others with the same background from succeeding.

Cumulative grade point average: refers to the participants' overall grade point average at the time of the interview.

Engrade: is the electronic grading and parent communication system where parents can log in and monitor their child's grades, see missing assignments and receive emails from the teacher.

Inclusion class: refers to a smaller mixed-class which includes special education and standard students which usually moves at a slower pace than a regular standard class because of the needs of the special education students.

Academic self-esteem: a student's perception of their achievement or lack thereof.

Maryland State Assessment (MSA): refers to the state test that all students are required to take in middle school which is designed to assess the academic performance of each individual and district.

Middle/Upper class students: refers to students who come from a family of at least \$54,430 which is the median income of the sample population.

Program Placement: refers to a student's curricular program such as gifted and

talented, special education or standard.

Suburban Area: a town or area which lies outside of a city.

Successful Student: students who are proficient on the Maryland State School Assessment in Reading and Mathematics.

Teacher Efficacy: the belief teachers have about their skills and abilities to create desirable outcomes for students or the extent to which teachers believe they can influence how well students learn.

Tracking: refers to a method used by many secondary schools to group students according to their perceived ability, IQ, or achievement levels.

Unsuccessful Student: Students who score less than proficient on the Maryland State Assessment in Reading and Mathematics.

Urban Area: a geographical area in a major city.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review spanned 60 years and was informed with sources from 1954 through 2014 with the primary search phrase "*achievement of African American males.*" It also included terms specifically related to urban and suburban public schools. Other search phrases and terms included: *Brown vs. The Board of Education 1954*, *teacher-efficacy*, *teacher-expectations*, *Critical Race Theory*, and *Resilience Theory*. Furthermore, this literature review included searches in the *Educational Research Information Clearing House (ERIC)*, *ProQuest Data Base*, *Google Scholar*, *JSTOR*, *EBSCO Academic Search Premier*, reference lists from articles, Internet searches, technical documents, and books. All articles were peer reviewed.

Although there is an abundance of research on the achievement of African American males in urban schools and the risk factors associated with poverty, there is a growing need to examine the plight of suburban African American males who do not have the traditional risk factors associated with poverty, but are still achieving in a manner inconsistent with their White counterparts. Therefore, many of the studies in this literature review examined the plight of suburban African American males and the persistent and pervasive achievement gap. Not having the traditional risk factors associated with poverty and the accompanying issues, the risk factors for these suburban students are two powerful in-school process factors, teacher-efficacy and teacher-expectation, which will be viewed through the lens of CRT and Resilience Theory.

Since *Brown vs. Board of Education 1954*

Prior to the Supreme Court ruling, *Brown vs. Board of Education 1954*, separate and segregated schools were the norm in the United States. This long standing norm was

established in 1896 by *Plessey vs. Ferguson*, a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case. The court's ruling on *Plessey vs. Ferguson* legitimized the principle of “*separate but equal*” (Lyons & Chesley, 2004). According to Lyons and Chesley (2004), the *Plessey v. Ferguson* ruling validated and institutionalized racial inequality and social norms of segregation for over half a century. The *Plessey vs. Ferguson* decision condoned and maintained racially separate railroad cars and other modes of transportation and virtually guaranteed segregation in the nation's schools and school systems (Lardner, 1999).

Although the 1896 ruling was supposed to ensure “*separate but equal*” accommodations, history has shown this seldom reflected reality, particularly in states where the Court's decision was most applicable (Lyons & Chesley, 2004). In 1935, Charles Houston, Dean of Howard University's Law School, traveled to South Carolina to explore the “*separate but equal*” doctrine and found deplorable conditions in African American schools (Lardner, 1999). He found that many schools were no more than unheated cabins and tar paper shacks; however, under the “*separate but equal*” doctrine, African American schools should have been equal to White schools.

However, *Brown vs. Board of Education* reversed the *Plessey vs. Ferguson* ruling. Public policy that the Court unanimously ruled against was straightforward, “segregated schools (established and maintained by state action) were inherently unequal” (Lyons & Chesley, 2004, p. 298). In *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*, the court clearly said that state-sanctioned-segregation was clearly a violation of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which forbids any state from making or enforcing any laws which deny people within its jurisdiction the equal protection under the law. The ruling overturned the legal justification for segregation across the South and in many places in the United States. In particular, this opinion supported the belief that African

American students were being deprived of their rights as guaranteed by the 14th Amendment.

Furthermore, *Brown vs. Board of Education* served as a catalyst for legislation which ignited social and educational reform throughout the United States. This legislation included the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act 1965* (ESEA) which attempted to put into place high standards and systems of accountability to promote a quality education for all students regardless of socioeconomic status. (Garibaldi, 1992; Gills & Reynolds, 1999; Standerfer, 2006). ESEA provided federal funds to schools based on the socioeconomic status of their students. This seemed to be a way to decrease the achievement gap and not infringe on states' rights to make decisions on curriculum and the general operation of schools. Although ESEA was passed and implemented, coupled with special education legislation, the desired educational outcome was not realized (Brown & Jones, 2004). According to Brown and Jones (2004), African American students, especially males, continued to lag behind their counterparts in other races.

Recently, the *No Child Left Behind Act 2002* (NCLB), the reauthorization of ESEA, required states to have students demonstrate proficiency on state academic standards through mandated state assessments. Since NCLB, African American males have demonstrated gains on state mandated testing, in reading and math, which has narrowed the achievement gap in some states (Center on Educational Policy, 2010). Yet, many African American males are not achieving at the same levels needed for future success in college and careers; thus, the gap remains. According to the Center on Educational Policy (2010), the African American subgroup remained the lowest performing racial/ethnic subgroup in 2008 in the majority of grades and subjects analyzed

in grade levels 4, 8 and high school.

Finally, despite the *Brown vs. Board of Education*, *ESEA*, and special education legislation, the quality of education that African American students receive in the United States remains inadequate (Baker, 2005; Lyons & Chesley, 2004; Saddler, 2005). Braun, Chapman, and Vezzu (2010) posited that the achievement gap between White and African Americans students, between 2000 and 2007, continues to be persistent and pervasive. Even more striking, African American males lag behind all other groups in achievement (Irving & Hundley, 2008; Renick & Zand, 2007). According to research, education remains the strongest predictor of success which includes higher incomes, status advancement and upward social mobility. (Baker, 2005; Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010; Downey, 2008; Lyons & Chesley, 2004).

Researchers have determined there are many factors which contribute to the persistent and pervasive achievement gap such as socioeconomic status, culturally relevant curriculum and instruction, inadequate teacher preparation programs, lack of appropriate funding and many more. (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010; Cooper, 1996; Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Hetty, Bosker, & Geet, 2000). African American males perform at lower rates on standardized test than their White counterparts. Additionally, this gap widens as students' matriculate throughout K-12 and actually widens the longer students stay in school (Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010). Historically, researchers blame the lack of achievement on genetic predispositions (e.g., race), which affects cognition (Franklin, 2007; Jenson, 1969; Terman, 1925). However, as researchers begin to understand more about the achievement of African American males, they realized that many out-of-school and in-school process

factors converge perpetuating the achievement gap (Cooper, 1996; Ghaith & Shaaban, 1999; Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Hosp & Reschly, 2004).

The out-of-school process factors that must be mitigated to narrow the achievement gap are poverty, parental involvement, and health care issues (Halawah, 1992). Although African American males are three times more likely to come from poverty than their White counterparts, educators must not become comfortable with attributing the lack of African American male achievement with socioeconomic status and the lack of parental involvement (Morales, 2010; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Oakes (2005) suggested that the in and out of school process factors must be leveraged to increase academic success; however, educators must focus on in- school process factors that can be mitigated within the confinement of the schoolhouse (Siwatu, Frazier, Osariemen, & Tehia, 2011).

In an effort to breach the achievement gap for African American males, educators must focus on factors they can control and should believe students must succeed. Unfortunately, negative assumptions made by educators promote a self-fulfilling prophecy that serves to sustain the gap in achievement (Hargrove & Seay, 2011). Teachers are central to student achievement. Two in-school factors controlled largely by teachers are teacher-efficacy and teacher-expectation. This literature review analyzed two in- school process factors that are critical to successfully mitigating the achievement gap and discussed theories to undergird in-school process factors. While the academic achievement gap is a key component in the argument that centers on African American male students' academic success, teacher-efficacy is equally important.

Teacher-Efficacy

Kivilcim, Turhan, Mehmet, and Fikret (2013) described teaching as one of the

hardest professions. Furthermore, teaching is referred to as instructing or coaching and suggests that the qualifications for being a teacher must not be solely based on education but on one's self-confidence in fulfilling his/her duties (Kivilcim et al., 2013). Scholars have determined that teacher-efficacy has a direct impact on students' success and attitude (Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Harris & Rosenthal, 1986; Love & Kruger, 2005). Therefore, teachers exert a powerful influence over the achievement of students.

Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory suggests that self-efficacy is one's personal self-confidence in whether or not he/she will be successful against a situation or problem or how he/she will handle the problem. Academicians use Bandura's Social Learning Theory to understand teacher-efficacy which is defined as the belief teachers have about their skills and abilities to create desirable outcomes for students or the extent to which teachers believe they can influence how well students learn (Bandura, 1977; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Harris & Rosenthal, 1986; Kivilcim et al., 2013).

Teacher-efficacy is one of the few constant characteristics related to student achievement. Teachers who believe that student learning can be influenced by effective instruction, despite home and peer influence, and have confidence in their ability to teach, persist longer in their teaching efforts while providing greater academic focus in the classroom (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). In essence, people (teachers) must believe that their actions can produce the desired outcomes. If they do not, there will be little motivation to act or persevere in the face of difficulties such as working in unfamiliar situations and with students who are different. These differences may be ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic or gender based.

According to Gibson and Dembo (1984), two dimensions of teacher-efficacy have

been identified. First, general teacher-efficacy is teachers attributing student struggles to external factors such as family, violence, substance abuse in the home, the value placed on education in the home, and economic factors (Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990). Teachers with a high general efficacy believe that all of these external forces can be overcome by teaching (Brady & Woolfson, 2008). Secondly, personal teacher-efficacy, being more specific, refers to the teachers' beliefs about their own abilities to affect student outcomes. Teachers may have a high sense of general efficacy but still doubt their personal ability to perform the activities necessary to produce the desired outcomes (Brady & Woolfson, 2008; Ghaith & Shaaban, 1999).

While examining small group instruction, Gibson and Dembo (1984) found that teachers with high efficacy spent 28% of their time in small group instruction; whereas, low-efficacy teachers spent 50% of their instructional time in small groups. Although both high and low efficacy teachers used small group instruction, it was more strictly adhered to by low efficacy teachers. Low efficacy teachers became agitated when there was interruption to their routine while engaging in small group instruction. Therefore, students who were working independently were most often off-task and were not redirected by the teachers.

Whereas, when high-efficacy teachers were engaged in small group instruction, they were found to redirect students who were off-task, answer questions from students who came up to the small group, and generally maintained more on-task behavior of the students who were working independently. Gibson and Dembo (1984) found that "high-efficacy teachers may achieve higher student engagement rates by utilizing whole class instruction and may be better able than low-efficacy teachers to keep other students

engaged while instructing small groups" (p.578). Therefore, it is important that suburban schools enroll teachers in developmental training programs that enhance their teaching style to bridge the gap of less performing low-efficacy teachers so that African American male students succeed academically.

Good and Brophy (2003) found differences in feedback patterns following students' incorrect responses. Low- efficacy teachers provided students with little feedback on incorrect responses. Low-efficacy teachers were more likely to provide students with the correct answer rather than allow students to answer the question correctly or call on another student to answer. Low-efficacy teachers did not prompt students for acceptable responses. Conversely, high-efficacy teachers were found to do the opposite.

Brady and Woolfson (2008) examined teacher- efficacy in teachers of students who needed additional learning supports. According to Brady and Woolfson, teacher-efficacy relates to a teacher's feeling of his/her capacity to successfully facilitate student learning. Teachers with a strong sense of efficacy were more willing to modify teaching methods to meet the needs of their students (Stein & Wang, 1988). Moreover, Soodak and Podell (1993) found that teachers, both regular and special education, with a high sense of teaching efficacy were more likely to be supportive of inclusive placements and more willing to take the responsibility for meeting the needs of students with difficulties within their classroom.

Soodak and Podell (1994) found that teachers who believed in their ability to reach even the most difficult students were more likely to make teacher-based suggestions to meet the needs of their students; however, teachers with low personal

efficacy were more likely to look for solutions outside their own classroom and feel a causal relationship between external factors. As expected, low personal efficacy teachers were more likely to refer students to special education.

In recent studies, teacher-efficacy has been shown to have a powerful and direct impact on achievement among African American students (Gill & Reynolds, 1999; Tucker et al., 2002; Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan, & Quek, 2008). Other teacher-efficacy work suggests that teachers have lower expectations for and fewer interactions with minority children (Garibaldi, 1992; Osborne, 1999; Hetty, Bosker, & Geert, 2000; Hudley, 2005). Therefore, teacher-efficacy can be related to race.

Pang and Sablan (1998) found that many teachers felt unprepared to teach students from culturally different backgrounds. More specifically, teachers felt they could not effectively teach African American students, according to Pang and Sablan. In-service teachers, in particular, reported lower efficacy for teaching African American students (Pang & Sablan, 1998). In light of the known influence of efficacy on student achievement, these findings, may in part, explain the large and persistent gap between the academic performance of White students and culturally diverse students, particularly African American students.

Garibaldi (1992) found that in New Orleans, 40% of the African American male students did not feel that their teachers had high expectations; nevertheless, 60% of the students indicated they wanted their teachers to raise their level of expectation. Pang and Sablan (1998) suggests that low expectation is directly linked to low efficacy where teachers felt unprepared to effectively teach African American male students. Moreover, Pollard's (1993) research indicated that African American male students were more

likely to be misjudged by teachers and less likely to receive educational encouragement and information than African American female students. Jenkins (2006) suggested that although White teachers have good intentions, they simply lacked the cultural capital to successfully reach and engage students of color. Likewise, Hubbard (2005) found, particularly for African American male students, that teachers' low expectations had significant and long-term consequences. She describes a cycle of disengagement whereby teachers' low expectations caused these students to disengage from academics, which in turn, caused teachers to have even lower expectations of their abilities (Hubbard, 2005).

Ward (2002) suggested that low efficacy teachers often react adversely to male behavior: which can be rambunctious and loud, or marked by distractibility, causing teachers to respond with more negative attention, negative evaluation, and suspension. This scenario is particularly evident with respect to African American males (Leake & Leake, 1992). African American males are disciplined by school personnel more often and more severely than African American females, leading to higher dropout rates and higher rates of incarceration (Hubbard, 2005). Additionally, African American males are 16 times more likely to be subjected to corporal punishment as White females at both the junior and senior high school levels (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Furthermore, Taylor and Foster (1986) reported in sequential order the likelihood of suspicion to commit a crime among African Americans to Whites, ranging from most-likely to least-likely: African Americans males, White males, African Americans females, White females.

Grant (1984) observed six 1st-grade classrooms that ranged in composition from 20% to 96% African American. Half of the classes were taught by White teachers and

half by African American teachers. Grant (1984) found that both groups of teachers rated the performance of African American female students below that of White female students, but above that of African American male students. In addition, African American females were more likely to be encouraged to develop social rather than cognitive skills. African American females received less teacher/peer attention and appeared to be more isolated than African American males (Grant, 1984). Subsequently, African American girls saw themselves as less powerful with teachers and peers than did African American males. Grant asked teachers to evaluate the skills of their students and found that teachers rated African American females' academic performance and skills as average or slightly below average in comparison to other children. African American girls were rated most similarly to White males, lower than White females and higher than African American males. Therefore, African American females had lower estimations of academic skills than African American males despite their higher performance. This data becomes more telling when suburban schools are analyzed.

The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) (2003), data revealed that African American students from middle-class backgrounds outperformed students from lower-income backgrounds; however, these students still lagged behind their White counterparts. In line with NAEP's data, Ogbu (2003) conducted an ethnographic study on African American families in the Cleveland's Shaker Heights community and found that African American families of high socio-economic backgrounds performed less than the level of Whites with similar socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, if socio-economic backgrounds hold constant, data analysis will continuously reveal that African American students, especially African American males, will lag behind their White peers (Braun,

Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010; Chavous, Smalls, Rivas-Drake, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Osborne, 1999).

Howard and Reynolds (2008) attributed the disparity to low teacher expectations and the lack of rigorous courses which has resulted in the disproportionate referral of African American males to special education and gifted and talented education. Thus, looking beyond socio-economics to school level processes that account for the difference in achievement, researchers concur that teacher-efficacy is a powerful in school process factor which is the catalyst for teacher expectancy (Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Lampe-Enderlin, 2002; Pringle, Lyons, & Booker, 2010).

Teacher-Expectations

Teacher-efficacy has been shown to have a direct impact on student achievement (Long, Monoi, Harper, Knoblauch, & Murphy, 2007). However, teacher-efficacy is the vehicle which informs teacher-expectations. Teachers with low teacher-efficacy tend to have low expectations for students. Since the first documentation of teacher- expectancy by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), many researchers have acknowledged that teachers' expectations have a direct influence on student achievement (Alvidrez & Weinstein, 1999; Harris, Rosenthal, & Snodgrass, 1986; Kulinski & Weinstein, 2001; Rubie-Davis, 2006; Rubie- Davis, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006). More specifically, Ferguson (2003) and Noguera (2003) found low teacher-expectation to be related to low academic achievement in African American students.

In 1985, several meta-analysis studies were conducted that focused on teachers' expectations; however, 16 studies centered on race (Ferguson, 2003). Teachers were found to have higher expectations for White students in nine of the studies and for

African American students in one of the studies. The other six studies found that differences were statistically insignificant. Other studies found that White teachers expected less of their African American students (Harris & Rosenthal, 1986; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). Additionally, Decker, Dona, and Christenson (2007) concluded that African American middle school students performed higher when they perceived that their teachers had high expectations for them. Furthermore, African American males were found to be generally held in lower esteem by teachers resulting in lower expectations which negatively impacted their achievement. Because of low expectations, African American males face two major disadvantages: ability grouping and tracking which often subjugates African Americans males to lower trajectories than any other subgroup (Burris-Corbett, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008; Cooper, 1996; Mickelson & Greene, 2006).

In theory, ability grouping and tracking sorts students into differentiated curricula based on specific measures of prior performance for purposes of teaching them in ways targeted to ability and prior knowledge (Lucus, 1999; Oakes, 2005). The practice of ability grouping and tracking usually begins in elementary school when students are identified as gifted or exceptional or when they are assigned to a group for instruction within a classroom (Oakes, 2005). Consequently, ability grouping and tracking becomes more visible during the middle grade years when academic classes often are differentiated into general and honors levels.

Lucus (1999) suggested that tracking serves to maintain and perpetuate social educational inequality because students in lower tracks such as special education and on lower ability tracks receive inferior education. Low-income and ethnic minorities are

disproportionately placed in lower tracks, while middle to upper-class Whites and Asians are enrolled in more rigorous college-bound courses (Mickelson & Greene, 2006). As a result, ability grouping and tracking is a school process that directly impacts the referral and placement of African American students in special education and gifted education (Blanchett, 2006; Ford, 1998; Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Jordan, 2001).

The 23rd Annual Report to Congress on the implementation of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) indicated that African American students continue to be overrepresented across all thirteen legally sanctioned disability categories with significant disproportionality occurring within the categories of mental retardation (MR) and emotional disturbance (ED) (US Department of Education, 2001). The three most prevalent disability categories are MR, ED, and learning disabilities (LD). Together these categories comprise the largest number of children served in special education. When one examines the overrepresentation data among these three high-incidence disability categories—MR, ED, and LD—it is documented that African American students are overrepresented in special education and are stigmatized as disabled (US Department of Education, 2001).

Jordan (2001) found that African American students nationwide are nearly three times more likely than Whites to be labeled MR, almost two times more likely to be labeled ED, and almost one and a half times more likely to be diagnosed with LD. Oftentimes, African American students are not included in rigorous curriculum or standard placement classes. Furthermore, Jordan (2001) examined district level data from ten urban school districts. Jordan's (2001) data revealed not only disproportionate numbers of African American students labeled as MR, ED, and LD across ten school

districts, but these students represent a significant percentage of the population of students who spend more than 21 percent of the school day outside of the general education classroom.

Given the research findings of a disproportionate identification of African American students within high- incidence disability categories and segregated class placement, serious issues arise regarding educational inequity. This troubling picture of overrepresentation and exclusion warrants a careful examination of how African American students are positioned and constructed as disabled within the organizational and disciplinary processes of the school.

Teacher-efficacy and teacher-expectations are important to understand because it predicts a number of student variables (Ross, 1992). Highly efficacious teachers report improved student outcomes including higher student achievement (Ross, 1992), and school effectiveness (Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990). One of the most important decisions a teacher makes is to refer a student for individual special education evaluation. The referral initiates a process whereby a student is identified and tested by a team of individuals to determine eligibility for special education services. High expectancy teachers report more positive referral data, including a willingness to provide interventions to students (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Contrarily, low expectancy teachers are less likely to make modifications for struggling students and are more likely to refer those students to special education (Guskey & Passaro). Oftentimes, referred students are placed in some level of special education with a disproportionate representation of African American males (Garibaldi, 1992; Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Jackson & Moore, 2008; Oswald, Countinho, Best, & Singh, 1999).

Subsequently, the teacher referral process has been identified as causal for the African American gender disparity in special education. Some studies hypothesize that biases in teacher-student interactions yield over-identification of African American males and under-identification of African American females (Ross, 1992; Lyons, 1996; Hosp & Reschly, 2004). Grantham and Ford (2003) investigated teachers' priorities when referring students for special education and reported more African American males than African American females were referred. Students ranking highest for learning or adjustment problems were African American males. More African American males than African American females were referred for behavior problems. Grantham and Ford (2003) concluded that girls were relatively ignored in the referral process.

Additionally, Caseau, Luckasson, and Kroth (1994) investigated the possibility of teacher bias in referrals for students with serious ED. Caseau et al. (1994) studied referrals for adolescents and found significant gender differences. As suspected, African American males far outnumbered African American females in the groups referred and identified through school systems. Externalized behaviors (disruptive classroom behavior) were more common than internalized behaviors (symptoms of anxiety and depression).

The literature indicates that teachers more often refer males for special education for behavior problems; however, both males and females were referred for poor achievement (Caseau et al., 1994; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Hosp & Reschly, 2004). The emerging theme is that teachers are more likely to refer students with a combination of poor achievement and some other problems, particularly behavior problems (Caseau et al., 1994; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Hosp & Reschly, 2004). Further investigation is

required to determine whether gender disproportionality reflects actual differences between males and females or is it the result of environmental and cultural influences manifested in teacher-student interactions.

The 23rd Annual Report to Congress on the implementation of IDEA indicated that African American males continue to be overrepresented across all thirteen disability categories. Additional research commissioned through the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University described the extent to which African Americans and other minority students are identified as disabled and educated in restrictive special education environments (US Department of Education, 2001). This disproportionate placement of African American males is a multifaceted problem. Of the many contributing factors, poverty is the greatest predictor of academic and social failure (Ross, 1992; Grantham & Ford, 2003; Oswald et al., 2003; Robinson, 2007).

The argument that links poverty to disproportionate placement cannot account for variations in identification rates across minority groups with similar levels of poverty and academic failure. Research indicates that significant racial disparities exist in identification rates between African Americans and Hispanics in the categories of MR and ED, and between African American males and African American females in the category of ED (Goldsmith, 2004). Furthermore, almost 3% of African Americans nationwide were labeled MR compared with less than 1% of the Hispanic population (Goldsmith, 2004). Additionally, Goldsmith noted that African American males were almost four times as likely as their female counterparts to be identified as ED. Therefore, poverty seems to be an inadequate explanation in accounting for the differences in identification rates between African Americans males and females as well as differences

across minority groups (Harmon, 2002; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Ogbu, 2003).

As with special education, the teacher referral is the “gate-keeper” for gifted and talented education. The referral is the process by which students become eligible for official evaluation for entry into gifted and talented education programs (McBee, 2006). Although the overrepresentation of African American males in special education is not a new phenomenon, neither is the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education (Daniels, 1998). Despite advancement in educational reform efforts, inequities exist in programming and instructional practices that negatively affect African American students. (Daniels, 1998; Ford & Feist, 1993; Ford & Webb, 1994).

Gifted African American students share many of the concerns as their non-minority peers including peer pressures, poor peer relationships, perfectionism, heightened sensitivity and awareness of societal problems, excessive expectations from significant others, and confusion about the values of their gifts (Ford & Harris, 2009). Ford and Harris (2009) indicated that academic success and retention of African American students is influenced more by personal environmental transactions and related sociocultural influences than by intellectual and academic factors. Furthermore, such factors as a positive self-concept, an understanding of racism, and the existence of support systems are more predictive of African American success than academic ability (Ford & Feist, 1993; Ford & Harris, 2009; Ford & Webb, 1994). Nonintellectual and nonacademic, psychosocial, and contextual factors are some of the strongest predictors of negative outcomes for African American students; therefore, African American students confront many school processes that influence their participation in gifted and talented education.

Thus, numerous psychometric and educational issues must be examined to better understand the low representation of minority students tracked into gifted and talented education. As stated earlier in this discourse, teacher referral/nomination is the “gate-keeper” for African American students tracked into gifted and talented education. According to Ford (1998), 46 states use teacher nominations in the screening process and 42 use teacher input in placement decisions. According to Ford (1998), a major concern was that 86% of the teachers were White. Additionally, research has indicated that teachers, because of their lack of training in gifted education, are less effective at identification than even students’ parents (Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Zhang, & Emmons, 1993). As a result, teachers are not always the most reliable source for identifying gifted learners.

Numerous studies have described the influence that teacher-efficacy and expectation have on student achievement (Harris & Rosenthal 1986; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Love & Kruger, 2005). Teachers often emphasized behavior such as cooperation, answering correctly, punctuality and neatness when making referrals (Ford, 1998). These behaviors may not be indicators for gifted, underachieving minority students; however, Ford indicates characteristics such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and family structure all influence teachers’ perceptions of students. Even when minority students have been identified as gifted, teachers may still have lower expectations (Ford, 1998).

A study conducted by High and Udall (1983) found that White teachers under-referred African American students for gifted education programs and that students’ teachers believed that poor academic achievement and performance was due to cultural deficits. Therefore, low teacher- efficacy, low expectancy and negative perceptions have

contributed to the low referral rate of African American students to gifted education. It is an unfortunate reality that problems related to racism, segregation, and long-held beliefs concerning minority groups have resulted in uncertain benefits for African Americans and other minority students (Oysterman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001).

Regardless of social standing, urban or suburban educational environment and level of schooling, African American males are often casualties of these process factors (Osborne, 1999; Saunders, Davis, Williams, & Williams, 2004). When tracking and ability grouping were examined, African American males were most often tracked into less demanding classes such as special education and lower ability groups. Once again, African American males were found to be tracked into less rigorous classes, especially special education, more frequently than their female counterparts (Saunders et al., 2004). Likewise, in gifted and talented education, African American male students lagged significantly behind White and Asian students in referral and placement.

Given the many challenges African American students have to face, research has found racial identity as a significant contributor to the underachievement of African American males (Chavous, Smalls, Rivas-Drake, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008). Research on race has suggested that many view African American males as dangerous attaching such descriptors as threatening, criminal, and the products of dysfunctional families (Jackson, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Jackson & Moore, 2008). Racial constructs have become a powerful means that school officials use to label, sort and fabricate the identities of the African American male (Kennedy, 1992)

Critical Race Theory

The term race, popularized in the 19th century, sought to divide humans according

to physical differences or phenotypes such as skin color and biological ancestry in order to develop a theory of distinct superiority and inferiority among races (Bryan, 2012). Race as a socio- historical construct was designed to justify imperialistic regimes and practices and to exploit and subordinate Africans by Whites (Bryan, 2012; Warmington, 2009). Although race is a socio-historical construct, it remains a persistent social fact at the level of lived experience and social organization. The biological concept of race may be unreal to some people; however, race manifests in the form of racist practices within schools, the media, labor markets and other areas of society. Thus, this phenomenon and its relationship to education will be examined through Critical Race Theory (CRT).

CRT is closely associated with a long tradition of African American social critique which questions the obdurate nature of racism and White supremacy (Rashid, 2011). Within this tradition, the works of W. E. Burghardt Du Bois are seminal. In the American academy, Du Bois's critiques foreshadow many of the key elements of CRT. According to Rabaka (2007), the Duboisian discourse on race and racism makes one wonder whether contemporary CRT is a continuation or contemporary version of the work of Du Bios. Rabaka (2007) furthers argued that Du Bois identified the systemic nature of racism and its function within the political economy of a racially divergent society. Moreover, CRT draws on Du Bois's prescient insight on the problem of the color line. These insights include his robust articulation of double consciousness and his attention to the importance of gender, class, and how it is personified in racialization.

Like Rabaka (2007), Shuford (2001) draws a clear parallel between the work of Du Bois and CRT. According to Shuford (2001), CRT embraces four Duboisian tenets. These tenets are:

The impossibility of racial eliminativism; the worth of races toward laboratory culture-making; the “inescapability of Whiteness as an ontological condition of indebtedness; and revision of “racial gifts” discourse to motivate racial redress as gifts of atonement toward mutual healing and delegitimization of racialized commodification practices. (p. 301)

Consequently, Du Bois anticipates many aspects of CRT with his thesis: *The Problem of the Twentieth Century is the Problem of the Color Line* (Rashid, 2011). This thesis, although a simple statement, encapsulates the quintessence of Du Bois’s reasoning that racial inequality has been so inextricably interwoven into the social fabric of the United States and that it underlies all aspect of society. Thus, many connections can be noted between Duboisian tenets and CRT.

Du Bois’s emphasis on the indestructible nature of race and racism in American society relates directly to CRT (Rabaka, 2007; Rashid, 2001; Shuford, 2001). His work illustrates the centrality of race and racism and addresses the role of institutions in perpetuating systems of racial inequality even criticizing both slavery and colonialism. Furthermore, he illuminates how these institutions, slavery and colonialism, served to solidify a system of global White supremacy. Additionally, Du Bois argues the question of counter-narrative or voice (Rabaka, 2007; Shuford, 2001). He supported the notion that African history provided a platform for African Americans to understand themselves in a global-historical context, and it also provided African Americans an opportunity to challenge the dominant discourse of White supremacy (Rabaka, 2007). This discourse of White supremacy suggested Africans had no history, and the enslavement and colonialism were improvements in their otherwise despicable condition. Finally, Du Bois

recognized the relationship between education and social power which is linked to his views on culture and the importance of dedicated educators and institutions as organs of social change (Rabaka, 2007; Rashid, 20011; Shuford, 2001).

Building on the work of Du Bois, CRT emerged in the legal arena with Derrick Bell's public protest at Harvard University over the need to hire more African Americans and to shift the treatment of race as a methodological variable to a central conceptual place in research (Leonardo, 2012). However, CRT emerged in education during the mid-1990s (Ladson-Tate & Tate,1995). Educational scholars developed a cache of concepts such as knowledge apartheid, micro aggression, and critical race pedagogy. Intellectually, CRT legitimized a critical study of race and racism in education (Leonardo, 2012).

Although there are some excellent male and female African American students, on average, African American male students achieve at lower rates than other ethnicities. According to McWhorter (2000), African American males and other students of color belong to a culture infected with a subtly anti-intellectual strain, but these students are decisively taught from birth not to whole-heartedly embrace schooling. McWhorter (2000), suggest that researchers use a stereotypical and deficit model to explain the status of African American males in public education. However, it is through CRT that we are constantly reminded of the lingering significance of racism and our inability to eliminate it from society in general and more importantly public education (Alston, Bell, & Preice-Feist, 1996; Delgado & Stefanci, 2001; Du Bois, 1935).

CRT challenges the dominate discourse of race and racism in education by examining how educational theory and pedagogy are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups (Ladson-Tate & Tate, 1995; Ortiz & Jani,2010). CRT in education is

illuminated by five basic assumptions: (1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, (2) the challenge to the dominant ideology, (3) the commitment to social justice, (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (5) the interdisciplinary perspective (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

The first assumption, the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, recognizes the role that race and racism has played in the structuring of schools and schooling practices which intersects with other forms of subordination such as sexism and classism (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Furthermore, CRT posits that race and racism is central, endemic, permanent and a fundamental part of defining and explaining how American society functions (Bell, 1992; Yosso, 2005). Through CRT, one is forced to acknowledge the inextricable layers of racial subordination based on gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality (Yosso, 2005). Moreover, CRT recognizes ideologies of objectivity, neutrality and meritocracy, and recognizes these as ideological regimes of truth (Ladson-Tate & Tate, 1995). In an attempt to lay the foundation for CRT, it is important to tie the theory to the relevance of this study by noting that curricular practices such as ability grouping, teacher- efficacy and expectation, and student testing have historically been used to frame the academic prowess of colored students (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Within the fabric of this discourse, it is important to note that racism encompasses four distinct dimensions of segregation: micro and macro components, institutional and individual, conscious and unconscious elements, and has a cumulative impact collectively and individually (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

According to Parisi, Lichter, and Taquino (2011), macro-segregation is defined as

the “unequal geographic distribution of Blacks and other racial groups across places, both metro and non-metro, and regions” (p. 831). Moreover, African Americans are being excluded from mainstream society in high and persistent numbers through neighborhood segregation and racial balkanization at other levels of geography which includes various groups and niches that are often hostile. Dixon, Tredoux, and Clack (2005) defined the macro level of racial segregation as “racial segregation which is manifested on a large scale level such as horizontal and vertical stratification of occupations or through the uneven demography of entire cities or regions” (p. 399). Additionally, these phenomenon focuses on social context where racial intergroup boundaries are formally demarcated which presents as stable and institutionalized barriers to interaction. This practice is especially evident in the racial composition of the nation’s schools (Dixon et al., 2005).

Logan (2008) found a decline in African American and White segregation over a twenty-year span in 255 metropolitan areas. These findings suggest that segregation has decreased due to changing racial attitudes, residential preferences, African American socio-economic mobility and the enforcement of fair housing and lending practices. Conversely, a less sanguine view is African American neighborhood segregation remains exceptionally high, exceeding all other racial or ethnic groups from Whites. (Massey, 2008; White, Crowder, Tolnay, & Adelman, 2005). In an analyses of 298 metropolitan areas, Wilkes and Iceland (2004) found that African Americans were considered more likely than Asians and Hispanics to be segregated along several distinct dimensions such as unevenness, exposure, concentration, clustering, and centralization.

Additionally, White-flight has played a significant role in changing patterns of

macro-segregation (Gillborn, 2006; Schnell & Yoav, 2001). Zhang (2008) defined White flight as:

A demographic term originally used to describe the phenomenon of residential relocation of White households from inter-city neighborhoods to suburban communities in response to the in-migration and succession of minority populations, especially blacks, and the social problems that sometimes are associated with such migration. (p. 236)

Subsequently in education, White flight refers to the decreasing enrollment of White students in poor- performing inner city schools to suburban schools; however, some families do not relocate but rather move their children to private or parochial schools. (Crowder, 2000; Zhang, 2008). Fairlie and Resch (2002) suggested a preference theory which proposes that Whites move to avoid contact with minorities due to the desire to maintain racial homogeneity or religious affiliation. Alternately, Saporito and Sohoni (2006) suggested a market based theory to White flight which postulated that Whites move because they are pursuing a quality education.

White suburbanization or exurbanization, being racially motivated, left African Americans and other minorities in declining cities. White flight left urban areas with a declining economic base. This process has amplified macro-segregation by creating an uneven spatial distribution of African Americans and Whites across communities and regions (Parisi, Lichter, & Taquino, 2011; Wilkes & Iceland, 2004). However, upwardly mobile African Americans are moving into older suburbia and to suburbs closer to major cities. The number of African Americans has increased in the suburbs forcing Whites to move further away from the inner city. The flights of Whites decrease the economic base

of inner cities and suburban communities alike.

Similarly, micro-segregation is a phenomenon whereby boundary processes operate at an intimate scale and in everyday life with fleeting social relations, informal and subject to constant realignment (Schnell & Yoav, 2001). Micro-segregation is the outcome of innumerable small acts of division that spontaneously occur. When the divisions are viewed in isolation they often seem innocuous; however, collectively they reproduce systems of social isolation and profoundly shape the daily experience of race (Dixon et al., 2005). Studies to support micro-segregation were conducted in the United States in the period following the end of *de jure* segregation (Dixon et al., 2005; Schnell & Yoav, 2001).

Davis, Seibert, and Breed (1966) investigated race relation on public transit buses in New Orleans after the abolition of the White precedence law. In 1958, this law made it illegal for African American passengers to sit in front of any White passenger and conversely, for a White passenger to occupy a seat behind an African American passenger. Their findings indicated that so-called precedence violators were rare and the vast majority of bus rides continued with high levels of segregation (Davis et al., 1966). In short, legal desegregation had failed to bring about *de facto* integration.

Likewise, Parker (1968) conducted a study at Chicago Baptist Church and found that members seemed to be willing to initiate and sustain interracial conversations which led researchers to believe significant degrees of integration had been achieved. However, when seating patterns were analyzed over a series of five Sundays, findings suggested a pattern of systematic segregation with African Americans and Whites sitting in different areas of the church. Whites sitting in each of the church's quadrant differed significantly

from the expected even distribution which maintained seating distances and divisions. Similarly, Schofield and Sagar (1977) conducted a longitudinal study on students' eating arrangements at a middle school over a year-long period. Patterns of both face-to-face and side-by-side seating was observed and analyzed. The findings indicated minimal mixing across racial and gender lines and that seating arrangements were a process of re-segregation in the school.

Therefore, these studies suggest that segregation exist within everyday life spaces such as buses, churches and school cafeterias. Thus, segregation is maintained, whether deliberate or inadvertently. Furthermore, these studies illustrated the micro-ecology of segregation. Micro- segregation institutes and maintains racial boundaries in situations where the possibilities of interactions are perpetually imminent. Subsequently, mutual isolation of groups encourages the development of negative attitudes, intergroup tensions, conflict, and stereotypes (Dixon et al., 2005).

Institutionalized racism manifests clearly in public education. Education, a social institution, is steeped in institutional and everyday forms of racism which permeates school life at all levels (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). These forms of institutionalized racism include ability grouping practices by which African American students and other minorities are over-represented in lower academic tracks. In addition to institutionalized racism, racism may take the form of conscious and unconscious perpetrators.

Young (2011) identifies conscious perpetrators as those individuals who commit intentional acts of racism such as purposeful, albeit sometimes subtle, discrimination on the basis of race. Young (2011) asked teachers to define conscious perpetrators and found that teachers define conscious perpetrators as individuals who made racist jokes and

stereotypical remarks based on first impressions. The participants further described conscious perpetrators as someone who accepts stereotypes without challenge. Thus, implicit in their view of conscious perpetrators are stereotypical images of “old White men convening in clandestine meetings plotting the demise of people of color” (Stovall, 2006, p. 250).

Conversely, participants identified the unconscious perpetrator as those individuals who commit acts of hostility or speak words of denigration with no awareness of malice or foul play. Many White Americans believe that racism ended with the Civil Rights Movement and the objective of racial equality and multiculturalism has been achieved. These individuals call for color blindness or the non- recognition of race. Harris (1993) argued that not recognizing race in itself is racist. Colorblindness simply protects the property interest of Whites and denies the historical and social context of White domination, according to Harris.

The second assumption of CRT is the challenge of the dominate ideology. More importantly, CRT challenges the “universality of the White experience/judgment as the authoritative standard that binds people of color and normatively measures, directs, controls and regulates the term of proper thought, expression, presentment and behavior” (Calmore, 1992, p. 2160). Furthermore, CRT recognizes the system of education in the United States as part of a critique of societal inequality and challenges social and cultural assumptions including culture, intelligence, language, and capability which are challenged through research, pedagogy, and praxis. These assumptions are most manifested in education through stereotypes. Racial and ethnic stereotypes take on three distinct forms: intelligence and educational, personality or character, and physical

appearance. African Americans students, including males and other minorities, are often characterized as dumb, lazy, irresponsible, dirty, and dangerous (Jenkins, 2006).

Stigmatized language is often used to rationalize African American positions in society (Jenkins, 2006). In the schoolhouse, these stereotypical traits are often used to justify low expectations, placing students of color in separate schools and in separate classrooms within schools, "dumbing down" the curriculum and pedagogy, and expecting students of color to occupy lower status and levels of occupations (Blanchett, 2006; Ferguson, 2003).

Critical race theorists argue that traditional claims of objectivity and meritocracy camouflage the self-interest, power, and privilege of the dominant group in public education and society in general (Calmore, 1992; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Michael Young introduced meritocracy into the public lexicon in his seminal 1958 book, *The Rise of Meritocracy*. In his book, meritocracy is a pejorative term used to describe a social system based on intelligence testing and educational attainment (Lui, 2011). However, in today's society meritocracy is often referenced as a positive concept to which one should aspire. Nevertheless, the fundamental ideal of meritocracy is that status in society should be determined by individual merit.

Individuals may believe they are constituents in meritocracy because of their level of educational attainment. Subsequently, these individuals believe they should be rewarded with power, authority, status and wealth; however, the reality of meritocracy is not unambiguous. The perplexing issue with meritocracy is that it fails to recognize that there is greater structural social inequalities at play that might result in students not attaining educational standards (Lui, 2011). Baez identifies meritocracy as an "institutional construct and that it does not and cannot exist outside of the institutions that

uses it” (as cited in Lui, 2011, p. 386). Therefore, the concept of meritocracy is fundamentally subjective and any attempt to demarcate it inevitably renders it vulnerable to critique (Lui, 2011).

The third assumption of CRT is to examine social systems: law, education and media, and how these systems reproduce and normalize racism (Ladson-Tate & Tate, 1995). Committed to social justice, the critical race framework seeks to be laboratory and transformative in its research agenda eliminating racism, class oppression, poverty and to empower all marginalized groups and eliminate inter-connected structures of oppression (Solórzano, 2001). This framework seeks to decrease the achievement gap in all students by exposing inequalities and inadequacies in the school process practices of public education.

Public education looks to CRT to expose inequalities (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Jay, 2003). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) connect race and property as a central construct in order to understand the inequalities and inadequacies in schools. The findings indicate that racism accounts for such inequalities as dropout and suspension rates among African American males and other students of color. More importantly, Ladson-Tate and Tate (1995) linked property values to the quality of schools. This link illustrates how poverty and low social status is racialized with African Americans and other minorities having access to property with lower values; which in turn, affects the quality of the schools in the area.

Furthermore, Jay (2003) argued that for a re- examination of the hidden racial curricula used in schools. She suggests that schools should contend for a progressive multicultural curriculum but severely limits its transformational possibilities. Jay

proposes that attention should be drawn to this contradiction. Likewise, Lynn and Parker (2006) argued White intellectual supremacy has shaped the discourse on the achievement gap. In short, curriculum has failed to connect with communities of color and failed to consider perspectives of children of color. Lynn and Parker (2006) suggested that schools should consider creating a more inclusive environment by changing curriculum and policy to embrace people of color.

Furthermore, researchers have examined the experiences of students of color and the inequalities they face in education. For example, Duncan (2003) conducted an ethnographic study of a larger high performing high school in the mid-west and found that adolescent African American males were subject to subtle but painful microaggression. Microaggression in its simplest terms is described as quiet, often unintended slights which can be racist and/or sexist that make a person feel underestimated on the basis of color or gender (Davis, 1989; Duncan, 2002). Microaggressive behaviors lead to feelings of inadequacy and eventually decreased levels of performance in school for African American males and other racially marginalized students. In the same way, other researchers found that schools often fail to explore the cultural wealth a student brings (Lynn & Parker, 2006). This community cultural wealth is often devalued or ignored.

Yosso (2005), through her idea of community cultural wealth, offered an alternative interpretation of the traditional Bourdieuan theory of cultural capital. Bourdieu argues that the knowledge of the upper and middle class society is considered capital that is valuable in a hierarchical society (Bourdieu, 1986). He suggests because one is born into a family where knowledge is viewed as valuable knowledge can be easily

accessed through schooling which in turn allows for social mobility. Therefore, Bourdieu's views on how hierarchical societies reproduce themselves is often used to describe why social and academic outcomes are lower for African American students. This view assumes that African American students lack the necessary social and cultural capital for social mobility. Thus, schools operate from this deficit model which suggests that a student's race and class leave them lacking the necessary knowledge and social skills, ability, and cultural capital to be socially mobile.

Community cultural wealth switches the focus from this deficit view of cultural poverty disadvantages. Community cultural wealth focuses and learns from the vast cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by a socially marginalized group that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged (Yosso, 2005). Community cultural capital recognizes the cultural wealth which students of color bring from their homes to the classroom which include: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital. Subsequently, this approach to education acknowledges the multiple strengths and talents that communities of color bring to the school house and to the larger struggle for social and racial justice.

DeCuri and Dixon (2004) conducted a study which looked at the impact of racism on African American students at a predominately White private school. They found a concept of interest convergence where African American civil and social rights are only tokens given when Whites have a decided self-interest gain (DeCuri & Dixon, 2004). Another troubling finding was students who were recruited as athletes, and were also academically gifted, were seen by their peers and administrators as an enhancement for the sports status of the school. Finally, the researchers found evidence of the concept of

colorblindness which is the notion that “color” is not seen or used when making a variety of decisions (DeCuri & Dixon, 2004). However, they found that the school downplayed a racial incident with disciplinary ramifications (DeCuri & Dixon, 2004). Additionally, African American students were the only one’s subjected to the school rules of racelessness with no outward displays of pride and culture during graduation ceremonies. This research is powerful because it uncovers how racism works in elite school settings.

The fourth assumption of CRT recognizes the centrality of experiential knowledge or the voices of African American students and all students of color as legitimate, appropriate and critical to understanding and analyzing the achievement gap (Lewis, 2001). CRT gives voice to the marginalized through hearing their stories by way of narratives, chronicles, family histories, scenarios, biographies and parables that draw on the strengths of the lived experiences students bring to the classroom. Morris (2004) conducted research on two successful African American schools. He found that success lies in a strong home/school connection (Morris, 2004). The schools were welcoming of African American parents, and administrators worked cooperatively to create successful bonds with the students and their families. Most importantly, the findings indicated a strong presence of teachers who cared about their students’ academic, cultural and knowledge building success (Morris, 2004). In short, the school climate fostered learning and a sense of community.

Through focusing on the lived experiences of students, voice is given to the marginalized who would otherwise remain nameless and voiceless (Eggleston & Miranda, 2009; Gribble, Cowen, Wyman, Work, & Wabib, 1993). Not only are the stories of these students told and brought to life but can also be used to connect the

experiences of others who share a similar plight. Furthermore, it illustrates the struggles that students experience in the larger society especially since society tends to blame students of color and their families for their failure in school when schools are dreadfully inadequate in helping the majority of children become successful in the larger society.

The transdisciplinary perspective, the fifth assumption, challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most traditional analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism by placing them both in a historical and contemporary context using transdisciplinary methods (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). CRT's transdisciplinary perspective methodology allows educators and researchers to draw on other fields of study such as ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, psychology, film, theater and other fields (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Yosso, 2005). By drawing on other theories and methodologies, a multidimensional view is established. Additionally, not only is this work disparate in its origins, the research literature has covered a wide range in this area within K- 12 and higher education including studies of teaching and teacher education, critical race examinations of bilingual education, criticism of multicultural education and to issues of curriculum and instruction.

More than 50 years after the Brown decision, racism is still pervasive and persistent in America's schools. Students of color continue to ask the question why they are hindered on the basis of color and social class. The uneven allocation of resources will continue until school district leaders, academicians, and policy makers look beyond research and actively assume responsibility to enact corrections. CRT will help in that regard. Finally, understanding CRT alone will not help to close the achievement gap between African American males and their White counterparts; however, aggressive,

color conscious efforts to change the way things are will do a great deal to eliminate the achievement gap (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). Snape-Jindal and Miller (2008) suggests that the key to navigating the achievement gap may be to understand those students who have demonstrated resilience successfully navigating the gap despite the many risks.

Resilience Theory

According to Condly (2006), most people believe in the existence of three fundamental principles which are embraced by all people believe and by which all people operate. These principles are: "The world is essentially a good place; Life events have meaning and purpose; and One's own person is valuable or worthy" (p. 211). These assumptions usually ring true and remain intact, unquestioned, unmoved regardless of the ups and downs, whether routine or novel, and regardless of a person's experiences. However, sometimes tragic events happen in life that often require immediate attention; but, it is the lingering damage that is most troubling (Condly, 2006). Additionally, trauma does not affect all people in the same way or with equivalent magnitude. After the initial pain, some people manage to lead normal lives; some even thrive. These individuals do not seem bitter, angry, depressed or otherwise incapacitated. Subsequently, these individuals have become the source of intense psychological research.

Children who suffer traumatic events experience greater distress because they, "lack the cognitive, physical and financial means to take care of themselves, make sense of happenings, affect changes and take preventive measures to help ensure against a repeat of the traumatic event" (Condly, 2006, p. 212). Howard, Dryden, and Johnson (1999) found that students often begin school with a number of risk factors that schools may have trouble mitigating. They found poverty and its associated problems hard on children. Consequently, students who are exposed to the multiple stressor of poverty do

not do well in school (Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010; Brown & Jones, 2004; Cooper, 1996; Finn & Rock, 1997). These students were found to have incidents of incarceration later in life and to experience more problems in marriage and their occupation.

Subsequently, many of the indicators for being at risk have changed very little, if any, over time. The term risk refers to those environmental factors that either singularly or in combination have been shown to prevent children from thriving (Howard et al., 1999). Other researchers define risk factors as any measurable predictor of an undesirable outcome (Masten, Herbers, Cutuli, & Lafort, 2008). Masten et al., (2008), identified risk factors as effects of war, natural disasters, terrorism, family violence, divorce, maltreatment, fires, and poverty or living in orphanages. Early resiliency studies acknowledge that risk factors rarely happen in isolation and sought to measure the cumulative risk or aggregated life events (Dryden & Johnson, 1999, Pianta & Walsh, 1998, Rutter, 1987). However, similar to other studies, Masten et al., (2008) found that as the level of risk exposure accumulates, children experience the worse outcomes.

West and Farrington (1973) studied juvenile boys and identified risk factors that still resonant true today (Jenkins, 2006; Noguera, 2003). Five key risk factors were recognized which incorporated low family income (poverty), large family size, parental criminality, low intelligence, and poor child-rearing techniques. West and Farrington (1973) found that teachers were uncomfortable with vulnerable population students in their classes and found them unprepared for the educational process. Furthermore, parents had little or no contact with the school and seemed to have minimal concern with the child's academic progress. Additionally, vulnerable population students were found to be aggressive, impulsive, and demonstrated a pattern of poor attendance.

Likewise, Green, Kleiber, and Tarrant (2000) investigated 25 minority youths and found low socioeconomic status, poverty, parental divorce, inadequate nutrition, poor health care, poor parental supervision and overcrowding or large family size to be high risk factors. Additionally, students who were exposed to these risk factors experienced higher drop-outs rates, behavioral issues, substance abuse and depression resulting in students faring poorly as the risk factors increased (Ahern, Ark, & Byers, 2008; Garmezy, 1991; Garmezy & Masten, 1994.). Moreover, many urban children and students of color are critically at risk; however, children in general are at risk regardless of where they live or their socioeconomic status due to divorce, parenting skills, economic pressures, domestic violence and community support (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Gabarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992; Knutson, Lawrence, Taker, Bank, & DeGarmo, 2009; Wortham, 2014). In fact, researchers report that 50% of domestic violence incidents, including visual and audible, occur in the presence of children. Other researchers suggest that children living in single parent, non-White, impoverished homes are more likely to witness verbal abuse (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Knutson et al., 2009; Wortham, 2014). Despite facing multiple risk factors, there are some students who still seem to thrive; these children are thought to be resilient (Ahern et al., 2008; Green et al., 2000; Ramirez-Earvolino, 2007).

Early risk and resilience research focused on children in a variety of different situations around the world (Ahern et al., 2008; Condly, 2006). One such study was the seminal Kauai, Hawaii longitudinal study conducted by Werner and Smith (1988). The researchers observed children born in 1955 on the island of Kauai. Of 698 children born, one third (201) were considered high risk. Of the high risk children, one third was

considered resilient. Nevertheless, Werner and Smith (1988) found that most children were resilient despite risk factors and flourished even under adverse circumstances given competence, confidence and caring. Similar to Werner and Smith's (1988) study, Garnezy and Rutter (1983) sample size was more than 2000 children in the mid-western region of the United States. Studying these children over time, results were similar. Despite their high risk environment, the majority of children were resilient and matured into healthy and successful adults.

Resilience is particularly important to African American students, especially males. The majority of research investigating African American males has been problem focused, spotlighting systems rather than root causes (West- Olatunji, Shure, Garrett, Conwill, & Rivera, 2008). Scholars have criticized the negative approaches such as dropout rates, crime, delinquency and chronic underachievement (Burriss-Corbett, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008; Davis & Jordan, 1996). Hence, these pejorative views of African American males are importunate within the media which often highlights the symptomatology of their sociopolitical realities as inherent and sometimes even as genetic flaws (Jackson & Moore, 2008).

Educational systems have responded to this persistent underachievement with compensatory programs, school-based intervention strategies and referrals to alternative educational settings and mentoring programs (Burriss-Corbett, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008; Green, Kleiber, & Tarrant, 2000; Oswald et al., 1999). Furthermore, there is minimal discussion of the strengths of this population, thereby contributing further to stigmatization (McMillian, 2003). Therefore, resilience theory provides a useful lens for investigating the challenges and strengths influencing the educational achievement of

African American males because of its focus on risk and protective factors (Richardson, 2002).

According to Luthar (2006) (as cited in Snape-Jindal & Miller 2008), resilience as a theoretical construct was introduced in the second half of the twentieth century with research on children with schizophrenic mothers. Luthar defined resilience as a phenomenon or process reflecting relatively positive adaptation despite experiences of adversity or trauma. Furthermore, Luthar (2006) identified two crucial conditions which must be considered when discussing resilience: exposure to significant adversity or threat and achievement of positive adaptation despite that adversity or threat. Whereas Bosworth and Earthman (2002) examined resiliency from the perspective of school leaders; subsequently, they defined resiliency as “children’s responses to both long-term and short-term adversity” (p.299). The critical feature of this hypothesis is that resiliency specifically focuses on children’s strengths rather than on risk conditions and problematic situations.

Likewise, Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, and Ouston (1979) conducted a longitudinal study of more than 300 students living in poverty. Their investigation was among the first to identify specific school characteristics that were related to positive outcomes for students with several risk factors for academic failure. Findings determined that students were successful when high academic standards were set, appropriate praise and support from teachers was given, and opportunities for students to experience success was provided. In the years that followed, researchers continued to look at various elements of schools that relate to positive academic outcomes for students even when they faced adversity (Luthar, 2006; Thornton et al., 2006). Subsequently, this field of

study became known as educational resilience which is defined as the “heightened likelihood of educational success despite personal vulnerabilities and adversities brought about by environmental conditions and experiences” (Downey, 2008, p. 56). Educational resilience is a dynamic set of interventions between the student and resources in his or her environment which work in tandem to disrupt a negative trajectory (Downey, 2008; Freitas & Downey, 1998).

Although there are many definitions for resiliency, past and current research suggest that there are three factors that seem to be common in all definitions regarding children or adults, and how these individuals deal with and overcome obstacles in hostile environments (Ahern et al., 2008; Brooks, 2006; Freitas & Downey, 1998; Finn & Rock, 1997; Harvey & Hill, 2004; West- Olatunji et al., 2008). The three resiliency factors are (1) the individual (intelligence and temperament), (2) family (the degree of support), and (3) external supports (persons and institutional). These factors can also be summarized as personality characteristics of the child, emotional integration within the family and the degree of outside support the child or family can obtain. These three factors are often identified as protective factors in resilience research (Green, Kleiber, & Tarrant, 2000).

Protective factors are those factors which allow children to lessen the impact of the risk present in the home or communal environments (Green et al., 2000). According to Green, Kleiber, & Tarrant (2000), protective factors are defined as “individual or environmental safeguards and development while fostering successful adaptation and competence” (p. 78) However, other researchers identify these factors, as both personal and environmental, which appear to protect children from some of the adverse effects of dangerous or toxic environments (Catterall, 1998; Freitas & Downey, 1998; Gilligan,

2000). Although each of these factors have identifiable characteristics, they are not inherently immutable. Researchers disagree on which has primacy in a given situation; however, there is little disagreement over that fact that children's resilience can be explained as an interaction between their genetic makeup and the kind of support they receive (Condly, 2006; Howard, Dryden, & Johnson, 1999).

Individual characteristic or genetic make-up, notwithstanding race, has been linked to resiliency in children (Condly, 2006). These characteristics include cognitive ability and temperament. Sameroff, Seifer, Barocas, Zax, and Greenspan (1987) found that children who were at high risk were 24 times more likely to have an IQ below 85 in comparison to low risk children. However, other researchers found IQ as an independent effect which is mediated by school related variables and attitudes (Dole, 2000). High cognitive ability allows students to understand what is happening to them and to distinguish between what is controllable and what is not; moreover, these students are able to select and modify supportive environments (Harvey & Delfabro, 2004). On the contrary, high cognitive ability is not a conclusive protective factor and does not come without its cost. Intelligent children, when compared to their nonresilient at risk peers, seem to suffer more emotional distress and depression because they are more sensitive to environmental stimulation and therefore suffer greater symptoms of internal stress. Although having a high cognitive ability can allow a child to find solutions to trauma, this same intelligence can predispose them to emotional scarring and the internalization of stress (Luthar, 2006).

The other individual characteristic often associated with resiliency in the literature is an easygoing temperament (Green et al., 2000). Research suggests that temperament,

which is obvious from infancy, affects the way a child interacts with the world around them and often gleans a more positive response for caregivers. For example, a study conducted in the mid-90s, (Smith & Prior, 1995), found teacher ratings of students' positive temperaments better predicted resilience on academic and social indicators than did ratings of self-esteem, gender and mother-child warmth; however, IQ was still the strongest predictors with more than half the variance ($r^2 = .55$).

Likewise, a study conducted by Werner (1984) found that resilient children had temperaments which allowed them to garner positive responses from family members and strangers resulting in them establishing close bonds with adults at an early age (Halfon & Newacheck, 1999; Richardson, 2002). In addition to temperament, other individual characteristics were noted which support resiliency in children. These qualities include: stable peer relationships, problem solving skills, realistic future plans, a positive ability to achieve and effectively deal with tasks, successful experiences, an ability to communicate effectively, strong attachment with at least one adult and being accountable for themselves and their actions (Thornton, Collins, & Daugherty, 2006; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010).

Locus of control (LOC) has also been related to resiliency in children. Locus of control postulates that people vary in the degree to which they attribute life events to their own actions or to environmental forces beyond their control (Crothers et al., 2010). Individuals who believe that events are a result of their own capacities, characteristics and actions are considered to have an internal LOC. These individuals believe they can control their outcomes. Additionally, these individuals believe they can effect change and are often better at accepting responsibility for their behavior and outcomes. Zaidi and

Mohsin` (2013) suggest that people with an internal LOC have high motivation for achievement and low outer directedness. Internal LOC may be referred to as self- control or self-determination.

Conversely, students with an external LOC, blame the behaviors of others or circumstantial phenomena such as luck or fate (Zaidi & Mohsin, 2013). These individuals rarely take responsibility for their own actions and are given to a feeling of helplessness as well as blaming others for their failures. These individuals may see stress as beyond their control and may subsequently descend into a state of depression, helplessness and anger believing they are the victims of circumstance (Crothers et al., 2010).

Although internal characteristics have been found to be predictors of resilience in children, family characteristics have been shown to be an equal predictor. A key finding in the Joint Learning Initiative on Children and AIDS suggest that when formal safety nets fail, families help to lessen the burden on children (Bhana & Bachoo, 2011). Thus, families absorb the impacts of negative events especially in the context of drastic social change. When families fail to thrive, individual well-being and health are put at risk, especially for children. According to Howard, Dryden, and Johnson (1999), many of the protective factors identified in the research vividly relate to the consistence and quality of support a child experiences during infancy, childhood and adolescence.

Werner and Smith's (1988) findings indicated a range of important protective factors related to family. These factors include such things as family size (four or fewer children), the availability of household care-givers, apart from the mother all of who were prepared to provide substantial amounts of attention to the child in infancy, and a manageable maternal workload. Likewise, structure and rules during the child's

adolescence, family cohesion, an informal and multigenerational network of kin and friends and few chronic stressful life events were found to be key protective factors (Werner & Smith, 1988). Gribble, Cowen, Wyman, Work, and Wabib (1993) confirmed the work of Werner and Smith (1998) finding that parents of resilient children had more positive attributes, more involvement in the lives of their children, and provided more and better guidance. The results indicated stress- resilient children were more attached to parents than were stress-affected children. Additionally, even when parents are the source of stress, the parent- child relationship can still paradoxically offer protection against stress.

Traditionally, the African American family has not been viewed by educators as particularly supportive of the education of its children, particularly in urban settings (Bhana & Bachoo, 2011; Halawah, 1992; Morales, 2010). The socioeconomic status of the parents often means they have less time to be involved in the education of their children due to the demands of work and many times transportation concerns. However, African American males are part of the collective historical and cultural experiences of African American families. Thus, these families bring an arsenal of coping skills and abilities that are untapped and underutilized within the educational environment (Brooks, West-Olatunji, & Baker, 2005).

Ladson-Billings (2005) reported that much of the achievement gap between African American males and their White counterparts can be directly attributed to the cultural discontinuity between mainstream Eurocentric values embedded in the curriculum and contrasting values within African American families. She also posits meaning in the African American cultural experience, which is in conflict with

Eurocentric values, is constructed through affect and experience or emotion and feeling. Additionally, African American culture values interpersonal relationships; thus, African Americans are considered to be sociocentric which is in direct contrast to the Western worldview which permeates the U.S. educational system (West- Olatunji et al., 2008).

The expectations between Eurocentric values in public schools contrast greatly with those of culturally diverse families. This tension presents as a risk factor or a major factor in the discord felt by students who are trapped in two different worlds (Gordon, 2012). Many scholars agree that the home culture informs students' diverse patterns of language, behavior and learning styles (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003; West- Olatunji et al., 2008). Upper and middle class White families are usually permeated by a nuclear family, individualism and specific role definitions within the family (Tutweiler, 2005). However, non-dominant cultures, such as African Americans, tend to focus on an extended family structure, group orientation and flexible family roles (Atkinson, 2004). Extended family units that include not only related family members but can also consist of unrelated members, known as fictive kin tends to be the focus of non-dominant culture families. Subsequently, intergenerational family units can provide collective economic, social and emotional resources when coping with systematic oppression. This is especially relevant for the African American community.

Therefore, resilience for African Americans is reflected by a sense of control, self-esteem, self-efficacy, coping and spirituality. Resiliency can be seen in the strong sense of self and appreciation of African American cultural and ethnic background. Personal and cultural identity development encourages self-esteem, apart from external societal factors that often serve to marginalize this population.

Of the positive factors, family has the most impact on the development of resilience in children because it is the immediate caregiving environment (Brooks, 2006). Also, parental involvement in a child's life can serve as a source of risk or resilience depending on the child's own characteristics and how the larger environment interacts with the child and family (Condly, 2006). Garmezy (1991) found that the external support for a child and the family was indispensable for the development of childhood resilience.

However, schools can also be another positive environment for solidification of resilience in children. The primary reason is students spend a great portion of their childhood in the school environment from kindergarten through 12th grade. Empirical evidence suggests that school environments can negatively or positively affect student outcomes (Freitas & Downey, 1998; Gilligan, 2000; Harmon, 2002; Young, 2011; Zaff et al., 2002). Howard et al. (1999) suggested that a school's efforts to support resiliency can be organized into five simple strategies:

Students should be able to develop significant relationships with school personnel; (2) Schools should build on social competencies and academic skills providing children with experiences of mastery and success; (3) Schools should allow students to become meaningfully involved and have responsible roles within the school; (4) Schools should work to coordinated services for children; finally, (5) Schools should cause no harm, that is they need to make sure all structures , expectations, policies and procedures do not add to the risks already faced by students. (p. 315)

Although there has been an abundance of research on the resilience of urban

poverty stricken African Americans and other students of color, there is an emerging body of evidence that outlines the experience of middle class African American students in suburban communities (Beard & Brown, 2008; Bhana & Bachoo, 2011; Gordon, 2012; Ogbu, 2003). As a result of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960, more African Americans of means have been able to relocate from predominately African American communities to virtually all-White suburban communities. According to Eggleston and Miranda (2009), approximately one third of all African Americans live in suburban communities. Despite the gains of the 21st century including the “Age of Obama”, the pejorative conceptualization of African American males as academically and socially problematic is so ingrained in the dominate belief that it has become common place (Gordon, 2012). These conditions perpetuate racist and a deficit- based understanding of African American males. In such environments, negative perceptions of African American male students are normalized (Gordon, 2012).

These perceptions, irrespective of socioeconomic status, may be more insidious in the 21st century because this normalized deviancy has been generalized to all African American children in matters related to disciplinary action and educational deficiency. Moreover, many studies have asserted that middle-class African American students are not performing as well as their White counterparts in schools; the explanation is peculiarly familiar (Beard & Brown, 2008; Becker & Luthar, 2007; Cooper & Jordon, 2003; Ogbu, 2004). Research attributes the lack of academic performance and behavioral issues of African American children, in both poor and middle-class African American households, to pervasive social ills such as crime, violence, drug abuse, and illegitimacy (Decker & Driessen, 2000; Ferguson, 2003; Gayles, 2005; Gills & Reynolds, 1999;

Jackson, 2006). This pathological image of African American males has become so omnipresent that even advancements in socioeconomic status, occupation, and academic achievement in the past decade seem neither to erase nor to mitigate the powerful impact of race.

Research on the experience of African American males suggests they are academically and socially aberrant, regardless of their middle-class suburban status (Gordon, 2012; Love & Kruger, 2005; Ogbu, 2003). According to King (1991), this subtle overriding negative view is termed dysconscious racism when coupled with racial tension, conflicts involving teachers, school staff, other students and especially their White male peers. These environments can have a devastating influence on the self-image and self-esteem of these suburban African American males. However, this pervasive attitude can contribute to the resiliency of African American males by making them more determined to prove themselves academically and elevate the quality and output of their school work (Gordon, 2012).

Another source of positive factors employed by African American males, particularly when they are in the minority in communities and schools, is a reliance on one's racial/ethnic group (i.e. other African American students) for support in stressful situations (Zaff, Blount, Phillips, and Cohen, 2002). According to Scott (2004), "racial socialization and racial identity are specific race-related factors suggested to foster resilience, adjustment and adaptation of African American adolescents in the face of race-related hostile environments" (p. 126). Therefore, the stresses of growing up and attending a suburban school are indeed palpable ones for African American males.

Research indicates several factors which promote resilience in African American

males who are educated in predominately White schools (Gordon, 2012). Resilient African American males in suburban schools openly challenge the racial attitudes and behaviors they encountered and used these negative influences as a positive motivational influence. Additionally, these resilient students were found to challenge the teacher's authority when they perceived it to be racist or unfair. More importantly, these young men assumed more ownership and responsibility for their academic work than their peers if they were to achieve their desired ends which is graduation from high school and attending college, or pursuing careers. Contrary to Ogbu's (2003) findings, studies find that resilient African American males in suburban schools who aspire to achieve academically do not view their academic success as a betrayal of their racial/ethnic identity (Becker & Luthar, 2007; Gordon, 2012; Whiting, 2009).

Researchers indicated that African American suburban students who have relationships with their parents, other Black students at their school and with groups outside of their suburban community often provide them with the validation they need which is often absent in suburban schools (Brown & Jones, 2004). These relationships promote resiliency in African American males attending suburban school. Additionally, researchers also conclude middle-class suburban African American parents teach their children coping strategies for dealing with racism by exposing them to the history and struggles of African Americans and using these struggles to promote educational achievement as a weapon against racism (Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008). Moreover, suburban African American parents encourage their children to adopt autonomous stances with regard to relationships with their White classmates while maintaining close familial relationships (Gordon, 2012; Suizzo et al., 2008).

In summary, many researchers have emphasized the importance of positive school experiences as a predictor of resilience (Catterall, 1998; Gilligan, 2000). Adapting positively has been seen as a result of protective factors that are present within the child and/or his environment. In conclusion, this study uses Critical Race Theory to expose those risk factors faced by African American males and to identify those compensatory resiliency factors which contributed to their success hoping to provide an amenable solution to the achievement gap.

Summary

Having detailed two theoretical frameworks that offer explanations for the achievement gap with respect to African American males, none of these constructs alone will adequately explain the achievement gap. When considered collectively, perhaps, portions of each will shed light on the increasing achievement gap between African American male students and their nonminority counterparts. Thus, CRT and Resilience Theory were used to answer the primary research question: How do African American male middle school students make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers? These theories were also used to answer the secondary research question: How do African American males perceive the efficacy and expectations of their teachers?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Epistemological Position

Historically, many ethnographers have used an objectivist epistemological position to inform their theoretical perspective when trying to create meaning (Crotty, 1998). According to Crotty (1998), an “objectivist epistemology holds that meaning and therefore meaningful reality, exist as such apart from the operation of any consciousness”. (page, 8) This epistemological framework assumes there are persistent principles that govern the behavior of people. In viewing schools from this positivistic perspective only one reality exists with its objects, occurrences and processes. These objects, occurrences and processes are objectified in the people being studied. According to Crotty (1998), it is the responsibility of the researcher to make “true” and “correct” these objects, occurrences and processes.

Furthermore, Crotty (1998) suggests an objectivist epistemological position which assumes language is clear and unambiguous in relation to reality. Thus, words have meanings that are understood by all. Additionally, this position also assumes that the researcher can collect empirical data on an organization’s life using quantitative methods. Using this position, a researcher can develop standardized variables to measure and assess casual relations to understand an objective reality (Crotty, 1998). According to Crotty (1998), researchers who seek to be “consistently objective will distinguish scientifically established objective meanings from subjective meanings that people hold in everyday fashion and at best reflect or mirror or approximate objective meanings” (p.15). The objectivist position fully recognizes the subjective meanings as important in peoples’ lives and may use qualitative methods of ascertaining what those meanings are.

Although this position takes into account the subjective meanings in peoples' lives, these subjective understandings are seen as inferior to their more scientific understandings.

This epistemological position is most often used to inform a positivist theoretical perspective which is closely linked to empirical science. From a positivist theoretical perspective, phenomena in the world has meaning prior to and independently of any consciousness of them (Crotty, 1998). Subsequently, a world addressed by positivistic science is not the world we experience every day; however, it is a world perceived through a scientific grid which is highly systematic and well-organized. According to Crotty (1998), it is a world of regularities, consistencies, uniformities, iron-clad laws and absolute principles. One of the primary assumptions of this theoretical perspective is the scientific method regardless of whether one is speaking of the natural sciences or the human sciences (Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) suggests that researchers using this lens look to laws that can be scientifically established, that is, to facts that regularly characterize particular types of beings and constant relationships. Therefore, these laws can only be established scientifically through observation, experimentation and comparison.

Using this epistemological position and theoretical perspective, schools were treated as a natural concrete phenomenon in an objective reality. The research conducted by Odum (1913) and Goddard (1911), (as cited by Franklin 2007), at the turn of the 20th century, supported this notion of an objective reality through a policy of segregation based on mental or physical manifestations. This policy continued in public education until the Supreme Court ruling in the Brown case. Although many improvements have occurred, African American students and students of color continue to face disparities in

achievement.

Many researchers have paid tribute to the great inequities that exist between the schooling of White middle class students and African American males who come from a background of poverty and hopelessness (Baker, 2005; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Delgado & Stefanci, 2001; Downey, 2008). Furthermore, it has been well documented that even in situations where poverty is not predominant; African American males still lag behind in their achievement (Hosp & Reschly, 2004; Robinson, 2007). In order to better understand the educational inequalities, challenges and gaps in the achievement of African American males, one must engage in a discussion of race and racism which continues to be muted by an objectivist epistemology and positivistic theoretical framework.

Like most qualitative research, this researcher will use a constructivist epistemology lens to view how African American males are making meaning of their educational experience in a predominately White suburban middle school. When using this lens, meaning is not discovered but rather meaning is constructed through ones' experiences (Crotty, 1998). Subsequently Crotty (1998) states, “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p. 42). Therefore, it is through the study of African American males engaged with their world and through this interplay meaning is born.

The achievement of African American males will not be approached in the conventional objectivist theoretical framework which is straightjacketed by conventional meaning; however, a critical theoretical framework will be used to frame this basic

qualitative study in hopes of generating a new and richer meaning. According to Crotty,

The world of the critical theorist is a battle ground of hegemonic interests. In this world there are striking disparities in the distribution of power: some people have dominant power; others have far less power; most have no power at all. This is a world torn apart by oppression, manipulation and coercion. (p.63)

Thus, the goals of critical theory are the just society, freedom, equity and equality. This perspective often admits the impossibility of effecting consummate social justice; however, the critical perspective deems the struggle to be worthwhile in leading to a more equitable and free society than we have at the moment. Therefore, this study explored this primary research question: How do suburban African American male middle school students make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers. The primary research question explores the meaning of the African American male experience and asked these male students to describe their everyday lived experiences. The secondary research question included: How do African American males perceive the efficacy and expectations of their teachers?

Basic Qualitative Research Design

The interpretive design is among the most commonly used research designs in the field of education (Merriam, 2009). Because all qualitative research is interpretive, Merriam (2009) suggested labeling this kind of study a basic qualitative study which seeks "understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved" (p.22).

Therefore, meaning is not discovered but constructed and does not inhere in the object waiting to be discovered (Merriam, 2009). Subsequently, meanings are constructed as human beings engage in the world they are interpreting. This design characteristically draws from concepts, models, and theories in education, psychology, and sociology

which provides a framework for the design (Caelli, Ray & Mill, 2003). This study used CRT and Resiliency Theory as its theoretical foundation.

According to Lim (2011), this research design aims to richly describe the phenomenon under investigation. Because meaning is constructed by people as they engage with their environment, the researcher's task is to analyze the intentional experiences of consciousness to perceive how a phenomenon is given meaning and to arrive at its essence. Thus, social constructionism involves the creating of meaning in a community. Crotty (1998) suggested that research in the constructivist vein requires that we not remain straight-jacketed by the conventional meanings we have been taught to associate with the object; instead, approach the object in a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new or richer meaning. Whereas, Thorne suggests that knowledge is not absolute but "socially constructed through the subjective person who experiences it" (p. 49).

In summation, the basic qualitative study attempts to understand: "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (Merriam, 2009 p. 23). Therefore, the goal of this study was to answer the primary and secondary research questions: (1) How do suburban African American male middle school students make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers? (2) How do African American males perceive the efficacy and expectations of their teachers?

Sampling.

According to Maxwell (2013) decisions about whom to include in a study and

where to conduct the study are essential to research methods. Quantitative research often recognizes two types of sampling: probability sampling (random) and convenience sampling (Maxwell, 2013). However, in qualitative research, Maxwell suggests “the typical way of selecting settings and individuals is neither probability sampling nor convenience sampling” (p. 97). Purposive sampling is used in order to provide information that is relevant to the questions and goals of the study (Maxwell, 2013). Therefore, in this study, purposive sampling was utilized.

Purposive sampling is best utilized because participants are deliberately selected to provide the information that is relevant to the questions and goals of the study. Usually this information cannot be gleaned from other sources (Maxwell, 2013). Specifically, the sample will include African American males who live in a suburban community, where the median household income is at or above \$54,430 annually and who have scored Advanced, Proficient, or Basic on the Maryland School Assessment and who are achieving a modicum of success academically with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 1.5 or higher in order to ascertain the source of their academic resilience. This sample population will best inform the research questions and goals. Finally, the measures of success, or lack thereof, will be determined by the participants’ individual scores on the Maryland School Assessment in reading and mathematics and their overall reported academic achievement.

School Site.

South Central Suburban Middle school has a comprehensive academic program that offers standard, gifted and talented, and special education level courses. The school is situated on a campus of approximately five acres in northeast Central Maryland. The campus borders a large metropolitan area which is predominantly African American

where the median income is at or below the poverty line and the educational system exhibits all the characteristics found in poor urban schools (Iver, 2011). According to Iver, many of the schools are not meeting with success based on Maryland State Assessment data, high dropout and suspension rates. Nevertheless, South Central Suburban Middle School is located in the middle of a community of third and fourth generation families which adds to the stability of the community. The community includes a blend of professional and blue-collar workers that are very supportive of their children and the school.

The school supports student success through their hallmark program called *Parent-Teacher-Student Association* that has a membership roster of approximately 500 people. On average, 85% of the parent members participate in conferences and Back to School Night. Based on the Maryland School Assessment, South Central Suburban Middle school has maintained a strong academic tradition and has been an integral member of the community, hosting a recreation center and serves as a meeting place for various civic organizations. The school was originally built and used as a high school in 1964 and was later converted to a junior high school in 1970.

The student population consists of 1,040 students including the following demographics: 60% White students; 26% of the attendees are African American, Asian, and Multi-racial, while Latinos carry the remaining 14% of the student population (Maryland State Department of Education). Of 1,040 students, 100 are special education and about one-third receive free and reduced meals. The school is staffed with 75 teaching positions including professional staff, custodians and several cafeteria workers. There is 125 teacher and staff positions at South Central Suburban Middle School. The

racial make-up of the teaching staff includes five African Americans. There are no African American males staff members.

Data Collection.

According to Merriam (2009) "individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds" (p. 22); therefore, meaning must be viewed within the social context in which it occurs. The instrument of data collection was the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B). An interview has been defined as "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 87). The most common interview is person-to-person where one person elicits information from the other. Therefore, through the interview, participants' descriptions can be explored, illuminated and probed using reflection, clarification, requests for examples and descriptions, and listening techniques.

The researcher started with a few general structured questions which established the context of the participant's experience, the construction of the experience, and reflected on the meaning of the experience (Flood, 2010). Subsequently, the interview is an interpretive tool used to understand the participants' feelings, thoughts, and intentions in order to glean their perspective (Merriam, 2009). The relationship between the participants and researcher evolves from observational to dialogical and then reflective. This reflection recognizes that the researcher is an important component in the research processes.

The Interview.

Ten of 50 parents agreed to allow their children to participate in the study. The school counselor identified students who fit the study's criteria. Semi-structured, digitally recorded interviews were conducted over a one- week period at South Central Suburban

Middle School. Each of the interviews were held in a conference room during the student's lunch or immediately following school dismissal. Participants were identified by their Maryland State Assessment (MSA) score in reading and math and their cumulative grade point average. The MSA is the way in which Maryland assesses individual student achievement and overall achievement of the total school. Based on examine scores, students are identified as Advanced, Proficient, or Basic. Students who are Basic have not met the minimum academic standard of success on the examination as designated by the Maryland State Standards. Because this is the formal measure of student achievement, participants were chosen across all three groups. Additionally, students' current cumulative achievement was provided by the school counselor.

The interview questions that were asked aligned with the primary and secondary research questions (Appendix B and C). Each participant was asked three warm-up questions and eight primary interview questions with follow-up probing questions when appropriate. A letter of consent was provided to each participants' parent(s) explaining the study and requesting their children's participation in the study (see Appendix D and E). A copy of the interview protocol was made available for parental review upon request. The researcher read a prepared statement to introduce himself, outline the purpose of the interview, and addressed any issues of confidentiality (see Appendix D). Following the interview protocol, an interview was conducted. Although each participant was given the right to deny being recorded, all participants readily agreed.

Data Analysis.

Using content analysis, the data in this basic qualitative study was analyzed using a coding system to determine reoccurring themes and patterns. Three primary coding methods were utilized during data analysis: Structural Coding, In Vivo Coding, and

Pattern Coding. Structural and In Vivo Coding were used during First Cycle coding and Pattern Coding was used during Second Cycle coding. Analytical memos were kept based on the participants' body language, intensity of responses, and the approximate wait time participants used to respond to questions and physical appearance. These analytical memos assisted with creating a portraiture of each of the participants in order to ascertain their inimitable qualities and to present each of them as unique individuals.

First during preliminary coding, interview transcripts were imported to ATLAS-ti, a computer program used for qualitative data analysis, where participants' responses were analyzed using In Vivo coding. The initial codes were then analyzed for frequency and grouped into families which included: unfair treatment, African American culture, stereotypes, feelings about White teachers, academic performance, parental involvement, and resiliency. The initial code families revealed participants' concerns about their educational environment.

Next, Structural Coding was applied to categorize the data corpus by primary and secondary research questions. According to Saldana (2011), Structural Coding "applies a content-based or conceptual phrase representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data that relates to a specific research question used to frame the interview" (p. 66). In addition, Namey, Guest, Thairu and Johnson (2008) suggested that Structural Coding, "is a questioned based coding system which acts as a labeling and indexing device, and allows researchers to quickly access data likely to be relevant in a larger data set" (p.14). Therefore, the interview questions were aligned with each of the two research questions with participants' responses clustered under each interview question allowing relevant data to be extracted.

After organizing the data structurally, In Vivo Coding or Verbatim Coding was used. According to Saldana, In Vivo's root meaning is "in that which is alive" (p. 74); therefore, this coding process refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record" (p.74). Moreover, In Vivo coding is simply the participants' own words that they use in everyday life which precludes terms derived from academic disciplines or professional practices. Saldana (2011) described the benefit of In Vivo coding by stating that "the child and adolescent voices are often marginalized and coding with their actual words enhances and deepens an adult's understanding of their culture and world view" (p.74). As suggested by Namey et al. (2008), frequencies of In Vivo codes were determined on the basis of the number of individual participants who mentioned a particular code.

Next, according to Saldana (2011), "the primary goal during Second Cycle coding, if needed, is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of First Cycle codes" (p. 149). Additionally, Pattern Coding pulls together an abundance of material into a more meaningful and parsimonious unit (Saldana, 2011). Thus, using the frequency of In Vivo codes, pattern coding was used to organize the corpus and to attribute meaning to that organization which resulted in emergent themes based on the primary and secondary research questions. Eight themes emerged relative to the primary research question and three themes emerged in relationship to the secondary research question. These themes generated several findings: eight for the primary research question and three for the secondary research question.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

According to Maxwell (1996), the greatest threat to the validity of a basic

qualitative study is “imposing one’s own framework or meaning, rather than understanding the perspective of the people studied and the meaning attached to their words and actions” (pp. 89-90). This threat happens when the researcher is not aware or does not bracket his own subjectivity or when codes are drawn from the literature. When bias occurs the study is compromised (Maxwell, 1996). The researcher avoided this pitfall by using In vivo coding. Additionally, the researcher represented the data in block quotes which allowed for the reader to form their own opinion of the data (Maxwell, 2013; Ridenour & Newman, 2008)

Furthermore, according to Merriam (1992), the central assumption with qualitative research is individuals construct reality through interacting with their social world; subsequently, the presumption is that meaning is constructed through the person's experience with the researcher assessing meaning through his own perception. To minimize the influence of reality as subjective, viewed by each participant, interviews occurred separately and participants were not aware of others in the study.

Risk and Benefits and Ethical Considerations

There was very limited risk associated with this basic interpretative qualitative study. The scope of this study was explained to school administrators, parents, and student participants at the beginning of the research. The researcher used pseudonyms for all participants to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, and participants were interviewed separately to ensure confidentiality.

Subsequently, this study benefited all participants because it allowed the stories of the students to be told. Finally, a signed consent form was on file before the study began; no ethical issues emerged.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents data from the primary and secondary research questions. The questions were designed to allow the voices of suburban African American male middle school students to be heard. The first question sought to understand the experiences of middle school African American male students being taught by White teachers in suburban areas. The participants in this study voiced a variety of paradoxical opinions when asked the nine primary questions associated with the primary research question and subsequent follow-up questions. Participants expressed feelings about key items: their academic performance; their interactions with all White teachers; how the lack of teacher diversity impact their learning; and how White teachers' preferential treatment impacted African American male students. Additionally, participants expressed their views on what should be changed in South Central Suburban Middle school and about parental academic involvement. The participants in this study perceived they were being educated in an environment with high teacher-efficacy and expectations; however, the data revealed an undercurrent of unconscious racism.

The second research question was designed to understand participants' perceptions of their teachers' efficacy and expectations. In an effort to understand participants' perceptions six primary questions and subsequent follow-up questions were asked. Moreover, participants voiced their feelings about the teachers and classes they liked and disliked. They also spoke about what should be changed at South Central Suburban Middle School. More importantly, participants expressed strong feelings about what their teachers felt about their culture and the use of cultural examples during instruction. Although

participants spoke of engaging lessons and enthusiastic teachers, they also voiced concerns relative to their culture and the curriculum. Thus, issues of unconscious racism surfaced.

Portraits of Participants

The aim of this study was to give voice to African American male students being educated by a predominately White teaching staff and to determine how these participants make meaning of their education and their perception of teachers' efficacy and expectations. Therefore, the constructivist epistemological lens was appropriate to investigate this phenomenon. Crotty (1998), states “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p. 42).

Fifty requests for interviews were sent to families of African American male students at South Central Suburban Middle School. Seven students returned permission slips to participate in the study. Follow-up phone calls were made and three additional parents agreed to their children participation in the study. Subsequently, ten students were interviewed regarding their lived experiences at South Central Suburban Middle School. The 10 participants came from two parent homes with an average income of \$54,000 and were not eligible for free and reduced meals. Furthermore, at least one of the parents in most cases held graduate degrees. The students included: Gifted and Talented, Standard, and Special Education/504(IEP). Having background information on participants' elementary experience proved insightful when attempting to understand their middle school experience.

Thomas.

Thomas, a 12-year-old 7th grader, has been a student at South Central Suburban Middle school for two months. Thomas was neatly dressed in jeans and a white tee-shirt with a hair style that is commonly referred to by African American students as a Cruddy, hair that is neatly shaped but appears nappy or unkempt on the top. Furthermore, throughout the interview, he maintained direct eye contact and spoke intensely when answering the interview questions. Thomas indicated that he moved to the county, and his parents transferred him to South Central Suburban Middle School. During his time in elementary school, Thomas attended two different schools because his "parents moved around a lot". Furthermore, Thomas sat up, smiled and ardently reported his elementary schools had "a lot of Black kids but mostly Black teachers;" moreover, the majority of teachers and students were African American. The researcher's impression of Thomas' body language was that he enjoyed being with teachers and students who looked like him which was echoed by Thomas when said, " he liked his elementary schools because they were small and had more Black teachers". He was one of three students who had African American teachers during his elementary school experience. Finally, Thomas is an IEP student placed in the inclusion setting. His Maryland State Assessment (MSA) scores were Basic in reading and math. His cumulative grade was reported as a D.

Joshua.

Joshua, a bi-racial-African American and Caucasian- 14- year- old 8th grader, attended South Central Suburban Middle School all of his middle school years. However, he attended three different elementary schools because "they moved a lot." Joshua did indicate that two of his elementary schools, located in the inner city, were all African American and many of the teachers were African American. However, his family moved

to the suburbs during his 5th grade year where the student body was extremely diverse. Moreover, he remembers the teachers at the suburban school being nice and helpful. He also indicated that he had his "fondest memories" from the suburban elementary school. Joshua arrived at the interview well-dressed with his pants securely around his waist support by a designer belt. He spoke resolute about his middle school experience while maintaining eye contact throughout the interview. Being bi-racial, he did identify himself as African American and was not preoccupied with his ethnicity. Joshua is a gifted and talented student with Advanced reading and math scores on the MSA. His cumulative grade was reported as a C.

Barry.

Barry, a bi-racial 14-year-old 8th grader, has been a student at South Central Suburban Middle School for his entire middle school experience. However, Barry indicated that he attended five different elementary schools because his "parents moved a lot." According to Barry, his parents moved around because his father was searching for a job which was commiserate with his degree from Howard University. Barry's family moved to the neighborhood because his father found a job that was commiserate with his education. Barry, who identified himself as African American, reiterated his bi-racial status during many of the interview questions. His clothing aligned with the hip-hop culture including baggy pants, fronts (gold teeth) and a Mohawk haircut colored a soft red. Subsequently, all of the elementary schools served different ethnicities. According to Barry, some schools were all Black including teachers and students; whereas, the other elementary schools were mixed with Black students, White students; yet, mostly White teachers. Barry is in the standard program; he is Proficient in reading and math on the MSA. Barry's cumulative grade was reported as a C.

Chris.

Chris, a 14-year-old 8th grader, has been at South Central Suburban Middle School throughout his middle school experience. He attended the same elementary school for his entire elementary experience. He indicated that he most enjoyed his music and art classes because he was interested in the arts, and his performing arts teachers shared a similar enthusiasm. Chris was eager to share that his grandfather brought him a new alto saxophone which he enjoys playing. Additionally, Chris' passion for music was clear based on the enthusiasm in his voice as he sat on the end of his chair talking about music and his passion. He was dressed in designer jeans and a designer sweater with Jordan tennis and a fresh haircut. He expressed himself clearly and definitively throughout the interview. Chris indicated that his suburban elementary school was very diverse. However, all his teachers were White. Chris is a gifted and talented student. He is Proficient in reading and Advanced in math on the MSA. Chris's cumulative grade was reported as a D.

Cedric.

Cedric, a well-dressed and groomed 13-year-old 8th grader, has been a student at South Central Suburban Middle School his entire middle school experience. He attended the same elementary school throughout his entire primary experience. His fondest memories of elementary school were in gym class because he "liked to run." Furthermore, he indicated that the suburban elementary school was very diverse; however, the teachers were mostly White; and all of his teachers were White. However, throughout the interview, Cedric failed to make consistent eye contact while fidgeting with his pencil, shirt sleeve, and fingers. There were times during the interview where Cedric spoke softly and appeared to be sad or disturbed by what he was sharing when he talked about how he had been

treated. Cedric is a standard student who has a 504 plan for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); he is Basic in reading and math on the MSA. Cedric's cumulative grade was reported as a D.

Curtis.

Curtis, a clean-cut, well-dressed 14-year-old 8th grader, has been a student at South Central Suburban Middle School for his entire middle school experience. He attended the same elementary school for his entire primary experience. Curtis indicated that his elementary school was mostly White students and teachers. Even though all of his teachers were White, he viewed the school as "one big family". He spoke to how hard the teachers pushed him to do his very best each day. Although he wore a designer belt, his underwear could be seen as he entered the interview room. However, he presented himself well, articulate with strong feelings about his middle school experience. Curtis is a gifted and talented student; he is Advanced in both reading and math on the MSA. Curtis' cumulative grade was reported as a C.

Donta.

Donta, a 13-year-old 7th grader, who has attended South Central Suburban Middle School for two years. He attended the same suburban elementary school his entire elementary school experience. Sporting a well-groomed Cruddy hair style and designer tennis, Donta's smile radiated when he expressed that he felt safe and the teachers pushed him to do his best every day during elementary school. More importantly, Donta talked to the researcher like he had known him forever. Donta describe his school as "mostly White, but nobody cares because we're a happy family." He indicated that he never had a Black teacher during his elementary experience. Donta is a gifted and talented student. He is

Advanced in reading and Proficient in math on the MSA. Donta's cumulative grade was reported as a B.

Michael.

Michael, a 14-year-old 8th grade gifted and talented student, has attended South Central Suburban Middle School for his entire middle school experience. Michael wore light green khaki pants and a white pullover polo shirt, buttoned to the top. He also had a green sweater tied around his waist. Unlike, many of the other students, Michael's hair was neatly cut and well groomed. With constant gesturing of his hands and many inflections in his speech, Michael candidly spoke, while sitting perfectly upright throughout the interview, about how the White teachers prepared him for the rigors of middle school and "all he cared about was getting into a good middle school." He is Advanced in both reading and math on the MSA with a B cumulative grade point average.

Darius.

Darius, a 13-year-old 8th grader, who has attended South Central Suburban Middle School for his entire middle school experience. He indicated that the suburban elementary school that he attended for his entire elementary experience was "fun." He commented on the small classes, how his questions were answered, and how his friends followed him to middle school. Darius was the only participant who was dressed with his pants hanging off even though he was wearing a belt. His hair was bleached blond on the top and he sported gold fronts on his teeth. Although Darius was dressed in a style typical of the hip-hop culture, he was articulate and readily shared his feelings about his educational experience while leaning back in the chair. Like several of the other students, he has never had a Black teacher despite the school being diverse with a few Black teachers. Darius is a

standard student who is Proficient in reading and math on the MSA. Darius's cumulative grade was reported as a B.

Shamar.

Shamar, a 13-year-old 7th grader, has attended South Central Suburban Middle School for his entire middle school experience. He attended a suburban elementary school and indicated that the teachers were really nice, and there was a lot of people to help. Although there were a few African American teachers, Shamar indicated that he never had an African American teacher while in elementary school. He presented as shy tone, spoke very softly and avoided direct eye contact. Shamar's hair was in a Cruddy but was unkempt, and his clothes were wrinkled which suggested he did not care about his appearance. This notion seemed to supported by his expression of feeling "dumb." Shamar's wait-time when asked about being treated fairly was extended which made it appear he was apprehensive about expressing his true feelings about how he was treated. However, he did eventually answer the questions with a degree of confidence. He appeared to not want to express his true feelings. Furthermore, Shamar, an IEP student, is currently Basic in reading and math on the MSA. Shamar's cumulative grade was reported as a D.

Table 1 Summary of Participants' Background Information

NAME	GRADE	AGE	ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	TRACK	MSA SCORE	AA Teacher Elem. School
Joshua	8	13	C	Gifted and Talented	Advanced: Reading & Math	Yes
Curtis	8	14	C	Gifted and Talented	Advanced: Reading & Math	No
Donta	7	13	B	Gifted and Talented	Advanced: Reading & Proficient: Math	No
Michael	8	14	B	Gifted and Talented	Advanced: Reading & Math	No
Thomas	7	13	D	Special Education	Basic: Reading & Math	Yes
Shamar	7	13	D	Special Education	Basic: Reading & Math	No
Cedric	8	14	D	Special Education/504	Basic: Reading & Math	No
Chris	8	14	D	Standard	Advanced: Math & Proficient: Reading	No
Barry	8	14	C	Standard	Proficient: Reading & Math	Yes
Darius	8	14	B	Standard	Proficient: Reading & Math	No

Table 1 depicts the summary of participants' and their backgrounds. The table outlines seven core elements of which three elements indicate the participants' academic proficiency level.

Emergent Themes from the Primary Research Question

This research sought to answer the following primary research question: How do suburban African American male middle school students make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers? Data is presented through the voices of the participants in the form of seven emergent themes consistent with the theoretical and/or conceptual framework. The seven emergent themes are (1) feelings of apathy; (2) feelings of being ignored; (3) unfair treatment and stereotypes; (4) lack of rigor and classroom supports; (5) compliant acceptance and inquisitive speculation; (6) relationships and the personal connection; and (7) resiliency and the ambiguous teacher.

Feelings of Apathy.

Eight of the participants replied apathetically when asked about their academic performance. They all expressed variable degrees of apathy such as the "lack of

enthusiasm", "lack of interest", and "not working to their full potential." Additionally, participants indicated studying more would improve their grades. Each participant reported grades that range from B's to D's which was largely due to "boredom" and/or "lack of interest" in what was being taught. Participants tracked into standard and IEP courses replied apathetically when asked about their academic performance. They all expressed feelings of apathy such as the lack of enthusiasm, lack of interest, and not working to their fullest potential. Joshua stated " high C, low B but could be higher, but I'm bored most of the time and just don't try hard." Similarly, Cedric said " Mostly C's and B's. I could probably do better...mm... Classes are boring, and I'm not interested." Chris expressed his feelings about his academic achievement:

They aren't where I want them (grades) to be, but... yeah, I think that's that. I just don't try my hardest Mm... I don't understand sometime when the teachers are giving examples and teaching. I just sit there if I don't understand. I think I would be a D student. Sometimes I am not interest in some subjects like English and American History.

"Average, don't have that good of grades. I don't try very hard" is how Thomas expressed his feeling regarding his academic performance. Likewise, Shamar said, "I could do better if I could concentrate and would try harder. The class is bad," When asked about his academic performance, Darius indicated that "I felt kind of lazy and uninterested in school." Moreover, Joshua stated, " high C's, low B's but could be higher, but I'm bored most of the time and just don't try hard". However, Barry expressed his feelings about his academic performance in the following statement:

I would say average. I don't necessarily try to do above and beyond. I usually try

and do the minimum work. I'm lazy and my teachers don't motivate me, I guess. But mainly, I'm lazy. C's, most likely. Highest I usually get is a B. I do try a lot sometimes. I can manage to get A's and B's, but my laziness overcomes, and I usually get C's and B's.

Subsequently, there were two outliers, GT students Donta and Michael, who expressed their academic performance as "good" and "phenomenal." When Donte was asked about his academic performance he posited:

I'd say I do pretty good. I've made honor roll every single quarter dating back to fifth grade, the last quarter of fifth grade. I made honor roll the fourth quarter of fifth grade, every quarter in sixth grade, and the first quarter of seventh grade. So I'm looking to continue that. Averaged it all together, I'd probably say A's and B's. I try not to get any C's. Unfortunately, I had a C on my second quarter report card. But overall, A's and B's is usually what I get.

However, Michael spoke clearly to the issues that confronted him as he progressed from sixth grade. Michael's thoughts are:

Oh, that's a tough one. Well, in sixth grade, I was doing phenomenally. I was having usually... I usually had one B, one or two B's. But in seventh and eighth grade, a lot of changes are happening in my household, with myself, and a lot of that translated into school. So my work ethic faltered because of that, and I really struggled with GT Math, and I started getting C's and I stopped getting honor roll...Probably like a... Overall, probably like a 3.7.

Feelings of apathy were voiced by 8 of 10 participants. The participants' feelings of apathy were voiced using terms like, "I could do better"; "boring", "not interested" and "I could try

harder". Consequently, these apathetic feelings were reinforced by feelings of being ignored by the teacher.

Feelings of being Ignored.

The participants agreed that their participation in class fluctuated; however, students tracked into all three programs expressed feelings of being overlooked. For example, Curtis became exasperated trying to understand why he was not called on when his hand was raised.

Whereas, being ignored left Shamar and Cedric feeling "dumb" and pondering why the teacher was not calling on them. Cedric was apprehensive about raising his hand due to his fear of being laughed at which often left him feeling disheartened and frustrated. Darius summarized their collective experiences best in his response:

I always participate, the most I could. A lot of times the teacher did not call on me.

I guess she didn't think I knew the answer, but I did. It was discouraging sometimes.

Then I stop trying.

More importantly, Donta expressed feelings that instruction lacked cultural relevance which in turn caused him to disengage from learning. He said candidly:

Sometimes the lessons don't relate to anything I am interested in like Black Lives Matter or the boy that got killed and caused the riots in Baltimore City. The teacher does not want to talk about it, not sure why.

Joshua, a gifted and talented student, connected his participation to engaging activities. Joshua was transparent about his feelings concerning participation which differed from class to class. He often participated more if the class was fun with different engaging activities; otherwise, he would not participate. Unfortunately, Michael said:

Well, I've always participated in class, but it was just in the subjects I understood.

The classes I didn't really understand I didn't really try, cause at some points, I stopped trying in class. I don't feel like the teacher knows who I am.

The theme of feeling ignored resonated throughout each of the participants' stories when they discussed their class participation. The participants reported some degree of being ignored that ranged from not acknowledged by the teacher when their hands were raised, to feeling as if the teacher did not know them or their names. Subsequently, feelings of being ignored led to all participants' voicing experiences of unfair treatment and stereotyping.

Unfair Treatment and Stereotypes.

Irrespective of the academic track, participants unreservedly voiced their experiences related to unfair treatment and stereotypes. Joshua expressed two concerns about being treated unfairly:

I've felt like I have been treated unfairly. I'm not saying that I'm a saint, but I have gotten in trouble before and I'm not saying it's because they're racists, but one student may do the same thing I do, get off scot-free, but I'll get in trouble because I'm a different race or they see me as a troublemaker sometimes.

Joshua's response revealed that he thought African American males were being stopped more frequently in the halls with the unfounded assumption that they did not have the proper documentation to be out of class. This was a source of frustration for many of the participants. Curtis' response encapsulated the frustration that participants felt about being treated unfairly:

Yeah, once. The teacher, every time I would be doing something and it was my

first time doing something, and everyone else in the class was doing, they did it so many times, the teacher would always just call me, point me out doing and not tell any other student stuff. I have no idea. The teachers at school say I'm a very respectful student that listens to all those. I have no idea why the teacher did, said that. Why the teacher always yells at me about or something. Barely. I think because I am Black. He barely ever got on the White kids.

There was clear evidence that some participants were not being given assistance when asking for help; however, Thomas perceived that the teacher would help the White students. Whereas, Shamar displayed feelings of agitation as he began to talk faster and louder adamantly exclaiming:

Well, my science teacher, she would just send me out of class when she was mad at someone else in class, and usually it'd be someone of different skin tone, and she'll yell at them. And then I'll look back, then I'll look back at her. And then she'd just be like, "Oh, you're not paying attention. Get out my classroom." And then I'd be really upset.

He further clarified his feelings of unfair treatment by saying, "usually White people. Whenever she would get mad at someone that was Whites students, she would yell at them, and then she'd look at me or one of the other Black children and send us out." Nevertheless, he was resounding about his unfair treatment and about what he thought needed to be changed in the educational environment.

The issue of stereotyping resonated with most of the participants. Donta and Joshua shared similar experiences of being stereotyped. These two African American males expressed clearly and resolutely that their teachers assumed they were bad or

trouble makers because they were Black and because of the way they dressed before getting to know them personally. The participants suggested that the teachers at South Central Suburban Middle School get to know their students before judging them on the way they dress, look or act. Darius felt like his teachers thought his "family sold drugs" or was involved in some other "illegal activity" because he dressed in a manner representative of the Hip-hop culture. Thus, the feelings of being treated unfairly and stereotyped made some participants perceive themselves as "slow", "dumb" or "inept".

More importantly, when participants were asked about their after-school activities or club involvement, responses did not include any academic club involvement. Although participants mentioned academic clubs such as the " 24 math club, reading club, and Spanish club", none of the participants took advantage of these clubs and were not aggressively encouraged to do so by their teachers. However, the ten students reported academic struggles. Joshua was asked about clubs or afterschool activity participation and said, "no, not really, because I struggle with grades and getting in trouble and stuff. I did go to some football, afterschool football programs once or twice. But that was mainly it, we never really did anything afterschool." Curtis resounded the same thing saying, "a bunch of sports clubs". Similarly, Donta talked about "after school band and basketball." Michael did mention being in the Spanish club, but he said, " We never met". Moreover, the clubs and after-school activities participants took part in were nonacademic, sports and music, which may be viewed as stereotypical for African American males although many of them would have benefited from participation in academic afterschool clubs for reading and math.

Finally, all the students were transparent and recounted passionate stories about

unfair treatment and stereotyping at South Central Suburban Middle School. Coupled with unfair treatment and stereotyping, participants were placed in less rigorous courses and some were not given the appropriate special education support.

Lack of Rigor and Classroom Supports

The participants were questioned about their most challenging class, they all mentioned standard and inclusion classes with the exception of one gifted and talented outlier although there were four gifted and talented students. Surprisingly, Joshua, Curtis and Donta, all gifted and talented students, indicated their most challenging classes were not gifted and talented, especially since these participants were identified as being capable of a rigorous course of study by the Gifted and Talented Committee. These students were all placed in English; but were not placed in gifted and talented American history. Even more interesting, Donta, a student identified as gifted and talented was placed in an inclusion Spanish class. There were several standard Spanish classes and two gifted and talented Spanish classes; but this participant was placed in the lowest tracked Spanish class available, inclusion. However, Michael, a gifted and talented student, acknowledged:

Gifted and talented Common Core Algebra II. It is most challenging simply because I don't understand it, and I gave up at one point. So, I would just sit in class, not do my work, not do my homework, and then get a C. And then, I have to work hard to get a B when I actually try. Cause that was the only time it is made challenging. It is challenging cause of myself, really.

The remaining students were tracked as standard or IEP students. However, all these students were placed in inclusion classes, including the standard students, and

experienced some degree of difficulty. Thomas expressed having reading comprehension issues; on the other hand, Shamar had difficulty with algebraic computations. More importantly, all the participants expressed that teachers did not assist them when they asked for help but rather invited them to coach class afterschool or to get a tutor. Shamar had this to say about his Algebra teacher, " My teacher tried to help me by saying come to coach class, but I had to ride the bus. She told my parents to get a tutor, but they could not afford that. I really felt dumb". Similarly, Darius said, "If you were struggling, she would say come to coach class after school. I couldn't because I didn't have a ride home". Finally, Barry expressed his feelings by saying, "The teacher really isn't helpful because she speaks with a heavy accent which caused frustration on my part".

In summary, all of the participants were placed in less rigorous classes, despite being identified as gifted and talented or standard. Moreover, strong standard students, as indicated by their cumulative grade point average (GPA) and MSA scores, were placed in less rigorous inclusion classes, and IEP participants expressed not being able to get assistance from the teacher when asked. Nevertheless, not being appropriately challenged in rigorous courses or given the necessary special education supports, all of the participants compliantly accepted having all White teachers but speculated about having an African American teacher.

Compliant Acceptance and Inquisitive Speculation.

When participants were asked about their feelings about having White teachers and the impact of those White teachers on their educational experience, they replied with satisfaction. 70% of the participants have only had White teachers their entire school

experience. Therefore, it has become the norm. Thomas summed it up in one simple statement, " It just feels like school". Subsequently, participants did not view the race of their teacher as having any impact on their education. Participants indicated that all the teachers are required to "teach from the same books" and the "same curriculum". Barry's response best echoed the responses of all the participants when voicing his opinion on the impact that White teachers have had on his education. Barry, who has never had a Black teacher, responded:

Umm... I never really had a problem with that. Until you've actually brought it up, I'd never really thought about it. Majority of my teachers were usually White. I did have, I think, only one and that wasn't even in my class. I don't think I actually ever had a black teacher teach me. I knew there were Black teachers, but I don't think I actually ever had one. No, not that I could recall. No, I don't believe so. Aren't teachers required to teach the same curriculum. I think they are so does it really matter black or white.

Nevertheless, participants speculated what it would be like to have an African American teacher. They wondered if an African American teacher would understand them as an individual because of similar shared experiences and take more time to allow for conversations on relevant African American male issues. Curtis' response was reflective of many of the participants when he said, "I wonder if a Black teacher would take time to really know why some students act how they are or why they are who they are and take time to listen to them." Although similar to Curtis's response, Cedric added, "I wonder do White teachers understand us. We tried to talk about Freddie Gray and what happened but they did not want to talk about it." Additionally, participants expressed feelings of

teachers not seeming to care about their students and make them feel good about their learning. Barry's response encapsulated the feelings of many of the participants when he said,

I would make it a little more personal. I think that's my biggest thing. Like actually know the students, really talk to them. I came in class, and it is so much different from having my six and seventh grade classes, because we would sit there and we would do work and she would barely call our names.

Although participants compliantly accepted having all White teachers and wondered what it would be like to have an African American teacher, more importantly, they pondered about the benefits of having an African American teacher.

Relationships and the Personal Perspective.

As a follow-up to the question to having all White teachers and the impact on their education, participants were asked to share their thoughts about the benefits of having African American teachers. All of the participants' replies incorporated relationship building and understanding the dilemma of the African American male in today's society. Participants believed that African American teachers would have a better understanding of what it is to be an African American male in today's society.

Subsequently, Curtis and Thomas' responses provided a summation of participants' responses on the issues of the personal connection. Curtis stated, "Because there are certain problems that African American males might have in life that a White teacher might not understand, an African American teacher might understand how the kid feels". Similarly, Thomas expressed, "I think an African American teacher would be able to connect with us because they realize the struggle and because they will take us

doing good personally."

More importantly, all participants indicated that African American teachers would care more about their students and could relate more than White teachers. This was robustly expressed best by Michael:

I think that having an African American teacher would benefit African-American students because, again, they can relate to their students more. It would be really helpful because I feel like no one really knows you except your own people, and that's just my opinion. So if somebody said something to me at the time... I remember that there were a group of teachers, I didn't ever have them, but they were African American. And they would notice that I was acting out and they would tell me... They would really try to help me back to that place where I was or help me be a better person. So I think that generally, they really care about their own students more, or just... Yeah, I feel like they care about their own students more.

Other participants felt that having African American teachers would be a counternarrative to the low expectations and deficit model thinking to which many of their White teachers ascribe. Donta referenced the Freddie Gray incident and the riots which occurred in Baltimore City and the negative images of young African American males that were portrayed by the media. In support of this argument, Donta said,

"I do feel... I feel like the African American teacher... they help the argument that we're not crazy. We're just like everybody else. We're calm. We might have a different style of doing things, but we still wanna achieve the same goals".

Subsequently, participants realized that the experiences of an African American teacher

could help them navigate the harsh terrain of public schooling because they have "experienced it" and found it important in helping them move forward educationally. Darius' response resonated summarizing the voices of all participants, "Because African American teachers understand where African American students come from. They know what they go through, and they know what they have to do to get to college". Chris expressed feelings of pride when discussing African American teachers and their knowledge of "our heritage;" therefore, "we can walk out of school and then go out in public and be proud of because they have experience in many different ways. They have seen things and done things that we cannot imagine,"

All participants felt having African American teachers would be invaluable to their educational experience. Overall, participants perceived that having African American teachers would be advantageous because of their shared experiences, and what they could learn from them based on their lived experiences. In addition to their feelings about the positive benefits of having African American teachers, they attributed their current academic resiliency to parental or family involvement.

Resiliency and Ambiguous Teacher.

When asked about their parental or family involvement in their education, nine of the participants responded positively with one outlier who identified a teacher as his primary support. Eight out of ten participants proudly talked about their parental involvement. Joshua reported that he had failed all of his courses and his family came to the rescue and began to get on him about his grades. He did express that he struggled with homework at times and his parents are not able to help him. Like the other participants, Joshua's response about his teachers' encouragement of parental involvement was as

follows:

They really don't because I hear back in... When my mom and dad were in school, they would call home a lot and stuff, but now that we got email and call, I mean cellphones and stuff, they'll just rather do that but they don't really do that that much anymore since we got new technology and stuff. The parents, they think it's the parents' duty to just go online and check what your students are doing and contact them, not vice versa.

Additionally, all participants mentioned the electronic grading system, Engrade. Communication with parents has been reduced to electronic communication which has prompted parents to take more ownership of their child's academic progress and made the teachers' role in communicating students' achievement status nebulous. Donta echoed the sentiments of all the participants by saying, "They don't really encourage my parents. They have to go on Engrade to check my grades. My teacher says it is my parent's responsibility because she posts the grades. Parents are expected to contact the teacher."

Moreover, participants identified extended family as their primary academic support. Cedric specifically mentioned how helpful his older sister was in helping him with his homework and making sure his grades were satisfactory. Similarly, Shamar expressed having a large extended family as support. He acknowledged his father and stepmother as supports for him during his regular weekend visits.

On the other hand, Michael, an outlier, expressed how a teacher was his main support. He admitted that he did not have the support of his family. Michael smiled and said, "That's a tough question. I think that... My mother, is not really involved in my education. But Ms. Jones (teacher) and everyone else, yes, they really are engaged and

involved." In addition, Michael expressed his views on teachers' encouragement of parental involvement when he said that "they post stuff on Engrade and expect the parents to look at it. That's about it".

As a final point, Darius, the outlier, whose father is a teacher said when asked about parental involvement in his education, he stated "not really. My dad, he works at a high school, but he doesn't help me with my education. They could help me with some studying and stuff". In addition, Darius communicated his thoughts on the encouragement of parental involvement by saying, " No, they don't. Everything is on Engrade. They expect parents to monitor it. If your parents do not, they say it was posted. Nothing is personal." Darius' response captured the lack of communication between parents and teachers.

To conclude, data was organized into eight themes which gave the researcher a view of what participants' encounter while navigating the educational terrain of South Central Suburban Middle School. All of the participants were candid in their stories in responding to the interview questions associated with the primary research question.

Emergent Themes from the Secondary Research Question

Furthermore, this research sought to answer a secondary research question: How do African American males perceive the efficacy and expectations of their teachers? Participants were eager to voice their feelings on the primary six and subsequent follow-up interview questions which addressed the secondary research question. Through their stories, three themes emerged: The data is presented using those themes which include: (1) Positive Relationships and Paradoxes; (2) Engagement vs. Disrespect; and (3) Stereotypical and Color-blindness

Positive Relationships with Paradoxes.

When participants were asked about their overall feelings about teachers at South Central Suburban Middle School, many voice a variety of positive opinions. Joshua described his teachers "like friends" and expressed how good it made him feel to be acknowledged. Participants felt their teachers "really cared about them", "wanted the best for them" and were "respectful." Thomas described his teachers as being nice and helpful. Nevertheless, Curtis' response best captures the overall experience of participants when asked how they felt about their teachers:

They just make me feel okay. They help with a lot of my school work. Sometimes they make sure that they added extra work, or work the I could redo so I can keep my grades up and do better. Some say it is my job to keep my grades up. They make activities in class fun and educational. They make us want to do it and make us want to learn.

Although participants voiced positive feelings about their teachers, there was some issues that presented as paradoxical. For example, participants also reported their teachers saying "learning is the students' responsibility;" "students must take responsibility for their own learning;" and "learning is your job and teaching is mine." This notion of learning is the students' responsibility was succinctly captured in Joshua's response, "some (teachers) attitude is like I got mine you gotta get yours. It's up to you. Those teachers make me want to skip or not go to their class and when I am there I don't do my best". Participants also voiced concerns of teachers not wanting to listen to or accept alternative viewpoints or opinions. Cedric expressed vexation over teachers "yelling", "getting smart" with students and "sending them to the office". Chris' comments

summarized the paradoxical nature of environment which the participants navigated each day:

My teachers make me feel... Well, some of my teachers make me feel like school is another home, and some of my teachers make me feel like I want to go home. I feel that the teachers are very... I think that they are very... How can I put this? They're very responsible when it comes to certain things, but other things they lack experience in. Such as knowing when a student is having trouble with work, but doesn't really come up to them and ask them what's going on. Because of the enthusiasm they have in class, it's like they don't understand, or better yet, they don't care about the way their students are doing in class, considering the fact that it's not them.

All of the participants expressed feelings that their teachers cared, some with excitement and others nonchalantly; paradoxically, participants voiced concerns about being told they are responsible for their own learning. Furthermore, when students were asked about their classes, their responses were again contradictory which included engaging lessons with innuendos of disrespect.

Engaging verse Disrespect.

When participants were asked about their classes, it was clear that the classes they enjoyed most were those class where learning was made "fun," "interactive," and the teachers exuded a "passion for their subject matter." For example, Joshua and Curtis expressed similar feelings about their class. Both young men spoke of classes that included group collaboration and hands-on-activities which made learning interesting, entertaining and fun. However, Donta was more interested in the classes where the teacher was "fair."

Whereas, Thomas declared the classes he enjoyed most were those classes where the teachers actually took time to better his understanding. Furthermore, Barry's response about his math class is indicative of all of the participants' feelings about their favorite classes:

My math teacher would make games and make lessons that would catch my attention. His units were always interactive and we did a lot of group work. He was very understanding. He seemed to care about his students. He wanted them to succeed.

Contrariwise, a common theme of disrespect was noted in those classes participants found least likeable. Joshua stated he least enjoyed the classes where he did not bond with the teacher or the teacher responded to him in a sarcastic and disrespectful manner. Similarly, Curtis was irritated in those classes where the teacher failed to acknowledge his opinion which left him feeling dumb. Likewise, Michael's robust comments about his least favorite class echoed the sentiments of his fellow participants:

Oh, my gosh. I would have to say Spanish simply because of the teacher. I could not stand that lady. Because she was a little bit disrespectful. And at the time, I was different, so I would speak back, and not in a pleasant way. So we would often get into arguments, and that would affect my grades. It was a nightmare class. I remember one time, I asked for extra help on my test because we had literally all... The entire class failed it. So we spent like another two weeks going over the same material, and then we failed it again. So I asked for extra help and she yelled at me, and then I started crying cause I was so sensitive. But I remember she made me feel like I was a little slower.

Interestingly, in Shamar's least favorite class, he was relegated to boring book work with minimal teacher interaction. Subsequently, Chris spoke to the lack of enthusiasm and passion when talking about his least favorite classes which in turn made him feel like those teachers did not care if the students learned or not. Additionally, Joshua had a great deal to say about his least favorite classes. Joshua was frustrated in those classes where the teacher failed to adequately explain the content. He went on to say that during class he would get confused and ask the teacher for assistance and she would continue to repeat the same explanation which made him angry and caused him to disengage from instruction.

In conclusion, the classroom environment seemed to be optimal for all participants where learning was engaging and fun; however, there was an undercurrent of disrespect where students were yelled at, opinions were not valued, boring book work and inadequate explanation of course content were given. Along with these acts of subtle disrespect, participants had interesting comments when they shared their perceptions about what the teachers' felt about African American culture.

Stereotypical and Color-blind.

When participants were asked how their teachers felt about their culture, all of the participants thought teachers perceived their culture in a negative manner. For example, Joshua and Michael insisted that many of their teachers believed that African American males are all "troublemakers" and thought the teachers recognized African American culture but failed to embrace it because they continue to teach what they have always taught with little or no modification. Although unsure about how his teacher felt about his culture, Curtis insinuated in his responses that he felt his teachers perceived African

American students were "actually mental slow kids". However, at the end of his response, he indicated, "Some teachers actually do care about me and who I am. Some teachers could care less... Couldn't care less. Uninterested, they're not helpful". On the other hand, Shamar felt his teacher wanted to "bring him down" because he is an African American male. Additionally, Thomas insisted when he raised his hand to answer a question, the teacher looked for White students which left him feeling "not as important" as an African American male.

More importantly, participants felt like teachers did not use relevant examples from their culture. Participants mentioned such things as, the African trade routes, slavery and hinted at the Jim Crow Laws which are all found in the social studies curriculum. Michael's response best encapsulates participants' feelings about the use of meaningful, current examples of African American culture.

Not that I can recall. Not really, because I think they just have that curriculum they have, that one set thing that this is how you're supposed to teach, so they didn't really incorporate anything else. I think that everybody's looked at the same, and that's really it. There was no point in inter- fusing anything other into the classroom setting.

Cedric's comments reinforced Michael's comment. Cedric indicated that the majority of what is taught in his class comes from the book which is dominated by the White culture with very little attention, other than slavery, given to the prominence and contributions of African Americans. Whereas, Chris mentioned trying to talk about current issues, such as the Freddie Gray case, and the teachers refused to permit discussion on this issue that is extremely germane to the African American male experience; however, they

wanted to "stick with the slaves, the slave trade and the trade triangle that took place in early America." Darius' response best characterizes participants feeling on African American culture and its use in the classroom.

I think some of my teachers thought I was gonna be one of the bad kids, or like stealing cars. They see me as well dressed, they thought... It was stereotyping. Maybe my social studies teacher... Not really. Slavery. No. It is important because it's not all about White culture. They need to realize black people live here. In a teaching environment, I would not say. As an understanding way and understanding me individually, I would say that would be different.

All in all, participant's responses were stereotypical when voicing their perceptions on how their teachers felt about their culture. More importantly, the participants were clear about the examples used in instruction and the importance of their culture.

In conclusion, the data presented in three emergent themes allowed the researcher a glimpse into the participants' perceptions of their teachers. Although on the surface teachers' appeared to care about the participants, but insidious subtle forms of racism surfaced.

Chapter 5: Interpretations, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary

This basic qualitative study depicts the experiences of suburban African American male middle school students in a predominately White teaching environment. The primary and secondary research questions served as the road map for this inquiry:

- *Primary Research Question:* How do suburban African American male middle school students make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers?
- *Secondary Research Question:* How do African American males perceive the efficacy and expectations of their teachers?

The American educational system has been the spawning ground for institutionalized racism for many years (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Despite the progress made during the *No Child Left Behind* era, suburban African American males have persistently lagged behind every other subgroup in achievement in suburban schools where they most often bring the same social, cultural, emotional and economic capital as their White peers. Subsequently, middle class suburban standing does not protect African American males from in-school process factors which negatively impact their educational experience (Beard & Brown, 2008; Center on Educational Policy, 2010; Condon, 2009; Ogbu, 2003). Therefore, the literature review in Chapter 2 surveys two key in-school process factors, teacher-efficacy and expectation, which impacts the academic performance of African American male students. An in-depth review of the literature revealed these two powerful in-school process factors either support high academic achievement in African American males or serve as an ever present

impediment.

This study gave voice to ten suburban African American male middle school students who daily navigate these two powerful in-school process factors. I believe telling the stories of the participants is the only way to make meaning of their experiences, thereby disrupting the current educational condition to bring about change and to decrease the achievement gap for suburban African American males. The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews with 10 participants who are currently navigating this educational landscape. The interview data was coded and organized into themes where several findings emerged. The study's foundation was Critical Race Theory and conceptualized through teacher- efficacy and teacher- expectation. The intent of the study was to understand the plight of African American males in the suburban school setting. The findings are organized by research question.

Key Findings and Discussion: Primary Research Question

Eight major findings surfaced relative to the primary research question: How do suburban African American male middle school students make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers? Findings included eight actions that impacted the education of the ten African American male participants being educated by White teachers: 1) Teaching lacks cultural relevance; 2) The voice of the African American teacher is essential; 3) Lower academic self-esteem due to feelings of being ignored; 4) Experiences of unfair treatment and stereotyping; 5) Curriculum perceived as the driving force behind learning; 6) Less rigorous courses and the lack of classroom supports; 7) Decrease in personal communication between teachers and parents; 8) Protective factors associated with participants. Each finding will be discussed in

relationship to the existing literature on teacher efficacy and expectation as it relates to educating African American males. Positioning these findings within the broader scope of the literature exposes commonalities and divergences between this study and others and helps to further the understanding of the lived experiences of these students and shed light on the persistent and pervasive achievement gap.

Teaching is not culturally relevant.

Studies perorate that White teachers have limited personal and professional interactions with individuals who are racially, ethnically, linguistically and culturally different which suggests they cannot make learning relevant for African American males because they are unable to relate to their lived experiences (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2005, 2006; Tatum, 1997). This absence of a cultural connection to participants produced feelings of apathy which presented as not feeling a sense of exigency to achieve their maximum potential. Most of the participants used words like "lazy," "not interested", and "lack of motivation" which are symptomatic of a culture of institutionalized racism where high expectations are not the norm for participants, but rather stereotypical beliefs (McWhorter, 2000). Eight of 10 participants indicated that they could achieve at higher levels but merely lacked the interest or could not find a personal connection during instruction. Consistent with the research of Irving & Hundley (2008), students become actively engaged in learning when it is culturally relevant and when students are able to make connections to their lived experiences.

Participants reported they were detached because the material was boring and lacked cultural relevance. This finding suggests participants are likely to have teachers with low efficacy who are less likely to stimulate students to reach their maximum

potential by connecting instruction to present-day events and students' interests which is analogous to findings of other researchers (Irving & Hundley, 2008; Sodell & Podell, 1994). The data implies participants are not lazy or disinterested; but rather, they are a part of a system that does not recognize their lived experiences by integrating those experiences into teaching and learning in the classroom.

Many teachers are not conscious of the racism that African American males have come to accept because it's their lived experience in the schoolhouse (Aguilar, McKinnon & Sookraj, 2011; King, 1995). More importantly, participants seem not to realize they are a part of an insidious system of racism and discrimination that dates back to slavery. Ultimately, the findings suggest that teaching is not culturally relevant to participants and indicative of low efficacious teachers with low expectations which supervenes academic engagement which is consistent with the findings of many researchers (Gordon, 2012; Irving & Hundley, 2008; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2005, 2006; Tatum, 1997)

However, two gifted and talented participants were outliers expressing their academic achievement as "good" and "phenomenal." According to Condly (2006), students with high cognitive ability and temperament are resilient. Furthermore, these participants possessed the ability to distinguish between what they could and could not control which enabled them to be selective and modify their surroundings (Harvey & Delfabro, 2004). Thus, these two gifted and talented participants were able to articulate their level of achievement and were able to explain what impacted their achievement or how they would improve and maintain a high level of academic success. In addition, each of these participants spoke of having strong parental and/or teacher support which

has been shown to be a positive protective factor associated with resiliency in children enabling them to navigate the absence of cultural connections (Brooks, 2006; Condly, 2006; Garmezy, 1991).

The voice of the African American teacher is essential.

Coupled with culturally responsive teaching is the voice of the African American teacher. Davis (2003) suggested that an increase in the presence of successful African American males is critical in the educational environment to enhance the academic and social development of African American male students. This positive male presence is meant to diffuse traditional masculine stereotypes and to counter negative concepts of the gender role solicitation in African American males. Davis suggested that "the development of conceptions and expressions of masculinity that match positive behaviors and deportment in school settings is the primary objective of these interventions" (p. 528). This would include African American teachers.

Although African American males are characterized as academically disengaged and intellectually inferior by the dominate society; however, the presence of African American teachers presents a counter-narrative which highlights the success of African Americans which allows African American males to view schooling as a positive, viable option (Carter, 2008). Carter further states that:

The educational accomplishments of countless members of the Black community represent a rejection of the dominant societal narrative that African Americans have a history of underperformance in America's public schools. In fact, the counternarrative of Black children's school success serves to motivate many students who might otherwise internalize the myth of Black intellectual inferiority

and experience consistent academic underperformance. (p.11)

Subsequently, Carter posits that the presence of African American teachers, which represents success, may serve as motivation for African American males thus legitimizing their educational experience.

More importantly, participants voiced their perceptions about having an African American teacher. Participants recognized the benefits of the experiential knowledge that African American teachers bring to the educational experience indicating they could learn more about their heritage which is supported by the work of Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995). Additionally, Ladson-Billings (2005) suggested that there is a cultural discontinuity between mainstream Eurocentric values which are inherently embedded within the curriculum and the contrasting values of African American males. This conflict of values traps African American males in two different worlds (Gordan, 2012). Therefore, having African American teachers may mitigate this feeling of being trapped.

Moreover, participants expressed the benefits of the lived experiences of African American teachers and the correlation to current stereotypical or societal injustices that currently threaten young African American males. In fact, some participants indicated the presence of African American teachers may disrupt some of the stereotypical beliefs held by White teachers. Therefore, the data revealed that all participants agreed that the voice of African American teachers is essential to understanding or legitimizing the African American male's educational experience. Thus, this finding, which links to culturally relevant teaching, suggests that participants stories are not being incooperated which aligns with the research on low efficacious teachers with low expectations (Gordon, 2012; Irving & Hundley, 2008; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Tatum, 1997).

Lowered academic self-esteem due to feelings of being ignored.

Participants felt ignored. As a result, their academic performance suffered, they lost self-esteem, and they became disengagement. All of the participants conveyed stories of not being recognized when trying to participate in class. Although the researcher is not sure why students were not recognized, the participants perceived it was because the teacher did not think they knew the answer, or the teacher was only calling on White students. Regardless of the reason, participants were not recognized; many were left feeling "dumb" or "slow" when they weren't given a chance to respond which corresponded to lower academic self-esteem. Meanwhile, other participants did not feel comfortable responding if they were not sure of an answer for fear of being made to feel "dumb" which again equates to lower academic self-esteem.

More importantly, when participants were ignored it provoked a feeling of invisibility (Dowden; Gunby; Warren & Boston, 2014). According to Franklin (1999), this feeling of invisibility has been characterized as “an inner struggle with the feeling that one’s talents, abilities, personality, and worth are not valued or even recognized because of prejudice and racism” (p.769). Subsequently, this concept of invisibility presents as devaluing, demeaning, disadvantaging and the unfair treatment that many African-American male students encounter on a daily basis (Franklin, 1999). When participants need for personal affirmations were not met by being recognized and given the chance to demonstrate their understanding, they disengaged from instruction and were left feeling academically inadequate (Dowden, et.al., 2014).

This finding suggests that low efficacy teachers with low expectations are the culprits (Diamond, J. B., Randolph, A., & Spillane, J., 2004). Because of these two

culprits, teachers may be afraid to give students a chance to respond because they were apprehensive about their answers or assumed they did not know the correct answers which caused students to be ignored or overlooked. In summary, this finding exposed participants' feelings of being ignored which resulted in academic disengagement and lower academic self-esteem which is supported by an abundance of research on low teacher efficacy and expectation (Ghaith, G., & Shaaban, K., 1999; Yoe, L. E., Ang, R. P., Chong, W. H., Huan, V. S., & Quek, C. L., 2008).

Experiences of unfair treatment and stereotyping.

All participants expressed being treated unfairly and others spoke specifically about being stereotyped. Solórzano & Yosso (2001) characterize stereotyping as "an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify our conduct in relation to that category" (p.4). Participants expressed stereotypes in two forms which included cultural and intelligence. Participants voiced their concerns about nice clothes being associated with selling drugs or some other illegal activity (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Furthermore, participants expressed their feeling about been viewed as being prone to fight or not following school rules and procedures because they were African Americans males which resulted in participants being removed from class and stopped more frequently in the halls to be checked for proper documentation than other students. Being stopped and questioned because one is an African American male, constitutes racial profiling in the schoolhouse. Consequently, low efficacy teachers with low expectations reacted adversely to and disciplined African American males more frequently (Hubbard, 2005; Ward, 2005). According to one participant, when he raised his hand the teacher looked directly at him but called on a White student. Similar to the

findings of Pollard (1993), a student reported feeling judged because he was an African American male, and did not know the answer which is representative of low teacher efficacy and propagates low expectations.

According to Delgado & Stefancic (2001), this form of institutional racism can take on various forms at all levels of school life. The overwhelming majority of data suggests this form of racism does not take the form of conscious perpetrators but rather unconscious perpetrators. According to Irving & Hundley (2008), unconscious perpetrators commit acts of hostility or speak words of denigration with no awareness of malice or foul play. This aligns with the work of King (1991) on dysconscious racism which is a form of racism that implicitly accepts the dominate White norms and privileges. Dysconscious racism is not a false consciousness but rather an impaired consciousness. It is an uncritical way of thinking about race and racial inequality which validates the assumption that construct Whiteness and White privilege. Therefore, the perceptions of unfair treatment and acts of stereotyping has it genesis in Whiteness and White privilege. To concluded, the finding of participants' perception of unfair treatment and stereotyping is congruent with the findings of many researchers (Blanchett, 2006; Ferguson, 2003; Franklin, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Noguera, 2003; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Curriculum perceived as the driving force behind their learning.

When participants were asked about having White teachers and the impact on their education, they replied with compliant acceptance and inquisitive speculation. All of the participants compliantly accepted the fact they had all White teachers and did not appear to be overly concerned. This compliant acceptance seems to be steeped in the fact

that students have come to accept the notion of colorblindness. This phenomena or mindset has been so instilled in the educational system that students have come to recognize having all White teachers as the "norm" without question. According to Henfield & Washington (2012), "within education 'Whiteness' operates as color-blindness, culturally neutral meritocratic schooling, deficit thinking, which may run counter to experiences and patterns of socialization of African American males" (p.150). The notion of colorblindness distorts the impact of discrimination and diverts the conversation from exposing institutional systemic racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

Subsequently, participants voiced their opinions about the impact of having all White teachers with inquisitive speculation. While many of them seemed to agree that having all White teachers has not deleteriously affected their education, many voiced feelings of what they thought it might be like to actually have an African American teacher. One participant who had an African American teacher for history discussed high expectations and a bond that could not be found with his White teachers. Those participants who had not had an African American teacher could only speculate about the experience. With inquisitive speculation, the students imagined strong relational bonds with African American teachers which is juxtaposed to the dominate ideology of power and domination (Solórzano, 2001).

Nevertheless, the White experience or dominate ideology confines the African American males' thought processes, expression and presentation of behavior. Subsequently, as supported by the research of Calmore (1992), this authoritative standard is found in the curriculum; therefore, some participants thought it would not matter if the teacher was African American or White. These participants clearly reiterated teachers

must teach the curriculum. Du Bois challenged this in the early 20th century. He proposed this dominant ideology suggests Africans have no history and that enslavement and colonialism were improvements to their despicable condition (Rubaka, 2007).

Additionally, Lynn and Parker (2006) suggest the curriculum has failed to connect with communities of color and failed to consider the perspectives of African American males. Using Lynn and Parker's argument, participants may be correct in believing the race of the teacher may not make a difference in their educational experience because curriculum is written from the dominant perspective which is intrinsically racist. Subsequently, participants compliantly accepted having all White teachers but perceived curriculum as the driving force behind their education, not the race of the teacher, but speculated what it would be like to have an African American teacher which is incongruent with the research on high teacher efficacy and expectation (Gill & Reynolds, 1999; Tucker et al. 2002; Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan, & Quek, 2008).

Less rigorous classes and the lack of classroom supports.

Building upon the authoritative standard, participants were placed in less rigorous courses, despite their gifted and talented status or strong standard status. Additionally, the classroom supports for IEP students were found lacking which is analogous to the findings of many researchers (Blanchett, 2006; Ford, 1998; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Hosp & Reschly, 2004; Saddler, 2005; Whiting, 2009). The participants who were identified as gifted and talented students, with the exception of one, did not identify their most challenging class as gifted and talented. If a student has been identified by the gifted and talented committee, why then is that student not given the opportunity to participate in all appropriate gifted and talented courses.

Three of the four gifted and talented students were in gifted and talented English; however, they were placed in standard American history. Gifted and talented English and gifted and talented American history are closely related, but participants were denied the opportunity to take gifted and talented American history. This type of intelligence stereotyping and the dumbing down of curriculum for participants suggests low teacher efficacy and expectations (Blanchett, 2006; Ferguson, 2003). Likewise, those participants who were identified as strong standard level students, based on their cumulative grades, were all placed into inclusion classes where the pacing is much slower and less challenging rather than the more rigorous standard classes. Again, a clear demonstration of low teacher efficacy which presents in the form of low expectations for the participants in this study.

Even more disturbing, the three participants with IEPs reported they were not getting the assistance they needed. Thus, these three students were the only participants that scored Basic in reading and math on the MSA. According to Brady and Woolfson (2008), this behavior of not helping students relates in part to teacher efficacy. Teachers with low efficacy feel unprepared to help African American male students; more importantly, teachers with low efficacy are less likely to modify curriculum and provide the necessary supports for students who may be struggling. One participant indicated his teacher told him to go home and ask his parents for help. Similarly, another participant was asked to come to coach class after school, but he did not have transportation to get home. Once again, the assumption is that parents are capable of helping their children with special needs without direction or involvement from the teacher and that all students have transportation to stay after school. Not helping students caused them to

disengage from academics, which in turn, triggered even lower expectations of their ability. Hence, IEP students had low cumulative grades and Basic scores on the MSA in reading and math.

Personal communication decreased between teachers and parents.

According to the participants, the role of the teacher and parent have reversed. Participants stated that the personal connection between parents and teachers has dissolved into electronic communication which has created ambiguity in the teachers' responsibility of effectively collaborating and communicating with parents regarding the achievement of their children. Participants perceived that teachers have now put the ownership of knowing about their progress or lack thereof on the parents. Participants indicated that teachers say they post grades and other information on Engrade, and it is the parents' responsibility to keep track of their child's progress making the teacher's role in communicating with the parent ambiguous. This is particularly troubling because the assumption is that all parents have access to computers, the internet and have the ability to help their children with their school work which harkens back to the authoritative White standard. Furthermore, some students may have guardians who do not possess skills necessary to navigate a computer-based system.

Additionally, this finding is contradictory to the research of Beghetto (2001), who argues that electronic communication is a poor substitute for a face-to-face parent teacher conference especially if there are grave problems such as failing grades, scoring Basic on reading and math on MSA, demonstrating a lack of interest and not meeting with satisfactory levels of success. Thus, face-to-face conferencing would benefit most of the participants in this study because they self-reported not achieving at their

maximum potential.

Therefore, rather than communicating with the parents personally, teachers with low efficacy and expectations appear to find electronic communication as a way to avoid the personal connection with parents regarding their child's academic progress. Because teachers' expectations are low, they don't believe talking to parents personally will make a difference in the child's academic performance (Soodak & Podell, 1994). Hence, one participant said the grades were posted when voicing his feelings about parental and teacher communication which suggests a lack of caring for that student's academic progress. All in all, this unexpected finding suggests communication with parents has become less personal when discussing the achievement of the participants which squarely aligns with the research on low teacher efficacy and expectation (Harris, Rosenthal, & Snodgrass, 1986).

Protective Factors associated with Participants

Despite the challenges of institutional racism which were exposed by CRT, participants all demonstrated a degree of resiliency in their cumulative achievement and on their scores on the Maryland State Assessment with the exception of the three participants who were tracked into special education. Despite these students scoring Basic on the MSA, the participants tracked into special education still met with a modicum of success in their cumulative academic achievement. Therefore, resiliency is of particular importance when discussing African American males (Beard & Brown, 2008; Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010; Gordon, 2012; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; The Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012).

The 10 participants reported strong family involvement in their education with

the exception of one. Parents remained in constant contact with the teacher via phone, email or through the electronic grading system, Engrade. Furthermore, scattered throughout the data were examples of teachers who used engaging and student-centered activities which are characteristics of teachers with high efficacy and expectations which is also important to the resiliency of African American males (Soodak & Pollard, 1993; Stein & Wang, 1988). Therefore, given the positive support of their families and the limited support of a few high efficacious teachers, the findings suggested participants were able to survive the tempest of institutional racism and attain some level of academic success which succinctly aligns with the research on academic resiliency (Brooks, 2006; Condly, 2006; Garnezy, 1991; Halawah, 1992; Henderson & Milstein, 2003).

The eight emergent findings, viewed through the lens of CRT, suggest that the participants were subjugated to unconscious institutional racism in South Central Suburban Middle School. For example, participants were able to see through the façade of engaging lessons, connections to teachers and teacher enthusiasm and voiced instances of unfair treatment, stereotyping, not receiving the necessary classroom supports, the absence of their lived cultural experiences in the classroom, and the avoidance of face-to-face parent teacher conferences to discuss their academic progress. Subsequently, this group of African American males appear to be a part of an environment of low teacher efficacy and low expectation.

Moreover, the eight findings for the primary research question suggests participants have come to accept the educational environment to which they have become accustomed and conditioned resulting in academic disengagement and not

striving to reach their full academic potential. However, their collective stories revealed an environment of unconscious institutionalized racism which is being mitigated by strong parental support and a few highly efficacious teachers which aligns with the research on academic resiliency (Brooks,2006; Condly, 2006; Garmezy, 1991).

Conversely, one participant did not have strong parental support but had the support of a teacher with high efficacy and expectations which is also supported by the research on academic resiliency (Howard, S., Dryden, J., & Johnson, B.,1999). So, there is a glimmer of hope in this otherwise seemly foreboding educational environment for participants at South Central Suburban Middle School. Although not achieving at their maximum potential, participants are meeting with a modicum of success. All in all, the participants in this study will not realize an equal and appropriate education until the issues of race and racism are addressed by the local, state and national education agencies.

Key Findings: Secondary Research Question

Students' perceptions of their teachers' efficacy and expectations has been shown to have a direct impact on student achievement (Noguera, 2003; Rubie-Davis, 2006). In Bandura's Social Learning Theory, he argues that self- efficacy is someone's personal self-confidence in whether or not he/she will be successful in a situation or problem or how he/she will handle the problem (Bandura, 1977). Researchers have conceptualized teacher efficacy as the belief that teachers have about their skills and abilities to create desired outcomes for students or the extent to which teachers believe they can influence how well students learn (Bandura, 1977, Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Harris & Rosenthal, 1986; Kivilcim et al.,2013). Teachers' expectations are a natural consequence of their

self- efficacy. Subsequently, the study sought to answer the following secondary research question: How do African American males perceive the efficacy and expectations of their teachers? Therefore, three findings emerged relative to the second research question. Findings included: 1) Participants responsibility to reach content mastery; 2) Varying degrees of disrespect during instruction; and 3) African American culture recognized but not embraced.

Similar to the findings for the first research question, these findings will also be situated in relationship to the existing literature on teacher efficacy and expectation as it relates to educating African American males; thereby, exposing commonalities and divergences between this study and others and helps to further the understanding of the lived experiences of the participants and shed light on the persistent and pervasive achievement gap.

Participants responsibility to reach content mastery.

When students voiced their general opinions about the teachers at South Central Suburban Middle School, they responded positively; however, they did share experiences which uncovered unsettling information about their learning experiences and mastery of content. Across all three tracks, gifted and talented, standard and special education, participants indicated that teachers' provided instruction that was fun, interesting, interactive and engaging which is indicative of high efficacious teachers who want their students to be engaged in learning (Brady & Woolfson, 2008; Stein & Wang, 1988). However, during instruction students still expressed feelings of frustration because they felt it was their responsibility to learn the information. One participant expressed it this way, "I got mine you gotta get yours". Other participants articulated

feelings of being "inept or slow" or "stupid" because of things they should have learned in elementary school but did not which was pointed out by the teacher according interview notes.

According to Irving & Hundley (2008), teachers with high efficacy and high expectations will do whatever it takes to make sure their students have a robust understanding or achieve mastery of concepts. Even though the lessons were fun and interactive, participants were told they were responsible for their own learning which is characteristic of teachers with low efficacy and low expectations (Baker, 2005; Hetty, Bosker, & Geert, 2000; Hubbard, 2005; Jackson, 2006; Long, Monoi, Harper, Knoblauch, & Murphy, 2007).

More importantly, there is a clear link to meritocracy which posits that status in society should be determined by individual merit (Lui, 2011). However, in the classroom it manifests as an attitude of: *I taught it! Now, it's up to you to learn it.* The inherent problem with this thinking is it fails to recognize that African American males bring a wide range of educational experiences to the classroom which are often minimized or disregarded during the instructional process. For example, when participants were asked about their elementary school experience, many of them stated they attend at least two different elementary schools; some attended as many as five different elementary schools. When students do not have a stable educational environment, especially in the formative elementary years, they often present with gaps in their education because of the inconsistency of curricula and instruction.

African American students exist in a color-blind society which supports meritocracy and egalitarianism here low achievement of African American males is

blindly accepted which often results in the African American male being blamed for his lack of achievement (Henfield & Washington, 2012). All in all, the findings indicated that participants perceived it as their responsibility to achieve mastery of content instead of the teachers which contradicts the findings on teachers with high efficacy and high expectations (Alfassi, 2004; Diamond, J. B., Randolph, A., & Spillane, J.; Irving & Hundley; Masten, Herbers, Cutuli, & Lafavor, 2008).

Varying degrees of disrespect during instruction.

Moreover, the data revealed a classroom environment that appeared to be engaging for African American males. Participants talked about how the teachers made class entertaining and learning fun. Others felt like they connected with their teachers because of the passion they shared for the subject matter. These classroom characteristics could be indicative of a classroom with a high efficacious teacher who has established a culture of high expectations and mutual respect (Soodak and Podell, 1994). However, when examined closely, the findings exposed an undercurrent of subtle disrespect towards participants.

Subsequently, some participants felt as though their opinions or contributions to the class were not important or valued. One participant expressed a teacher who felt his view point or opinion was the only one or the correct one and refused to listen to others and/or belittled the opinions of others. Teachers who are not amenable to alternative interpretations or opinions expressed by African American male students is consistent with the work of Blanchett (2006) on White privilege. Teachers not willing to listen to alternative viewpoints that African American males bring to the classroom, contributes to maintaining the dominant groups' solidarity and preserves the dominant groups'

position in dismissing the stories of African American males.

On the other hand, another participant expressed frustration when he did not understand an assignment and asked for help but the teacher only continued to repeat the directions to him over and over again. Similarly, participants talked about teachers yelling at them for continuing to ask for extra help resulting in one participant who shared he was brought to tears which resulted in feelings of inadequacy. Others talked about teachers having them do doing book work which is suggestive of poor planning and lesson preparation. The many acts of disrespect, including not being thoroughly prepared with engaging lessons and yelling at students, further contributed to the disengagement of participants. More importantly, participants felt that some of their teachers lacked enthusiasm; which in turn, made students not want to be in class or learn because the teacher did not seem to care.

Whereas on the surface participants appeared to be in an environment where teaching and learning were engaging and relevant; however, upon closer examination subtle levels of disrespect during instruction were exposed. Moreover, teachers may not recognize these forms of disrespect which precipitates academic disengagement for their African American male students; subsequently, teachers become unconscious perpetrators of racism. Nevertheless, Sheets (1996) suggests that students recognize the unjust application of rules and are sensitive to the overt and covert nuances of differential treatment and the underestimation of their abilities.

There is also an assumption that students bring the necessary educational experiences as the dominant class which should enable them to understand directions and instructions with minimal teacher support which is contradictory to teachers with

high efficacy and expectations who are willing to do whatever it takes to make sure their students achieve (Soodak and Podell, 1993; Stein & Wang, 1988;). African American males do bring a wealth of knowledge and valuable lived experiences; however, one must remember that their experiences are not congruent with the White curricula (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Lopez 2003).

African American culture is recognized not embraced.

Surprisingly, participants voiced conventional responses when asked how their teachers felt about African American culture. Participants used phrases like: not sure, troublemakers, mentally slow, not important, lack of respect and refuse to help. These responses were found to be disconcerting because this group of African American males appear to have a negative belief about their teachers' perception of their culture. These findings parallel the findings of many researchers (Blanchett, 2006; Calmore, 1992; Ferguson, 2003; Jenkins, 2006; Siwatu, Frazier, Osariemen, & Tehia, 2011). Even though participants expressed feelings of teachers being supportive and helpful, when questioned about teachers' feelings about their culture, responses were contradictory.

Likewise, when participants were asked about the teachers' use of examples from African American culture during instruction, participants felt teachers recognized their culture but failed to embrace it. This finding can be linked to teacher preparation programs (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Siwatu, Frazier, Osariemen, & Tehia, 2011). This phenomenon of not espousing the culture of African American males exists because the dominant class desires to remain privileged while subjugating others (Bourdieu, 1986; Standerfer, 2006). Many researchers suggest that teacher preparation programs are designed for the White middle class and fails to prepare teachers to

embrace other cultures which contributes to an environment of low efficacy and expectation. (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Siwatu, Frazier, Osariemen, & Tehia, 2011). Similarly, Henfield & Washington (2012) suggest that White teachers should be cognizant of the cultural background and how this factor impacts their belief about education and employ strategies that support African American males rather than alienate them which is characteristic of high efficacious teachers.

Regrettably, curriculum is written from the same White-middle class point of view where mainstream White values are embedded. (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Therefore, teachers teach the White dominated curriculum because that is what they have been prepared to teach. This biased curriculum does not recognize the rich history and cultural views of African American male students; thus, making the White- middle class story everyone's story. Therefore, the findings from the second research question suggests low teacher efficacy and low teacher expectations which in turn creates an environment of low expectations for African American males is analogous to the findings of many researchers on teacher efficacy and expectation (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Kivilcim, Turhan, Mehmet, & Fikret, 2013; High & Udall, 1983; Oysterman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001; Siwatu, Frazier, Osariemen, & Tehia, 2011).

Additionally, when looking at the data collected for the secondary research question, it appeared on the surface that participants perceived they were being educated in a culture of high expectations and high academic engagement, however, when the data were further scrutinized participants expressed upsetting feelings about the perceptions of their teachers which was paradoxical in nature. Even though they expressed feeling that their teachers really cared about them and wanted the best, data uncovered an

environment of institutional unconscious racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). It is the researcher's opinion that teachers are not aware of the perceptions of their African American male students; however, these students are functioning in an environment which unknowingly subjugates them to daily obstacles which they must overcome to realize a modicum of academic success. Therefore, the limited data suggests that participants' perceived their teachers as having high efficacy and expectations because this is what they have been conditioned to believe; however, according to the stories of these African American male students, their lived experiences appears to be one of low efficacy and mediocre expectations at best. Table 2 summarizes the findings by research question.

Table 2. *Summary of Findings Related to Research Questions*

Research Questions
<p>Primary Question: How do suburban African American male middle school students make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Findings</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teaching lacks cultural relevance 2. Lower academic self-esteem due to feelings of being ignored 3. Experiences of unfair treatment and stereotyping 4. Curriculum perceived as the driving force behind learning 5. The voice of the African American teacher is essential 6. Less rigorous courses and the lack of classroom supports 7. Decrease in personal communication between teachers and parents 8. Protective factors associated with participants <p>Secondary Questions: How do African American males perceive the efficacy and expectations of their teachers?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Findings</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participants responsibility to reach content mastery 2. Varying degrees of disrespect during instruction 3. African American culture recognized but not embraced

Discussion

Critical Race Theory was used as the core theoretical foundation to judiciously

analyze and address seemingly normal day-to-day experiences of ten African American male suburban middle school students. CRT assumes that race is socially constructed and functions as a powerful aspect of social life (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Also, Solórzano & Tate (2001) are advocates of CRT being an effective theoretical framework for examining race, and how the meaning attached to race influence the educational context of students of color.

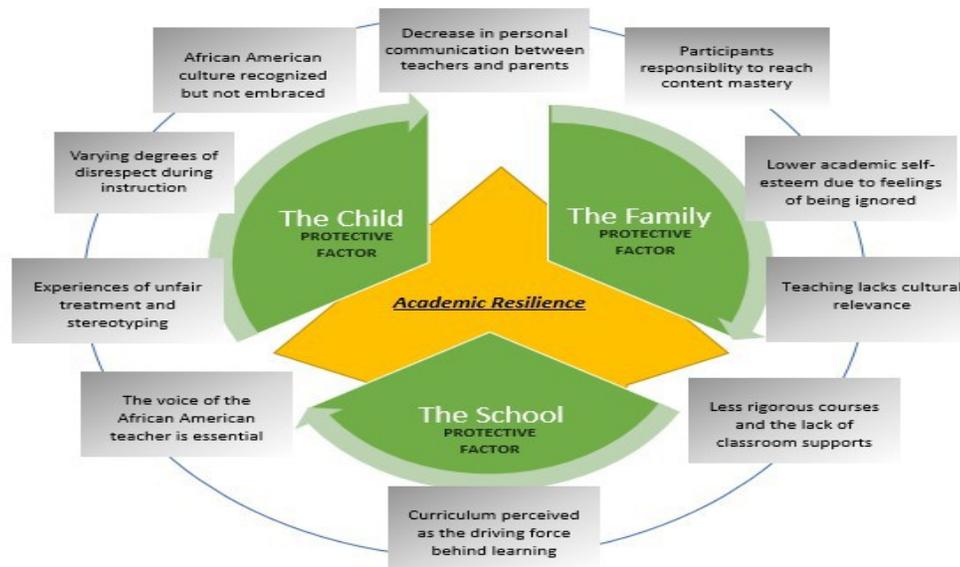
On the surface South Central Suburban Middle School appeared to be an educational environment where students were thriving with the support of high efficacious teachers exemplifying high expectations; however, the findings were disturbingly revealing when elucidated through Critical Race Theory. Using CRT as a foundational theory, ten of the findings presented as risk factors which impacted the academic achievement of participants at South Central Suburban Middle School. The findings include: 1) Teaching lacks cultural relevance; The voice of the African American teacher is essential; Lower academic self-esteem due to feelings of being ignored; 4) Experiences of unfair treatment and stereotyping; 5) Curriculum perceived as the driving force behind learning; 6) Less rigorous courses and the lack of classroom supports; 7) Decrease in personal communication between teachers and parents; 8) Participants responsibility to reach content mastery; 9) Varying degrees of disrespect during instruction; and 10) African American culture recognized but not embraced.

With intense scrutiny, 10 of the findings can be explicated within the five assumptions of Critical Race Theory that embraces: 1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, 2) challenge to the dominant ideology, 3) the commitment to social justice, (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (5) the interdisciplinary

perspective (Solórzano, 2001). Therefore, participants in this study provided counterstories which revealed lived experiences typically not recognized by the dominant society. However, all is not lost, there is a glimmer of hope due to positive protective factors, family and high efficacious teachers, which are supported by Resilience Theory, the secondary theory in this discourse. Figure 2 represents the interactions of the findings which were exposed by CRT that presented as risk factors for participants; however, when protective factors interrupted these finding students experience a modicum of academic resilience.

Figure 2

Risk Factors Exposed by Critical Race Theory



CRT posits race and racism are endemic and permeate the fabric of our society including America's schools. First and foremost, findings indicated that race and racism is central and exist in South Central Suburban Middle School. It is imperative that educators discuss the impact of racism on the educational system and how racism is maintained

without significant conscious thought. This oppressive education must be discussed and a consciousness-raising must occur at all levels of the American educational system.

Additionally, educators often follow the path of least resistance; however, the injustices which have been uncovered must be interrupted. The commonalities between all the findings can be positioned within the deficit-model and the color-blind ideologies.

According to Ford (2014), social inequality is the foundation for deficit-model thinking. Ford maintains the way people are viewed or treated, including prejudices and other forms of discrimination, frequently provides the foundation for denying or limiting opportunities for African American males and other students of color. Additionally, Ford (2014) suggested that:

Racial inequality is the result of hierarchical social distinctions between ethnic groups within a society and often are established based on characteristics such as skin color and other physical characteristics or an individual's place of origin or culture. (p.146)

Therefore, racial inequality most often presents as some group not being treated fairly or granted equal opportunities. Finally, Ford (2014) posited that "deficit thinking is a type of blaming the victim that views the alleged and imagined deficiencies of culturally different students as the primary reason for their school problems and academic failures" (p.146).

However, other researchers depict the manifestation of deficit-model thinking as a preoccupation with the differences and categorizes these differences as impediments of learning for African American males (Gordon, 2012; Rowley & Wright, 2011).

Furthermore, this deficit orientation focuses on what one sees as deficiencies in another group which was birthed by eugenics, the science of improving a human population by

controlled breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable heritable characteristics (Henfield & Washington, 2012). Additionally, Henfield & Washington (2012), maintain supporters and advocates of biological determinism and hereditarianism insist intellect or the lack thereof determines one's station in life (Henfield & Washington, 2012). In contrast, Beachum and McCray (2011) noted:

Deficit thinking is operationalized within the school when educators view students of color and students from the inner city as inherently flawed, suspect, and corrupt, and thus have nothing of value to offer or contribute to the learning process. (p. 84)

Nevertheless, the deficit ideology has persistently impacted teacher efficacy and expectation for African American males for more than a century. Consequently, many researchers contend that the deficit ideology most often results in low teacher efficacy and low teacher expectation (Baker, 2005; Hetty, Bosker, & Geert, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Long, Monoi, Harper, Knoblauch, & Murphy, 2007).

Therefore, due to the deficit ideology participants were tracked into lower academic courses than their intellectual ability. These students were placed in less rigorous courses even though their intellectual ability, as determined by the Gifted and Talented committee, suggested they should be placed in more arduous courses which resulted in lower academic self-esteem. More importantly, this cycle of deficit thinking must be interrupted by breaking the cycle of hiring from the same pool of candidates. Thus, the "new" teacher candidate must be cognizant of the racial and cultural backgrounds and how these factors converge to impact their beliefs about students; thereby, employing strategies to support rather than alienate African American males (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Finally, deficit model thinking is the gateway to perpetuating

low teacher efficacy and expectation for African American male students. Due to low teachers' efficacy and expectation in their classes, many of the participants in this study expressed feelings of inadequacy.

In summation, according to Ford, Harris, Tyson & Trotman (2002), "The less we know about each other the more we make up" (p 53); therefore, ideas about racial makeup and backgrounds have influenced and contributed to the development of policies, ideologies and practices in education for over a century to explain racial differences. More importantly, the deficit ideology can be traced back two centuries which includes *a priori* assumptions and fears associated with differences, particularly with African Americans, which led to conscious fraud on the behalf of researchers such as dishonest and prejudicial research methods, deliberate miscalculations, convenient omissions and misrepresentations of data among scientists studying intelligence (Ford, Harris, Tyson & Trotman, 2002). Therefore, this ideology of deficit thinking that participants faced must be replaced with a raised level of expectation and high efficacy among teachers before African American males will receive an equal and equitable education.

Secondly, findings can also be positioned within the color-blind ideology. For many Whites in America, the end of racial oppression for African Americans ended with the Civil Rights era and the subsequent laws that came out of the movement. (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). During this time the consciousness of mainstream America embraced the idea of a meritocratic society where individuals are rewarded or sanctioned based on their individual merit (Calmore, 1992; Lui, 2011; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Therefore, White Americans argued the state in which African Americans find themselves is their own fault which precludes them from using racism as a factor contributing to their social position

(Lead & Williams, 2006). This in essence laid the foundation for the color-blind ideology that is still unescapable and insistent in American schools and continues to have a profound effect on the achievement of African American male students.

According to Lead & Williams (2016), there are teachers who adamantly profess to be color-blind in their approach to teaching and obstinately acknowledge they treat and see everyone the same. Additionally, colorblindness to most teachers does not mean not seeing a student's race, but rather treating all students the same in the interest of being fair (Blaisdell & Borman, 2005). Therefore, the question becomes "the same as what". The researcher would suggest "the same as what" is the normalized White standard, without recognition of the cultural background or ethnicity of others. According to Williams & Lead (2006) as found in Smith (2003), the color-blind ideology is not one which occurred overnight, Smith argues that this process is a

cumulative one that takes a life-span in which Whites systematically internalize racist attitudes, stereotypes, jokes, folklore, assumptions, fears, resentments, discourses, images and fictitious racial scripts handed down through an elite discourse that fits into a dominant White post-civil rights world view of color-blind racism and seemingly race neutral discourse, ideologies and practices. (p.580).

Furthermore, each participant told stories of unfair treatment and stereotyping. They felt teachers judged them based on their clothing, friends or because they were African American. Participants experienced this treatment both individually and collectively. More importantly, participants experienced "being stopped while Black" in the halls with the assumption they were truant from class. In addition, the researcher hopes

these actions are representative of unconscious racism rather than overt acts of conscious racism. Their stories imply that students are experiencing unfair treatment and stereotyping because they do not fit the color-blind standard which is the White standard. Because these African American male participants look different, act different and bring cultural norms and practices which are not rooted in the White ideology, they instantaneously become victims.

Although some teachers dispute practicing the color-blind ideology, they fail to realize the "Whiteness" of the curriculum and pedagogy which fails to embrace students of color which renders it culturally irrelevant further contributing to the color-blind ideology (Blaisdell & Borman, 2005). More importantly, the stories of participants suggested teachers have not embraced a pedagogy that is culturally relevant to African American males which prompted disengagement from instruction. It is imperative that teachers embrace a culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Teachers must recognize and harness the rich and robust experiences of African American male students. Instruction must be germane to the experiences of these students. The findings in this study demonstrate that students disengage from learning when it is not made culturally relevant which is convergent with the research of Ladson-Billings (1995; 2000; 2006). Consequently, teaching and learning in America's schools is based on a color-blind curriculum where the stories and voices of African Americans are not included. Participants were keenly aware their culture and history is not included within the curriculum with the expectation of the slavery, and its associated issues. Many years ago Du Bois suggested that the dominant class does not recognize African Americans as having a history until the inception of the African slave trade (Rabaka, 2007).

One of the assumptions of CRT, the centrality of experiential knowledge, encourages the use of stories, narratives and scenarios to support teaching and learning which could serve as a disruption to the culturally insensitive curriculum that African American males face daily (Lewis, 2001; Solórzano, 2001). Many of the participant's reference current events germane to African American males such as the Freddie Gray case and the subsequent riots in Baltimore City. Teachers who practice a culturally relevant pedagogy embrace these events and use them as scenarios during instruction. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant high efficacious teachers embrace the cultural identity of African American students and believe in their ability to learn by maintaining high academic standards and high expectations.

Finally, Yen (2009) found that 40% of the nation's school children were non-White which suggests an increase in the racial diversity in the nation's schools. However, Feistritzer (2011) found that 84% of the K-12 teachers are White in the nation's schools. This is particularly troubling because most White teachers perceive themselves as color blind and do not see race as a relevant concept in the schoolhouse (Furman, 2008; Markowitz & Puncher, 2014; Winans, 2010). Although many researchers have found White teachers perceived themselves as color-blind, they still tend to believe that African American families, especially African American males, are more problematic than White families; but paradoxically, they also believe racial diversity is important (Furman, 2008; Hill-Jackson, 2007; Markowitz & Puncher, 2014; King & Howard, 2000). More importantly, the ratio of African American teachers to White teachers in South Central Suburban Middle School implies that the color-blind ideology is steeped in the hiring and retaining of teachers. It suggests the African American presence and lived experience is

not important or necessary in the classroom because everyone is viewed as the "same" so race has no place in the classroom which explicitly supports the color-blind ideology. South Central Suburban Middle School has a staff of 125; however, there are only 4 female staff members. Thus, African Americans represent .032% of the staff whereas Whites represent 98% of the staff. Figure 3 is representative of the racial makeup of the teaching staff at South Central Suburban Middle School.

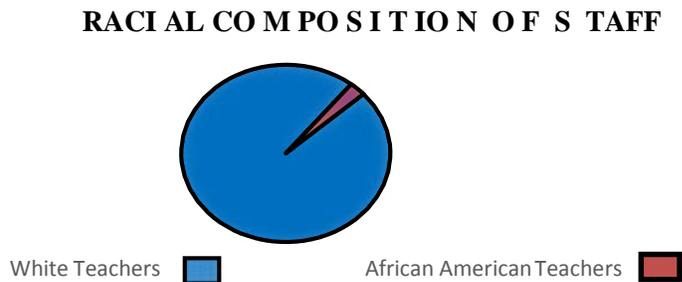


Figure 3. Racial Composition of Staff at South Central Suburban Middle School

Conclusion

Despite the frequent denial that race plays a significant role in society and is structured in a way to allocate social, economic rewards and punishments, racial ideology provides a rationale for domination including social, economic and political which Europeans established as early as 16th century to enhance their resources and privileges (Williams & Land, 2006). Consequently, CRT provided an effective theoretical lens to investigate the research questions in this discourse through which meritocracy, deficit thinking, egalitarianism and colorblindness were uncovered. Ten of the findings in this study were illuminated through the five assumptions of CRT which include: 1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism; 2) the challenge to the dominant ideology; 3) the commitment to social justice; 4) the centrality of experiential knowledge and 5) the interdisciplinary perspective. Therefore, given these findings, racism is

maintained without significant conscious thought as it applies to the participants in this study. This oppressive education must be discussed and a consciousness-raising must occur at all levels of the educational system to improve, not only the plight of the participants in this study, but for the benefit African American males across the United States.

Educators often follow a route of least resistance; however, the findings in this discourse must be interrupted. These injustices are rooted in "Whiteness" which does not refer to a biological state but rather to beliefs, presuppositions and attitudes derived from the dominate culture, the White middle-class. This view is one in which beliefs, presupposition and attitudes are projected as neutral and universal with virtually no deliberation given to the worldviews of racially and ethnically different people. Therefore, the reticence of many White teachers seems to prevent them from considering the privilege that comes with "Whiteness". Wise (2008), a White male, characterizes privilege using a fascinating analogy: "Privilege to use is like water to a fish, invisible precisely because we cannot imagine life without it"(p. 241). The findings in this study are rooted in "Whiteness" and its associated privileges which is evident by participants' perceptions of being stereotyped, treated unfairly and for being held responsible for mastery of content which subsequently led to participants' placement into less rigorous courses. Likewise, findings further suggest that "Whiteness" manifest itself in the form of deficit-thinking and color-blind culturally neutral meritocratic thinking which fails to recognized and embrace the lived experiences and rich cultural heritage that African American males bring to the educational table.

Although findings in this study cannot be generalized to the larger population, it

does give educators something to contemplate as they are made aware of the injustices faced by the African American male participants as they navigate within the school house. Therefore, the social agenda for educators and researchers alike must be to answer the following question: Since we have recognized and identified subtle forms of unconscious racism, what do we do about it? It is not enough just to uncover and debate the topic. Educators must engage in practices of developing and maintaining an environment where racism is not the norm but must engage in praxis to bridge what is known about theoretical concepts to everyday practices.

Furthermore, the unsettling findings in this study, as uncovered by CRT, can be viewed as nontraditional risk factors. The traditional risk factors such as poverty, large family size, parental criminality, low intelligence and poor child-rearing techniques and many others were not present in the participants of this study (Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010; Brown & Jones, 2004; Cooper, 1996; Finn & Rock, 1997). The participants were of the same socioeconomic status as their White counterparts and shared all of the amenities which accompanies that socioeconomic status. Therefore, the African American males in this study faced the pejorative conceptualization of African males as academically and socially problematic which has been ingrained in the fabric of schooling by the dominant society or "Whiteness" ideology which supports the deficit ideology (Eggleston & Miranda, 2009). Subsequently, the risks for these students were positioned within two powerful in school process factors, teacher efficacy and teacher expectation.

Although the findings in this study suggest an educational environment of low teacher efficacy and low teacher expectations, participants did experience a measure of success which can be associated with Resiliency Theory. Resiliency Theory suggests that

resiliency occurs when positive protective factors work simultaneously to counteract risk factors. The modicum of success experienced by participants was largely due to positive protective factors including parental involvement and few high efficacious teachers which served to disrupt the findings unearthed by CRT.

There was some evidence that a few participants participated in afterschool extracurricular activities which has been identified as a positive protective factor for students experiencing risks; however, there are mixed opinions about participation in extracurricular activities. Participants who were involved in extracurricular activities were achieving at higher levels (Fredricks & Eccles, 2010). However, because students who participate in extracurricular activities tend to be of higher socioeconomic status which is a predictor of positive adjustment, researchers argue whether the benefits of participation in extracurricular activities may be overstated as a protective factor for suburban youth in the extant literature (Fredricks & Eccles, 2010; Holland & Andre, 1987; Larson 2000). Nevertheless, when these two powerful in school process factors are interrupted and replaced with protective factors that work in consort, then and only then, will African American males achieve their maximum academic potential; thus, eliminating racism and subsequently decrease the achievement gap.

Implications for Educational Policy

Since the landmark ruling in the Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka (1954), followed by the passage of the Civil Rights of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 and the establishment of the Department of Education in 1979, educators have been attempting to address the persistent and pervasive gap that confronts African American males (Garibaldi, 1992; Gill & Reynolds, 1999). However, this study

sought to understand how suburban African Males make mean of being educated in a primary White teaching environment and to understand how African American males perceive their teachers' efficacy and expectation. Using Critical Race Theory as a framework, conceptualized through teacher efficacy and expectation, this study has uncovered factors which may explain the perceptions of the African American males in South Central Suburban Middle School. Although these findings are not generalizable to the overall population due to the small sample size; they do give education policy makers and instructional leaders information to ponder.

Federal legislatures should consider adding culturally relevant standards to the Common Core Curriculum. Furthermore, state superintendents must be made aware of what those standards are and should be held accountable to make sure they are addressed at the state and local district level. More importantly, federal law makers must make a deliberate effort to address the issues brought about by not having culturally relevant curriculum and pass legislation which mandates that state funded universities include culturally relevant teaching in their teacher preparation programs. More importantly, the study culturally responsive teaching should be made an integral part of the requirements for obtaining teacher certification. Additionally, curriculum has been identified as not being relevant for students of color and districts maintain funding new curricula many be financially taxing. Therefore, it is the recommendation of this researcher, that additional government funding be made available to states and school districts in order to offset or alleviate the burden offunding.

Moreover, educational policy makers at the state level should look at teacher training programs, particularly in those colleges and universities that receive federal and

state funding, to ensure that African American males and other students of color are being educated in a culturally responsible manner. University and college teacher preparation programs, particularly those that receive federal and state funds, must ensure that preservice teachers, both White and non-White, are taught to recognize that African American males and other students of color bring a robust variety of experiences to the schoolhouse and that these experiences, although different from the White middle class perspective, are valid, valuable and worthy of being integrated into their instructional program despite the current culturally unresponsive curricula. This study, consistent with many others, found African American males to be disengaged because they could not find a connection between "them" and the White middle class perspective. Which in turn, caused them to be bored, disinterested and to achieve at minimal levels. In spite of the current state of curricula in American schools, preservice teachers must recognize the cultural differences that African American males bring to the schoolhouse; and must be trained to integrate their rich cultural heritage and their varied lived experiences. It is an amoral imperative that preservice teacher training programs begin to shift focus from the dominant discourse to culturally responsive teaching and pedagogical practices aimed at including students of color, especially African American males. Therefore, States must make culturally relevant teaching a part of the certification process in order to become a licensed teacher which may lead to a national certification process that is required of all teachers which includes testing and coursework on culturally responsive teaching.

Not only should this training happen in institutions of higher learning, it should be considered as part of the professional development program at the district and school level. In order to eliminate the unconscious racism that occurs in our nation's school such as

stereotyping and not recognizing the worth of African American males, school districts should begin to offer professional development to teachers, administrators and central office staff specifically targeting the positive cultural heritage and lived experiences that African American males bring with them to school. More importantly, school district must be careful not to present this information from a deficit model but rather from a constructive prospective. Additionally, district leaders and school level administrators must be held accountable in making sure that this shift from a deficit model to a model which embraces the strengths and talents that African American males bring to the educational table.

The findings in this study indicated that African American males perceive the voices and presence of African American teachers is essential to understanding or legitimizing the African American male educational experience. According to Brown (2009)

African American men possess the needed pedagogies to radically transform the lives of African American male students. Additionally, that the African American male teacher possesses a unique kind of verbal capacity, interaction style, authority and personal connection necessary to reach African American males. (p.416)

However, Du Bois (1902) argued that it is more about the type of African American teacher suggesting the teacher has to provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to agitate and challenge the existing racial order. Jenkins (2010) suggests White teachers have the best intentions when educating African American male students but lack the cultural capital to successfully reach and academically engage these

students. Therefore, districts should make every effort to hire and retain more African American teachers; but more importantly, those African American teachers must be able to provide African American male students with the skills to challenge the existing racial order.

Suburban school districts should consider recruiting at Historically Black Colleges and Universities(HBCUs) where students are exposed to the rich tradition of African American culture and history and are willing to challenge the existing racial order (Williams, 2003). Although HBCUs are not graduating an abundance of students in teaching programs, it is the recommendation of the researcher that students receive assistance with tuition if they agree to study K-12 education in an effort to attract more students to the profession with the hope of creating a larger pool of candidates. More importantly, that graduates agree to work as teachers for a specified number of years. It is further recommended that districts actively recruit from the historical Black institutions. However, careful attention must be given to the hiring of African American teachers, Carter G. Woodson (1993) stated:

With “mis-educated Negroes” in control themselves, however, it is doubtful that the system would be very much different from what it is or that it would rapidly undergo change. The Negroes thus placed in charge would be the products of the same system and would show no more conception of the task at hand than do the Whites who have educated them and shaped their minds as they would have them function. Negro educators of today may have more sympathy and interest in the race than the Whites now exploiting Negro institutions as educators, but the former have no more vision than their competitors. Taught from books of the

same bias, trained by Caucasians of the same prejudices or by Negroes of enslaved minds, one generation of Negro teachers after another have served for no higher purpose than to do what they are told to do. (p. 23)

Therefore, it is critical that the hiring of African American teachers is thoughtful, methodic and purposeful. In short, districts must discontinue hiring prospective teachers from the "color blind" perspective which is inherently racist and supports a long standing tradition of institutional racism in American schools.

Implications for Instructional Practice

Although not generalizable due to the small sample size, there are some instructional implications. Even when lessons are engaging and students appear to be learning, teachers should be cognizant of all the students in the classroom making sure all students are given equal opportunities to participate and share their opinions; more importantly, always positively affirming students' efforts regardless of their own personal thoughts or opinions. The benefits of positive affirmation and providing opportunities for students to be successful is fully supported by the work of Rutter, K., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P., & Ouston, J. (1979). Teachers must create a culture of learning and high expectations for African American male students which includes giving them opportunities to participate in rigorous courses. This can only be accomplished through teaching to students' strengths rather than deliberately looking for their weakness. Until this happens, African American males may not realize their full potential whether in an urban or suburban educational environment.

In summary, schools can be contested sites where African American males' achievement possibilities are restricted or enhanced. However, many times schools

become another place which represents yet another disappointment in the lives of African American males. Davis (2003) explains the plight of African American students in this way:

For many Black male's schools ignore their aspirations, disrespect their ability to learn, fail to access and cultivate their many talents, and impose a restrictive range of their options. Within this social context, many Black boys simply give up - beaten by school systems that place little value on who they are and what they offer. (p.532-533)

Until schooling becomes culturally relevant and the lived experiences of African American males are full recognized and consistently incorporated, the educational environment is less likely to be sensitive to needs of African American males which will continue the cycle of academic disengagement and low performance. (Henfield & Washington, 2012). Therefore, teachers must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow their world to be turned upside down in order to permit the realities of their African American male students to edge into their own consciousness, and must make a significant paradigm shift in order to take culture into consideration which will provide greater opportunities for African American males and all students of color. Then, and only then, will schooling be supportive and equitable for students.

Recommendations for Additional Research

To fully understand how African American males being educated in a suburban environment by primary White teachers and to determine their perception of their teachers' efficacy and expectation, further research should be conducted with a larger sample size so that results can be more generalizable. Additionally, further research should be conducted to determine the extent to which biracial students identify themselves as

African American and how their perceptions correlate with the perceptions of their expectations of their White teachers. Moreover, as to the unexpected finding on communication, further research must be conducted to ensure that electronic communication is a viable source of communication for African American parents and to explore the impact of a blended model, electronic and face-to-face. Finally, several of the participants mentioned classroom disruption. Therefore, additional research should be to conducted to explore the impact of overt and covert disruptive behavior of African American males in the classroom and its relationship to teacher efficacy and expectation.

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Appendix A

Subjectivity Statement

Being born in a small town in Central Texas, issues of race have always been at the forefront of my life. As a child, I can remember standing in the local grocery store and hearing an elderly White man say, “It is so hot out; I’m sweating like a NIGGER.” My life as a young child and young adult was riddled with racial slurs and innuendos.

This pattern has continued throughout my adult life. For this reason, issues of equality, equity and diversity have incessantly interested me. I believe that race, in particular, for African American students and other students of color, is a consideration in all of their daily interactions and activities. Therefore, I am particularly interested in the plight of African American males because I am one of them and I share their story.

After finishing college and moving to Maryland, I became a teacher in a large urban, predominately African American, school district where I taught music and special education. Teaching in this urban district afforded me an opportunity to witness persistent and pervasive disparities found in many urban school districts. This district faced seemingly insurmountable poverty and hopelessness which contributed to a variety of negative in school and out of school processes. Frankly, daily survival was my students’ *modus operandi*. While in this position, I did what I could to provide my students with the best I could give.

However, my position in that district was eliminated due to budget cuts and I found myself in suburbia. Years later, I found out that I was placed in a troubled suburban school with a large failing African American population because I was an African American male. This pattern continued until I moved into administration. I was

placed in a suburban, high achieving middle school where I was one of three African Americans on the entire staff. Once again, I was sent as the token and to be a role model for the few enrolled African American students.

It is my past experiences which make me question the achievement of African American males and/or the lack thereof. The school currently has no African males on the teaching staff with only two African American female classroom teachers; however, approximately one-fourth of the student population is African American. The overwhelming majority of students never experience teachers of color. More importantly, once a student said to one of her teachers, “I am tired of old White women telling me what to do?” Subsequently, it begs to question whether African American students are being educated in an optimal learning environment which seeks to meet not only the educational needs but the emotional and psychological needs as well. Consequently, understanding how African American males make meaning of their education will allow me to understand their needs; moreover, the findings will help me better understand my role as a principal and ultimately my role as a person.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol Alignment with Research Questions

Research Question #1: How do suburban African American male middle school students make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers?	
Interview Protocol	
<i>Interview Question</i>	<i>Follow-up/Probe</i>
1. How old are you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What grade are you in? • Are you a magnet or comprehensive student?
2. How would you describe your school/academic performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are your grades? • What are your grades/GPA? (self-reporting) • How is your participation in class?
3. How do you feel about having all White teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel about having all White female teachers?
4. How has having all White teachers impacted your learning experiences?	
5. Tell me about your most challenging class and why it is challenging.	
6. Have you had any time when you felt you were being treated unfairly or differently?	
7. If you could change something about your educational environment, what would that be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you like to be in a different program? Why? • Why do you think having African teachers would benefit African American students?
8. What clubs or extracurricular activities are you involved in at school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you encouraged to become a part of the school? • What groups or clubs are you encouraged to become a part of?
9. Are members of your family involved in your education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do your parents involve themselves in your education? • How could your parents or family become more involved in your education? • How do your teachers encourage parental involvement?

Research Question #2: How do African American males perceive the efficacy and expectations of their teachers?	
Interview Protocol	
<i>Interview Question</i>	<i>Follow-up/Probe</i>
1. What teachers do you like best?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes them likeable? • What do teachers do/ do not to make the class least likeable?
2. Which classes do you like the least?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes them unlikeable? • What do teachers do/ do not do to make the class least likeable?
3. How do you feel about the teachers in this middle school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
4. What do you like most about your teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you dislike?
5. How do your teachers make you feel?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do your teachers make you feel about your school work? • How do your teachers make you feel about your class participation?
6. How do you best learn information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
7. What do you think your teacher feels about your culture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African Americans come from a variety of different backgrounds such as African (Nigeria, Ethiopia), Caribbean (Jamaican, Haitian). What is your cultural background? • Does your teacher use examples from your culture during instruction? • Do you feel your culture is important to your teacher? Why or why not?

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Research Question: How do African American male middle school students make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers?

Name of Participant (Pseudonym): _____

Name of School (Pseudonym): _____

Name of District/County (Pseudonym): _____

Date of Interview: _____ Time of Interview _____

Location of Interview (Pseudonym): _____

Roderick W. Harden, Sr.: Interviewer

Greeting:

Thank you for allowing me to spend time with you today. I am a doctoral student at The George Washington University. I am studying how African American male students feel about having primarily White teachers. Your responses will help the principal to think about the teachers she is hiring and what is best for your population.

I will not use any identifying information about you in the study. Everything you say will be kept confidential; your name will not be associated with any specific comments or conclusions expressed in the study. You will be identified by a made-up name, pseudonym, of your choosing. Thanks again for allowing me to interview you. If you or your parents have any question for me, I'll be available after this interview.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Warm-Up Questions:

- A. How long have you been at this school?
- B. Where do you live? How do you get to school?
- C. Where did you go to elementary school?
- D. What do you like at this school?

Interview Questions	Follow-up/ Probe
1. How old are you?	a) What grade are you in? b) Are you a magnet or
2. How would you describe your school/academic performance?	a) How are your grades? b) What are your grades/GPA? (self-reporting) c) How is your participation in class?
3. What teachers do you like best?	a) What makes them likeable? b) What do teachers do/
4. Which classes do you like the least?	a) What makes them unlikeable? b) What do teachers do/
4. How do you feel about the teachers in this middle school?	
5. How do you feel about having all White teachers?	a) How do you feel about having all White female teachers?
8. How has having all White teachers impacted your learning experiences?	
9. What do you like most about your teachers?	a) What do you dislike?
10. How do your teachers make you feel?	a) How do your teachers make you feel about your schoolwork? b) How do your teachers make you feel about your class participation?
11. Tell me about your most challenging class and why it is challenging.	
12. Have you had any time when you felt you were being treated unfairly or differently?	
13. If you could change something About your educational environment, what would that be?	a) Would you like to be in a different program? Why? b) Why do you think having African teachers would benefit African American students?
14. What clubs or extracurricular activities are you involved in at school?	a) How are you encouraged to become a part of the school? b) What groups or clubs are you encouraged to become a part of?
14. How do you best learn information?	

<p>15. Are members of your family involved in your education?</p>	<p>a) How do your parents involve themselves in your education?</p> <p>b) How could your parents or family become more involved in your education?</p> <p>c) How do your teachers encourage parental involvement?</p>
<p>16. What do you think your teacher feels about your culture?</p>	<p>a) African Americans come from a variety of different backgrounds such as African (Nigeria, Ethiopia), Caribbean (Jamaican, Haitian). What is your cultural background?</p> <p>b) Does your teacher use examples from your culture during instruction?</p> <p>c) Do you feel your culture is important to your teacher? Why or why not?</p>

Wrap-up:

I really want to thank you for your time. Your information will be very valuable for my research. I'll soon be doing an initial analysis of the data in my study. Should I have additional questions, I will contact your guidance counselor.

Thanks again for your time. Have a great day.

Appendix D

Informational Letter to Parents

Dear Parents/Guardians,

My name is Roderick W. Harden, Sr., and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at The George Washington University. Additionally, the South Central community is dear to me because I lived in the neighborhood during my childhood. I am currently in the process of conducting doctoral research and need to enlist the assistance of your child.

The research question that I am examining is: How are African American male students make meaning of being educated by predominately White teachers? Your child has been identified by his school counselor as a possible participant in this study. I would be honored to have the opportunity to interview your child in order to understand how they feel about their educational environment. To show my appreciation, your child will receive a \$20 Visa card at the end of the interview.

I am conducting a qualitative study to learn about the experiences of African American male students in a suburban educational environment with primarily White teachers. The interview will probe students' feelings regarding their current educational setting. All interview questions will be related to this topic only. The interview will last no longer than 45 minutes and will be schedule at a time convenient for the child during the school day with your permission.

Any qualitative research has its risk and these risks have been taken very seriously. This research design has also been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of The George Washington University. A copy of the IRB approval form is

attached. It is the goal of this research to inform the knowledge base regarding how African American male students feel about being educated in their current environment, not to exploit the data for negative or political purposes.

Although risks to your child in this study are minimal, several steps will be taken to ensure the protection and safety of all students involved. Your child will have the right to stop the interview at any time. To ensure their protection, a pseudonym will be selected for your child and the school. Only one copy of the child's name will exist and will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. All additional records, data, audiotapes, and transcripts will be kept in a locked, secure space in the researcher's home. All identifying information and audio tapes will be destroyed following completion of the study.

Please review the enclosed information detailing the research I wish to do with your child. If you agree that you would like your child to be a part of this research, please sign and date the enclosed consent form granting me permission to contact both you and your child. Consent forms can be given directly to your child's school counselor, and he/she will forward them to me. Your decision regarding participation in this study will in no way influence your child's academic standing nor will it affect any services your child receives from the school. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you for considering my request. I am excited about the possibility of working with your child. If I or my dissertation chair, Dr. A. Tekleselassie can answer any questions, we can be contacted at the numbers or email addresses below. Thank you again for your assistance and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Roderick W. Harden, Sr.

Contact Information: Roderick W. Harden, Sr. rharden4@gwmail.gwu.edu

(443) 388-1549

Dr. Ababayehu Tekleselassie silassie@gwu.edu

(202)-944-0132

Appendix E

Research Consent Forms

Black Male - White Teacher: The Voices of African American Males in a Suburban Middle School

GW IRB number: 111566

Principal Investigators

Dr. Abebayehu Tekleselassie silassie@gwu.edu

(202)-944-0132

Sub-Investigator Roderick W. Harden, Sr.

rharden4@gwmail.gwu.edu

(443)-338-1549

Introduction

Your child is invited to participate in a research study under the direction of Dr. Abebayehu. Tekleselassie, Associate Professor, in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy at The George Washington University (GWU). Taking part in this research is voluntary. More importantly, your decision regarding your child's participation will in no way affect his academic standing or impact any services provided by the school should your child chooses not to participate or if he withdraws during the study.

1. Why is this study being done?

You child is being asked to participate in this study because he has been identified by his school counselor as a potential participant for this study. The purpose of this qualitative

study is to give voice to African American male students who are being educated by primarily White teachers. All interview questions will be related to your child's experience as a middle school student. This study informs the way African American male students navigate an environment with primarily White teachers through teacher efficacy and teacher expectation.

2. What is involved in this study?

Your child will be asked to participate in an interview. The interview will last no longer than forty-five minutes and will be scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time. The co-researcher will ask your child for verbal consent to audio tape the interview. Your child has the right to decline to be audio taped or can ask for audio taping to be stopped at any point during the interview. All interview questions will be related to your child's middle school experience.

3. What are the risks of participating in this study?

Participation in this study poses no risks that are not ordinarily encountered in daily life. However, there is the possible risk of loss of confidentiality. Every effort will be made to keep your child's information confidential. Your child may refuse to answer any of the questions and may take a break at any time during the study. Your child's academic standing will in no way be compromised should he choose not to participate or withdraw from the study.

4. Are there benefits to taking part in this study?

Your child will not benefit directly from participating in the study. The benefits to educational research that might result from this study are to inform the knowledge base regarding how African American male middle school students navigate having all White teachers through teacher efficacy and teacher expectation. This study has practical,

personnel and professional significance. This study will have practical significance because it will help to understand the impact teacher expectation and teacher efficacy have on how African American male students make meaning of being educated in a suburban, predominately White, middle school teaching environment. Additionally, there are practical implications for practitioners in the area of staffing and staff development as these students tell their stories. Furthermore, this research has personal significance for the study's participants because students' perceptions of their environment can ultimately shape their educational achievement. This research also has professional significance because it will add to the body of research on teacher efficacy and teacher expectation with specific focus on the stories of African American male students. Finally, because schools are a place for amenable interventions, this research will provide data that will contribute to the development of educational policies that are equal, equitable and accessible resulting in closing the achievement gap for African American males and all students of color.

5. What are my options?

Your child does not have to participate in this study if he does not want to. Should he decide to participate and later change his mind, he can do so at any time.

6. Will I receive payment for being in this study?

Your child will receive a \$20.00 Visa card as a thank you gift for participating in the study.

7. Can I be taken off the study?

The investigator can decide to withdraw your child from the study at any time.

8. How will your child's privacy be protected?

Although the risks to participants in this study are minimal, several steps will be taken to ensure the protection and safety of all students involved. Written consent will be gained after you have had the opportunity to read this form thoroughly. Your child will have the right to stop the interview at any time. To ensure his protection, your child will select a pseudonym. Only one copy of your child's true name, school and district and attached pseudonyms will exist and will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. All additional records, data, audiotapes, and transcripts will also be kept in the locked, secure space in the researcher's home. All identifying information and audiotapes will be destroyed following the completion of the study.

9. Problems or Questions

The Office of Human Research of George Washington University, at telephone number (202) 994-2715, can provide further information about your child's rights as a research participant. If you think your child have been harmed in this study, you may report this to the Principal Investigators of this study. Further information regarding this study may be obtained by contacting the sub- investigator, Roderick W. Harden, Sr., at telephone number (443)-388-1549. Please keep a copy of this document in case you want to read it again.

10. Informed Consent

After reading the information, please let the co-researcher know if your child will participate in this study. By signing this form, you are consenting for your child to participate, you are notifying the co-researcher that you understand the information printed on this form. You are also indicating that you understand this study, its risks and potential benefits, and your other choices. Your signature indicates consent. You are indicating that your questions so far have been answered. You are also indicating your

willingness to allow your child to participate in this study and your understanding that you can withdraw him from the study at any time.

I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM INDICATES THAT I UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION AND I CONSENT TO ALLOW MY CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY.

Signature of Parent

Date

Printed Name of Parent

Date

Signature of Student

Date

Printed Name of Student

Date

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Printed Name of Principal Investigator

Date

Signature of Sub-Investigator

Date

Signature of Sub-Investigator

Date