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BUILDING A CULTURAL AND SCHOLAR IDENTITY IN ADOLESCENT BLACK MALES

A MASTER'S THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY

EMILY E. FIRKUS

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BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BUILDING A SCHOLAR AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN ADOLESCENT BLACK MALES

EMILY E. FIRKUS

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APPROVED

Advisor's Name: Lisa Silmser, Ed.D.

Program Director's Name: Lisa Silmser, Ed.D.

### Abstract

Black male students in the United States have been the focus of interest in education for a long time. Much professional development is centered around closing the Achievement or Opportunity Gap as the progress of Black students is not as great as their White peers. Research shows that Black male students want to be seen and valued in classrooms by their teachers, other adults in school, and peers. They want to experience equitable and fair disciplinary practices. They want to be held to high expectations and rigorous course options available to them. Schools need to provide opportunities for Black male students and their families to learn about and develop their cultural identity as there is a positive correlation between academic achievement and a positive racial identity. Mentorship with Black male adults has been shown to have a positive effect on academic achievement. Schools should simultaneously provide training to teachers to develop positive and high expectations, plan rigorous lessons, and create classroom environments that are supportive and validating for Black students. Teachers also need to ensure that behavior expectations are clear and enforced fairly for all students in the class.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

At the public junior high school where I taught the first five years of my career, there was a sixty-five-point difference between Black males' proficiency and their White peers, particularly in reading. In 2010, the school started a group with some of our Black males to see if there was a relationship between Black Males in an academic "brotherhood" and their academic performance, behavior issues, and attendance rates compared to students of the same population not being in the "brotherhood." As the teacher-facilitator of this group of young men, I was charged with helping to foster cultural and academic identities in each of them.

The private school where I have been teaching for the past eleven years has a population of students of color that has nearly doubled since I started teaching there. While the demographics have changed, many of our teaching and management strategies have not changed. Many of the same patterns in academic performance, behavior issues, and attendance rates I experienced at my old school also exist at my current school.

Adolescent Black males are ranked lowest academically, compared to their ethnic and gendered peers. The achievement gap between Black students and their peers is a growing concern nationwide (Bell, 2010). Bell stated that the behavior problems among Black males are often misinterpreted as being rude and uninterested in being educated. Many behavior problems occur when students are bored; they cause interruptions, fail to stay up with their academics, and often get suspended or dismissed from school (2010). Black males develop a "cool pose" as a defense mechanism to cope with oppression. It makes them visible and empowered and communicates power, toughness, and style. "Cool pose" helps maintain the

balance between their inner and social lives while helping to neutralize stress, manage rage, and counter all the negativity they deal with day to day. It shows as being nonchalant, tough, hostile, emotionless, and uncaring (Whiting, 2009). There is a stigma in Black culture that being intelligent and academic as a Black student is “acting White” (Oyserman et al., 1995; Whiting, 2009).

Black students typically lack communication skills and proper educational vocabulary. They must be taught social skills such as being attentive, staying on task, being engaged, and using manners to foster learning. Failure to raise hands to answer questions, wait their turn, be prepared, listen, and be courteous are things that can be construed as behavior showing that they do not really care or value education (Bell, 2010). According to Dawson-Threat, educators must understand that student behavior is not random. Behavior is observable, measurable, and often explainable and predictable (1997).

When educators continually give positive feedback for negative behaviors, a negative social culture is created. Black male students will continue being suspended, earning low test scores, and underperforming academically if teachers and administrators choose not to understand the norms of the Black and Black culture and behaviors (Bell, 2010).

Bell found that many Black students see themselves as successful academically, yet consistently achieve below grade-level on standardized tests. This information led him to believe that success for Black students is not linked to academics. It also presumes that the definition of success held by Black students is not the same as the definition of success held by the majority culture. Black males are overly placed in special education classes yet

underrepresented in gifted and talented programs. Most Black males would choose not to be seen in un-cool places like schools and libraries, or bookstores and museums (2010).

According to Whiting, there are many achievement barriers currently facing Black males in their quest to become scholarly. They lack a cultural identity and have poor self-perception. Peer pressure and social injustices – both of which they are unable to control – hold them back from excelling. When they lose momentum in their academics, they start holding different beliefs about their achievement. Finally, being intelligent causes them, and other peers, to question their masculinity (2009).

“Identity is a means of organizing and interpreting social experiences, regulating affect, and controlling behavior” (Oyserman et al., 1995). Existing research alludes to the idea that the majority culture conflicts directly with Black culture and is part of the reason why Black students are not achieving academically. Bell found that Black males have been “internalizing negative stereotypes about themselves, their looks, and their abilities... which may have retarded their academic potential” (2010). According to Bass and Coleman, Black males are unable to meld their home and school cultures and, in turn, start to believe that school is not built to help them, and learned helplessness is created (1997).

Scholars believe racial identity is created at different times in the lives of Black males. Whiting believes that high-achieving males go through the racial identity development process early. The process is more intense because they are more perceptive and thoughtful and face more negative pressure than their other Black peers as they receive pressure intraracially and interracially (2009). Hudley says that this racial identity process starts as children move into adolescence and learn to think critically and develop the complexities of their individual identity

(1997). However, Dawson-Threat states that Black males do not begin their racial identity process until late adolescence and into early adulthood. She says that this process is called Nigrescence, or the process of developing a black racial identity. This element of identity is generally developed through a racial identity crisis that causes the Black male to deeply search and explore. The resolution becomes a commitment to their Black identity (1997).

Black males fight within their “selves” where one self does what is expected by peers and their neighborhood or surrounding community while the other-self is driven by what the school’s expectations are for them. When students have not learned how to meld these two selves together, the first self takes over (Bell, 2010). Oyserman states that Black identity is rooted in a tradition of community, family, extended family support, and spiritualism; Black identity supposes a sense of self, yet the self is subjected to racism and exclusion. Now, Black males must create a new element of their identity – one that is rooted in the concept of “achievement as an African American” (1995).

The ethnic identity, according to Oyserman, Gant, and Ager, is created by the combination of the level of connectedness with the Black community and heritage, and the awareness of racism. Having one without the other has a negative correlation with academic success while having both concepts embedded in identity positively correlates with academic success. These researchers define racism as, “being excluded or negatively judged” (1995). Racism of which students have read or experienced themselves makes creating an identity that includes independence, success, and achievement a nearly impossible task for Black males. As educators foster the concept of achieving as a Black male along with the level of connectedness

and awareness of racism, Black male adolescent students could be an unstoppable force academically (Oyserman et al., 1995).

Students can be conscious of developing a Black and Scholar Identity at the same time. When they have a positive sense of Blackness and of who they are, students are capable of being persistent and overcoming obstacles and inequities (Dawson-Threat, 1997). Whiting says that when Black males can perceive themselves as “academicians” and talented within school settings, they are actively pursuing the development of their Scholar Identity (2006). Scholars found that having a balance in achievement-related possible selves predicted school achievement in Black males (Oyserman et al., 1995).

Possible selves are future-oriented and cause students to put themselves into action. They are developed using past experiences and the positive and negative images that Black students are urged to become and avoid, respectively. Balance within the possible selves occurs when students have a positive goal and understand what it takes to get there or fail to get there. They also understand that it is due to their hard work that their goals are achieved. There is a direct correlation between this balance and performing better in school within the Black male population (Oyserman et al., 1995).

Whiting believes that “the missing ingredient in closing the achievement gap is the lack of attention devoted to developing a positive image of Black Males as scholars.” He suggests a hierarchical model to building a Scholar Identity with the foundation being self-efficacy (2006). Self-efficacy is the voice inside saying, “I can do it!” and “I am competent and able!” Within high achieving Black males, there exists high resilience, self-confidence, self-control, and a sense of responsibility. Students with high self-efficacy are willing to make sacrifices in their social life.

They understand that to make progress, they must work and achieve a balance between work and play (2006).

According to Whiting, once they have made some personal sacrifices to foster their own achievement, students work from an internal locus of control or a belief that the outcomes of a task are controlled by their ability and effort, or lack-there-of. They participate, are positive and optimistic, but also study and do homework and are willing to ask for help if needed. These students are future-oriented and set realistic goals that they know must be achieved through education. High achieving Black males are also self-aware. They know what their strengths and limitations are and compensate for their weaknesses by asking for help, seeking out answers, studying, getting tutoring, studying more, and working through their problems (2006). These males have a driving need for achievement. They do well and look for ways to do better. They have the drive to succeed and work hard and attempt to think of ways to accomplish goals. Employers are drawn to people that exude these qualities because they know that they will get the best work from them, and problems will be solved because of their thinking and work ethic (Whiting, 2006).

Through the building up of the previous traits, Black males who are high achievers exude academic self-confidence. They believe they are intelligent and capable and persist through academic tasks. High achieving Black males are confident in their racial identity and masculinity. They are proud of and comfortable with being Black and believe that they can achieve without that achievement equating to “acting White.”

### **Research Questions of the Literature Review**

Educational systems tend to not be effective in teaching students of color, particularly Black males. In the review of the literature, I will be focusing on the question, “what effect does developing scholar and cultural identities have on positive school behavior and academic achievement amongst Black male students?” so that I can begin serving the young Black men in my classroom academically and culturally. The areas where the research will focus are academic achievement and positive school behaviors, cultural identity, scholar identity, systems that foster scholar identity, and systems that foster cultural identity.

### **Definitions**

Reading through the literature, some phrases and words often appeared and the descriptions between researchers were similar in many of the studies where they discussed. According to Gilman Whiting, co-founder of the Scholar Identity Institute at Vanderbilt University, having a scholar identity meant that students actively pursued the development of this identity by perceiving themselves as “academicians” and talented within school settings (2006). This scholar identity is seen as the driving force for Black adolescent males achieving in school and showcasing positive school behaviors.

As academic achievement was discussed by researchers, sometimes this was attached to grade point average data. Other times it was while discussing how students actively worked towards graduation from high school and prepared for possible higher education opportunities. Both GPA and working to graduate were attributed to hard work by students. Associated with academic achievement were positive school behaviors. These behaviors included regular school

attendance, a decrease in disciplinary referrals, suspensions, or expulsions, higher level of engagement and participation in class, and the development of study skills.

Cultural identity and racial ethnic identity seemed to be similar in going through the research. Over time, cultural identity became more of a broad awareness students had and acted within the bounds of the different places and people they encountered in school, their neighborhood, the walls of their home, with peers, at church, and other public places. Racial ethnic identity, on the other hand, developed in students through the combination of connectedness with their Black community and heritage and the awareness of racism (Oyserman et al., 1995).

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Scholar Identity

The research for this thesis came from peer-reviewed studies in multiple journals and publications found in various databases (e. g. EBSCOhost, JSTOR, and Project Muse) from 1986 to 2019. Keywords in the online searches included “African-American,” “African-American Males,” “cultural identity,” “racial identity,” “racial-ethnic identity,” “scholar identity,” and “academic achievement.” In this chapter, there are two main sections titled Scholar Identity and Cultural Identity. In the first section, academic achievement will be discussed regarding external and internal motivators as well as systems that promote academic achievement and positive school behaviors. In the second section, racial-ethnic identity will be discussed first in terms of non-white students, then Black students, and finally Black male students. Systems to foster a positive racial-ethnic/cultural identity are discussed towards the end of that section.

### Academic Achievement

There has been an achievement gap (sometimes referred to as an ‘opportunity gap’) between white and Black students in the United States since the 1970s when the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) began being administered. Researching reasons why this gap exists and developing programs and systems to support Black students to narrow that gap has been a focus of scholars since the data was first analyzed.

**External Motivators.** Anthropologists John Ogbu and Signithia Fordham were two of the first people that focused their work on figuring out reasons for the achievement gap between Black students and their white peers. Their research theorized that Black students resist education and school more than white students and that as students get older, the difference

grows (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 183). One reason given for this difference was that students understood that their opportunities in the job market as adults would be limited due to their Blackness so school became a place of ambivalence as no evidence of being a good student would help in their ability to access higher wage jobs with benefits. Another reason given was that Black communities tended to have access to poor schooling that didn't fulfill the needs of Black students. Because of these two things, Black students found other coping mechanisms to get through their years of education (1986, p. 178-179). This "oppositional culture" theory said that Black students, to preserve their Black identity, would defy any task or opportunity they believed was an effort to have them assimilate to the dominant White culture (1986, p. 181). Behaviors like speaking standard English, studying, working hard, and getting good grades were identified as "acting white" and seen negatively by their peers because it was not appropriate for them (1986, p. 186).

Researchers Davis and Jordan used national level data collected about eighth and tenth-grade Black males from the NELS database in 1988. Data about students from urban, suburban, rural, public, and private schools were used to see how contextual and structural factors affected the academic achievement of Black students in middle and high school and whether there was a difference in those factors as students went from middle to high school (Davis & Jordan, 1994, p. 572). In middle school, results showed that Black students achieved lower grades in urban schools than suburban and rural schools. In Davis and Jordan's research, they noted that urban schools were generally located in high poverty areas in cities and were typically underfunded and under-resourced. Because of economic systems affecting urban

schools, Black students were at risk for poor academic achievement as well as their opportunity to rise up.

In their research, Davis and Jordan also found that lower achievement was linked to a larger focus on discipline by teachers. As teachers in their study focused more of their time on discipline, they focused less time on instruction, which disproportionately affected Black male students. The last significant finding was that teachers who had students earning higher grades also assigned more work. Teachers who had high expectations and expected a higher level of effort from their Black students showed that they believed Black students are capable and gave grades that awarded their effort and knowledge. Teachers who gave lower grades tended to not hold high expectations and had doubts that their Black students would not or could not complete the work and that they did not deserve the higher grades (Davis & Jordan, 1994, p. 585). Their research found that the largest predictor of academic success in high school was how the teachers took responsibility for the education they were providing for their Black students. Teachers who determined they were responsible for Black students' success developed students that were high achievers.

Other factors that correlated with high academic achievement included spending more time on homework and having a high attendance record (Davis & Jordan, 1994, p. 585). Academic failure was linked to remediation, retention, and suspensions; Davis and Jordan (1994) argued that these three things were "symptoms and causes of failure" (p. 586) and BLACK students rarely got back on track with their grade-level peers when these three things entered their schooling. Often, this was a cause of Black students dropping out of school altogether (Davis & Jordan, 1994, p. 586). Teachers who took on the responsibility of the

success for their Black students and held them to high expectations and rigor, while lessening their focus on discipline and remediation, the higher the level of academic achievement for these students was.

Researcher Tyson studied how school environments contributed to attitudes, behavior, and achievement for Black elementary-aged children (Tyson, 2002, p. 1163). As much of the research about Black students centered around middle and high school-aged children at this time, Tyson saw a need to look at Pre-kindergarten-grade 6 students and how their school experiences shaped their attitudes toward school (Tyson, 2002, p. 1157). The population consisted of 56 third and fourth-grade students from two different all-Black elementary schools - one public and one independent and Christian. Each school had a Black principal. At the independent school, all teachers were Black while at the public school, nineteen were Black (Tyson, 2002, p. 1164).

During the 1996-1997 school year, Tyson spent one full day each week in each of the four classrooms writing down observations about how teachers and students interacted with each other. Included in her observations were body language, actions, facial expressions, tone of voice, general demeanor, and movement. She also interviewed a random sample of ten students and their parents from each classroom. The open-ended questions she asked the students were related to their experiences at school and their attitudes toward school in general as well as achievement and learning (Tyson, 2002, p. 1167).

As she analyzed her observations and interviews, she found a distinct theme in how students engaged in school and the effect that had on their achievement. The more students were engaged in class, the more they cared about how they performed and participated in the

classroom (Tyson, 2002, p. 1168). Tyson found that students were eager to participate in class and that students were eager to demonstrate their knowledge through 'ability shows' as a way to show their classmates and teachers how competent and smart they were (Tyson, 2002, p. 1169). She also observed that students celebrated academic success through dancing and high-fiving each other. Students who did not answer something correctly were often visibly and vocally distraught. Both responses were evidence of engagement as well (Tyson, 2002).

She also found that students in the elementary school tended to tease and ridicule each other for only their poor performance on academic tasks - especially if other students felt like they were being boastful or arrogant before making the mistake. Much of the research for older Black students, Tyson noted, showed that students were teased and ridiculed for performing well on academic tasks, so this was a notable observation in the elementary school-aged students (Tyson, 2002). Through interviews, Tyson found that lower-achieving students who experienced failure in the past carried those feelings of failure with them in terms of how they felt about a specific class. Failing some science tests meant that one student did not enjoy science class. Academic struggle and wanting to avoid school were a common thread in students who were achieving lower than their classmates (Tyson, 2002).

While lower-achieving students had some fear about their next year in school because the work was hard that year, higher-achieving students were excited about getting more difficult and larger amounts of work in future grades. The longer the history of poor performance, the more students reported not liking school and were more likely to give up while working. Students who had a history of success and were recently experiencing some failure clung to some hope that they would improve (Tyson, 2002, p. 1178). When asked about

grades they were proud of, most students discussed their highest scores in general while others spoke specifically to earning a high grade on assignments and tests that they found difficult. They also noted that students' parents felt proud of their accomplishments (Tyson, 2002, p. 1179).

Researcher Harris put to test Fordham and Ogbu's oppositional culture theory. This longitudinal study had a sample population of 1480 adolescents in Maryland and data was collected from the year the students entered middle school until the students were three years out of high school. Two-thirds of the students were from Black families and one-third from white families (Harris, 2006, p. 800). Harris tested five hypotheses related to oppositional culture theory using data collected from the Maryland Adolescence Development in Context Study. "Black children perceive fewer returns to education and more limited opportunities for upward social mobility than white children" (p. 802) was hypothesis one and the data did not support the part of the hypothesis about Black students perceiving fewer returns to education (Harris, 2006). The data showed that Black students perceived greater returns and had higher education goals than their white counterparts. The data did support the latter part of the hypothesis as Black students tended to perceive limitations in educational opportunities (Harris, 2006, p. 803).

Hypothesis two stated that "Black children have less favorable affect towards school than whites" and the data did not support this hypothesis. Black students had a greater affect towards school and stated that the enjoyment of their classes was more important than attendance (Harris, 2006, p. 803). As students aged, both Black and white students showed a

decline in their affect towards school and stated that they attend because it is mandatory (Harris, 2006, p. 809).

The third hypothesis, “Black children exhibit greater resistance to school than whites,” was not supported by the data as Black students sought help more often and worked on homework as much as white students. Both groups of students also spent time on educational activities and clubs (Harris, 2006, p. 809). The data also showed that while Black students did not skip school or cut classes more often than their white counterparts, they were disciplined and suspended more often, though being in trouble was not the same as resisting (Harris, 2006, p. 813).

Hypothesis four was the “acting white” hypothesis that stated that “high-achieving Black children are negatively sanctioned by their peers to a greater degree than high-achieving white children.” The “acting white” hypothesis equated academic success to whiteness and Black students’ apparent resistance to school was based on this fear of “acting white.” Data showed that an equal proportion of Black students in the poor-performing and good-performing groups thought that being good at school was “acting white” which then did not support the fourth hypothesis. Data showed that good-performing students got along better with their peers and Black students were more likely to report that they had friends which also did not support the hypothesis.

The final hypothesis stated “the peer groups of Black children have a greater counter-educational culture than those of white children” was also not supported by the data. Black and white students engaged in negative behaviors similarly and those negative behaviors increased from middle to high school and beyond. Harris’ study challenged Ogbu’s oppositional culture

theory and posited that lower school performance in the Black student population was due to other factors and explanations.

Researchers Ford, Grantham, and Whiting focused their descriptive and exploratory research on gifted Black males, what it means to “act Black,” and student perceptions and responses to why Black males tend to underachieve or perform at lower levels than their White peers (Ford et al., 2008, p. 225). The questions that guided their research were:

1. “What are their achievement-related behaviors? How do gifted Black students spend their time each week, and how much of their time is devoted to academic-related activities?”
2. How consistent are students in terms of their academic-related attitudes and behaviors?
3. What peer pressures do gifted Black students face (i.e., How do gifted Black students characterize the notions of acting White and acting Black?)
4. According to these gifted Black students, why do some capable students not perform well in school (Ford et al., 2008, p. 226)?

Their research builds on four theories that work to make sense of the achievement gap between Black and White students: Mickelson’s Attitude-Achievement Paradox, Ogbu’s Secondary Resistance theory, Ogbu and Fordham’s “Acting White” theory, and Steele’s Stereotype Theory. Researchers noted that all four of these theories showed that Black students tend to have negative beliefs and understandings about intelligence and achievement (2008, p. 224).

The Attitude-Achievement paradox, as explained by the researchers, stated that if students have the “right” attitudes and behaviors that they will be successful, and with hard work and effort, anyone can achieve their goals (2008, p. 219). However, some students had the “right” attitude and valued education and its role in future successes but also did not do what was necessary to achieve in school (2008, p. 220).

Ogbu’s theory of Secondary resistance, according to the researchers, said that because Black students fall into a category of involuntary minorities, as many of their ancestors did not choose to come to America but were brought here during slavery, they resist committing to values and beliefs that are aligned with the norm for White people (2008, p. 222). From this theory stemmed Ogbu and Fordham’s “Acting White” theory. Researchers stated that Fordham and Ogbu noted that Black students often looked at behaviors that were school achievement related (i.e. speaking standard English, studying, getting good grades, dressing well, being intelligent, having white friends), as acting White (2008, p. 222). This fell under the category of peer pressure in schools as acting White was seen as a betrayal of the student’s own racial group by ascribing to those types of attitudes and behaviors (2008, p. 222). This has been true in mainstream education but also found its way into gifted education and that gifted Black boys purposefully did poorly after being told they were acting White by peers (2008, p. 223).

The fourth theory researchers discussed was Steele’s Stereotype Threat theory. This theory noted that students understood that there was a negative stereotype associated with Black learners and achievement and they lived in fear of confirming that negative stereotype so much that it stifled their ability to perform well on assessments (2008, p. 223).

The sample population for Ford et al.'s study was 372 Black students who were either identified as gifted or had A or B averages in school. The analysis in this study was focused on the 166 students identified as gifted. These students attended middle or high school in one of two districts in Ohio that had a similar percentage of Black students enrolled. One middle school was in the inner city and had 17,000 students enrolled districtwide. This district was amongst the lowest performing schools in the state and only 54% of the students graduated from high school. The middle school students surveyed were Black and all received free or reduced lunch. The other district is a suburban district with 6,800 students and it is a higher performing school in the state evidenced by the numerous academic awards received and the high graduation rate of 88% (2008, p. 226).

Students were put in groups and asked to fill out a survey about their views about achievement. Teachers in both schools administered the survey and it took about an hour for students to complete. There were 22 items in seven different parts that ranged from yes/no questions to Linkert-scale questions to open-ended responses. The seven parts included demographic information, academic achievement, course enrollment, accessible resources at school and at home, interests, and hobbies, schoolwork habits, and social/peer pressures felt related to academics (2008, p. 227).

The mean GPA of the students was 3.1. On the survey, more than one-fourth of the students responded no to the question asking whether they put forth their best effort and were labeled underachievers as they likely could perform at a higher level with a higher level of effort. Nearly 70% of the students responded no to whether they studied or worked on homework over the weekend, though they also reported an average of 7.2 hours per week

working on homework outside of school. According to the survey, gifted Black students spend the most time (27.1 hours each week) with their family followed by watching tv and being with friends, and listening to music. Twenty-one percent of students stated reading was a hobby but 48% said that sports were a hobby (2008, p. 228-229).

In terms of social and peer pressure, one-third of students could identify someone who was made fun of for achieving in school and 42% of them reported that they themselves had been teased. Of those, they are most often teased by classmates or students in other classes. Sometimes they were teased by older students. Twenty-one students reported being teased by their friends and 13 students said they were teased by family members (2008, p. 230).

Eighty-one percent of those surveyed said they knew the phrases acting White and 78% knew the phrase acting Black. When asked to describe what acting White was like, the themes that came up were the language students used, their behaviors, intelligence, and attitude. The summation of comments showed a perception that Black students who acted White thought they were better than everyone else (2008, p. 231). When asked questions about acting Black, the themes that surfaced were language, intelligence, behavior, and dress - behavior being the most commented on by students. Only one student commented that acting Black was a positive thing suggesting that Black students had negative perceptions of acting Black and positive perceptions of acting White - acting Black was labeled as having low intelligence, being uninterested in school, behaving poorly, having poor language/speaking skills, and preferring more urban clothing (2008, p. 232). Acting White was determined to be the opposite of each of those things but also had a negative association with arrogance. When asked why some capable

students do not perform well, many students attributed it to being teased or criticized for being smart and are pressured into making bad choices by their friends (2008, p. 232).

Researcher Edward E. Bell's qualitative study was done to understand how Black male students felt about their school experiences (Bell, 2015, p. 1263). He recruited students who had an adult with them at a community event with flyers and explained the criteria of participation in the study. When invited, students and their parents were informed that it was voluntary and they could drop out of the study at any moment. After his recruitment, he ended up with a group of 18 Black students in grades 6-8 that he interviewed over the course of three months (Bell, 2015, p. 1263-1264). During those interviews, the students correlated their feelings about school closely with how teachers viewed them as they felt teacher interactions disrespected and devalued them. Participants liked going to school for academic and social reasons; the negative interactions with teachers got in the way of their overall view of school and created negative feelings about going to school. Bell noted that teachers needed to provide opportunities for Black students to feel respected, valued, and welcome in their classrooms by creating a space for students to be their unique selves by showing their talents and abilities. When teachers reacted inappropriately to their Black students' behavior, the students reacted negatively and associated negative feelings to school and learning (Bell, 2015, p. 1267). Bell named five strategies that could help create a positive learning environment:

- “1) validate their presence and contributions to the class
- 2) see them as individuals and not representatives of a group
- 3) treat them fairly and justly
- 4) don't overreact to their misconduct

5) expect them to succeed” (Bell, 2015, p. 1262)

Researchers Downey and Pribesh used national level data to determine whether matching effects (when teachers and students are of the same race) correlate with student behavior evaluations by teachers. Previous research describes the theory of oppositional culture as a way for Black students to foster their racial identity by developing peer groups that reject symbols and behaviors that are considered “white” by nature - including being a student in school (p. 269).

Downey and Pribesh posit that under Ogbu’s oppositional culture, Black students have more strained relationships with white teachers than with Black teachers because they tend to misbehave more and that dynamic should be more evident in eighth-graders than Kindergarteners because their peer groups are more set (2016, p. 268-269). They used the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS) from 1998-1999 for their Kindergarten sample and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) from 1988 for their eighth-grade sample. In each study, the researchers found that Black students are typically rated as poorer classroom citizens than are white students regardless of teachers’ race. However, both studies also found that Black students have an advantage when matched with a Black teacher in respect to their evaluations as Black teachers tend to report fewer problems for Black students than white teachers.

**Internal Motivators.** Researcher Hudley’s study centered around Deci and Ryan’s cognitive evaluation theory (1987) which said that intrinsic motivation was influenced by the context in which the activity was initially experienced; the better a student believed themselves to be at the activity, the higher level of intrinsic motivation existed which then built autonomy

(Hudley, 1997, p. 307-308). She hypothesized that perceived competence and intrinsic motivation in reading and math would be positively related (Hudley, 1997, p. 309). Students in this study were low-achieving students in a self-contained classroom setting that emphasized Black history and culture and the motivational habits that came out of it. Eighteen eighth-graders from Southern California participated in the study and resided in the poorer neighborhoods in close proximity to the school. Eighty-four percent of the student population was Black and the remaining students were Latino.

This self-contained classroom was taught by two Black male teachers. The students received their core course instruction (social studies, science, math, English) in the self-contained classroom and were in the mainstream classes for physical education and another elective class. The teachers intentionally emphasized Black culture and history and, at the onset of the program, only enrolled Black male students, though at the time of this study, females and Latino students were included in the classroom (Hudley, 1997, p. 309).

Hudley also was looking to see how much teacher control versus student autonomy played a role in the classroom. Some classroom routines she was looking for were offering students choices of academic activities, giving positive feedback, and minimizing classroom competition (Hudley, 1997, p. 309). Results of her research were mixed as the teachers used classroom competition and teacher control was necessary for the classroom, though they offered students some choice for academic tasks and control of their behavior (Hudley, 1997, p. 316).

There was no link between competence and intrinsic motivation (p. 316). It was unclear whether students' autonomy, control, and perceived competence were related or whether they

were a function of the competition or genuine interest in the curriculum. If the latter, there is some support for cognitive evaluation theory (Hudley, 1997, p. 316). These teachers also worked with students within behavior guidelines that were not seen as punitive or disciplinary. The guidelines were clear and enforced fairly (Hudley, 1997, p. 317).

### **Systems**

Research showed that Black students achieved more when schools provided support. Some of this resulted in after-school programs that provided tutoring, mentoring, and nutritious snacks while others were schoolwide systems that offered rigorous courses while teaching study skills and provided tutoring. These programs also gave students opportunities to learn about and make plans for what came after high school.

**After School Programs.** Researchers Martin, Martin, Gibson, and Wilkins studied the behavioral and academic effects of enrollment in an after-school program on Black male students. The program included enrichment, counseling, and tutoring. The behavioral changes that were assessed included attendance, suspensions and expulsions, and the number of discipline referrals received. Two tests were administered for assessing reading and math skills: the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (KBIT) and the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (KTEA) (Martin, et al., 2007, p. 689).

Thirty-three students, ages 13-17, who had accrued one or more suspensions or expulsions were included in the population. Many students were truant or absent from school forty to fifty times the previous year and had anywhere from twenty to forty discipline referrals in that same time period (Martin, et al., 2007, p. 691-692). They were all at least two years behind their grade level peers (Martin, et al., 2007, p. 693). Each student's family met federal

guidelines for poverty and, as a result, they were eligible for free and reduced lunch. Because of these students' behavior and academic patterns, the entire group was enrolled in an alternative school which automatically enrolled in the after-school program (Martin, et al., 2007, p. 692).

This after-school program was funded with state and federal funds and was developed by a group of community members and businesses that included mental health agencies, cultural organizations, libraries, recreational organizations, and the county education center (Martin et al., 2007, p. 692). Students met five days a week for a total of three hours per week. Because of the initial testing, researchers found that students were of average intelligence when they entered the program and as students exited the program two years later, they were tested again and increased their basic math and reading skills showing a positive correlation between achievement and the after-school program attendance (Martin et al., 2007, p. 693). Attendance and truancy decreased from averaging 42 days to about 23 days over the course of the two-year program while discipline referrals dropped from an average of about 27 to two (Martin et al., 2007, p. 694). Students had been expelled or suspended on average two times upon entering the program and by the end of the two years, averaging less than one time per year (Martin et al., 2007, p. 695).

Researchers found that having community involvement from local groups and agencies was critical for the program's success and that after-school programs needed to offer more than just one thing. Tutoring, activities, nutrition, and social training added value to the experience of the students (Martin et al., 2007, p. 696).

**AVID.** Researchers Smith, Estudillo, and Kang studied the effects of racial identification with academics on GPA and hypothesized that Black students would have higher levels on the

abstract questions and lower levels on the testing perception questions than that of their White peers. The population involved in the study was 464 eighth graders (266 Black and 208 White) who attended four different middle schools that fed into one high school. Students were given the *Identification with Academics* questionnaire that included abstract items for students to respond to about academics and how they identified with them on a scale of 'strongly disagree - 1' to 'strongly agree - 4'. There also were two items about the students' perception of testing. The other measure used was the students' grade point average (Smith et al., 2010, p. 80). This data was compiled to study how middle school students transitioned to high school.

Their hypothesis was supported as the overall mean for the abstract items was higher for Black students than that of the White students while the White students had higher scores on perceptions of testing. Not only that, but the Black female students had the highest overall mean score on the abstract items followed by the Black students surveyed - followed by White female and White male students, respectively (Smith et al., 2010, p. 81). The exact opposite happened for the perceptions of testing questions - White males scored highest followed by White females, Black Males, and finally Black females (Smith et al., 2010, p. 82). How students identified with school mattered, and researchers found that the higher the scores on the abstract, the higher the student's GPA. However, when disaggregated by race, Black female students (who scored highest on the abstract and lowest on the perceptions of testing) had lower GPAs than White males (who scored lowest on the abstract and highest on the perceptions of testing) (Smith et al., 2010, p. 84).

Researchers noted that this data has informed schools on ways to engage students in college preparatory work as students transition from middle to high school. They identified

AVID as one possible program that focused on schools offering higher-level courses, identifying students that would be successful with some extra in-school support, and built-in mentoring and tutoring by college students and community members (Smith et al., 2010, p. 87).

These results have also helped inform state policies that gave more opportunities for college access to graduating students. In the past, states have used merit-based and needs-based programs to help families, but more students were in need than expected and tuition was raised faster than the money allocated to those programs. States had to raise the GPA requirements and stop the awards to be tied to inflation by making them a static amount year to year (Smith et al., 2010, p. 87). Many states found that these systems weren't successful across the board at getting underserved populations into colleges because they did not include built-in school support throughout middle and high school.

Aside from AVID, a program called CASP (College Access and Success Program) had students sign a pledge in seventh grade to maintain a 2.0 GPA and stay away from alcohol, criminal activity, and drugs. They also had to apply to colleges within their state and meet deadlines for applying for financial aid. CASP provided full college tuition and parental support while their students were in middle and high school. Each college in the state was also required to provide mentoring for the students enrolled through this program so students were able to be successful throughout their college experience (Smith et al., 2010, p. 88).

Researchers Huerta, Watt, and Butcher studied how Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program in middle school impacted the rigor in middle school course offerings as well as the high school performance and college readiness of students who started in the AVID program in middle school rather than high school (Huerta et al., 2013, p. 28). The

student sample included seniors who started AVID in seventh or eighth grade and continued through high school combined with senior data for students who began AVID in high school and were enrolled for at least two consecutive years. This totaled 15,627 total senior students.

A qualitative survey about advanced course opportunities and how AVID impacted student enrollment in those courses was given to AVID coordinators, classroom teachers, and administrators who attended a summer institute in 2010. 797 responses from 1,192 participants were included in the data analysis. Nearly two-thirds of the teachers surveyed reported that their school and district offered new courses or had to add sections of more advanced courses (Huerta et al., 2013, p. 31). One administrator from Tennessee reported that they had to increase the number of sections offered because of the AVID students signing up for them (Huerta et al., 2013, p. 31). An assistant principal from Texas reported that their district removed the restrictions for students to enroll in a class, which gave any students who wanted to take that class the opportunity to do so (Huerta et al., 2013, p. 31). Another administrator from Texas reported that the school's principal and some of the teachers of the more rigorous classes were barriers to getting more students enrolled in the advanced courses. Some teachers reported that faculty were working on figuring out how to add rigor and critical thinking opportunities to all classes so AVID strategies were utilized schoolwide (Huerta et al., 2013, p. 32).

While no major differences were found in the SAT or ACT scores of students who enrolled in AVID in middle school and continued through high school and students who were only enrolled in high school, there were significantly higher GPAs overall, which showed that seniors enrolled in AVID in middle and high school performed academically better than seniors

who were enrolled only during their high school years (Huerta et al., 2013, p. 33). Additionally, students who were enrolled in AVID as middle school students took more AP courses and completed more four-year college entrance requirements in high school than students who were enrolled in AVID solely as high school students (Huerta et al., 2013, p. 33). Students enrolled in AVID from middle school through high school took more AP courses in high school than students who only enrolled in AVID in high school (Huerta et al., 2013, p. 34).

AVID being offered in schools created more sections of rigorous courses to be offered to more of the student population. Where schools could not offer more sections, AVID strategies were implemented and the curriculum was improved in the schools' already existing courses (Huerta et al., 2013, p. 34). The research also showed that the sooner a student engages with rigorous course content and college preparation, including AVID enrollment, the more prepared they were for, and likely took more, rigorous high school and college courses.

Researchers Pugh and Tschannen-Moran evaluated the efficacy of a district's AVID program. Perceived self-efficacy and self-regulated learning, GPA, and attendance were the measures used to determine the efficacy of the AVID program. Researchers wanted to know whether the amount of time students spent in AVID predicted self-efficacy, attendance, and GPA (Pugh & Tschannen-Moran, 2016, p. 146). The study's population consisted of 573 middle and high school students (434 who had been enrolled in AVID at some point during school and 139 students that had never been enrolled) that had been exposed to AVID strategies from zero to five years of exposure (Pugh & Tschannen-Moran, 2016, p. 146).

To measure self-efficacy, researchers used the Multidimensional Scales of Perceived Self-Efficacy which measured nine different things, but this study focused on just two: self-

efficacy for academic achievement and self-efficacy for self-regulation. Students rated their confidence in various tasks on a scale of one to seven. Academically, they rated their confidence level in coursework and self-regulation focused on tasks like planning, note-taking, and organization (Pugh & Tschannen-Moran, 2016, p. 147).

Researchers found that the longer students were enrolled in AVID, there was a positive correlation for both self-efficacy in academic achievement and self-regulation. They also found that AVID had a stronger influence on Black students at a higher rate than other students which could be because AVID provided a sense of belonging (Pugh & Tschannen-Moran, 2016, p. 153). Within the Latinx community, there was no connection between the things tested and student self-efficacy. In the full sample, there was not a connection between AVID and predicting GPA. When the Black students were isolated, however, the longer students were enrolled in AVID, the higher the GPA. This was not true for the Latinx students in the study (Pugh & Tschannen-Moran, 2016, p. 154).

Researcher Wooldridge conducted research on the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program with eighth-graders attending six schools in one district. The hypothesis was that students enrolled in AVID would have higher scores on a standardized test (ReadiSTEP) and higher fourth-quarter GPAs than their classmates and would also have fewer suspensions and a greater attendance rate (Wooldridge, 2017). Data from 1,649 eighth grade students was collected; 222 of those students were enrolled in AVID and the remaining students were not. To enroll in AVID, a student was in the 'academic middle' meaning their GPA was between 2.0 and 3.5. They were also classified as underrepresented and were likely going to be first-generation college students. Finally, they chose to enroll as being an AVID student is

voluntary (Wooldridge, 2017). The results of Wooldridge's research showed that students enrolled in AVID scored an average of .357 points higher on the standardized test than non-AVID students. Their GPAs were 0.25 points higher than non-AVID students and were suspended less often. Attendance between the AVID and non-AVID students was about the same (Wooldridge, 2017).

**Talent Search, Upward Bound, and GEAR UP.** Researchers Almarode, Subotnik, Crowe, Tai, Lee, and Nowlin studied how self-efficacy and interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) correlated with completing a college degree in a field of science. Their research questions were:

- “What is the relationship between reported feelings of intellectual capacity to be a scientist, mathematician, or engineer at different points in time and earning an undergraduate degree in a science-related area?”
- What is the relationship between a reported change in the level of interest in science disciplines at different points in time and earning an undergraduate degree in a science-related area” (Almarode et al., 2014, p. 310)

They surveyed 3,510 students who attended and graduated from a science-focused high school and 587 students who did not attend or graduate from a science-focused high school but did participate in a Talent Search program (Almarode et al., 2014, p. 307). About 45% of the participants in the study were male, 55% female. Seventy percent of participants in the survey were white while about four percent were Black.

High schools that specialized in science tended to offer a higher number of advanced courses compared to regular public high schools and in these higher-level courses, students

often were engaged in real-world research (Almarode et al., 2014, p. 308). Talent Search programs were available to students that tested above grade level and did not have access to these specialized programs even though they had a proclivity to science. Students who tested high enough were given the opportunity to attend summer or Saturday programs, engage in distance learning classes, and even work their way through early entrance college courses (Almarode et al., 2014, p. 308).

Students who felt that, as a junior or senior, they had the intellectual capacity to say they could be a scientist, mathematician, or engineer were 3.6% more likely to choose a STEM field for their undergraduate education (Almarode et al., 2014, p. 317). Students who felt like their interest in STEM courses intensified over time were more than four times as likely to choose a STEM-related undergraduate degree (Almarode et al., 2014, p. 320). Nearly 50% of the STEM school graduates and 53.4% of the Talent Search participants reported completing a STEM-related undergraduate degree (Almarode et al., 2014, p. 321). Interestingly, researchers found that interest in STEM before high school was not sufficient in a student's decision to continue studying that in higher education. They needed continued experiences and coursework and peers who challenged them while also building their intellectual capacity to continue down the STEM path in college (Almarode et al., 2014, p. 325). Results of this study showed that specialized high schools and Talent Search did well at what they were designed to do, which was to develop self-efficacy and grow interest in the STEM field (Almarode et al., 2014, p. 327).

Researcher Walsh used the 1988 eighth grade National Education Longitudinal Study data as a baseline to her four follow-up surveys in 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000 to determine

whether adolescent intervention programs like Upward Bound and Talent search increased post-secondary attendance. The purpose of the year 2000 follow-up survey was that it was approximately eight years from the participants' high school graduation date and gave plenty of time and opportunity for them to attend college. Post-secondary attendance included trade schools, 2-year, and 4-year college programs (Walsh, 2007, p. 378-379). Because she used a national-level study, the sample size was 10,204 and of that number, 8,049 students attended some sort of post-secondary institution. Of that 8,049, 358 students participated in Upward Bound or Talent Search for any amount of time from 10th to 12th grade (Walsh, 2007, p. 379).

When socioeconomic status (SES) was added to the data model, college attendance rates went from 14% to 17% for low-SES Black and Hispanic students (2007, p. 381). When also including family expectations in the data models, there was a statistical significance that SES and increased parent involvement had a greater influence on choices of students than the availability of programs provided by the government (2007, p. 382). Both Black and Hispanic students that participated in Talent Search or Upward Bound had an increased likelihood of attending a post-secondary institution (Walsh, 2007, p. 383). Overall, Walsh found that Black and Hispanic students who were low-SES and participated in Upward Bound or Talent Search in high school enrolled in and attended post-secondary institutions at rates similar to average-SES White students (2007, p.386).

Researchers Yampolskaya, Massey, Greenbaum focused their research on the effectiveness of the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness Program (GEAR UP) on high school students deemed at-risk due to socioeconomic factors and poor academic achievement. Specifically, they investigated the effect of the different components of GEAR UP on academic

achievement and behavior and the correlation between outcomes from participation with the time spent participating.

Unlike Talent Search and Upward Bound, GEAR UP is a school-based intervention that uses mentoring, tutoring, and counseling to help students graduate (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 459). At this specific school, academic achievement and graduation, educating students and parents about post-secondary options, and decreasing discipline and truancy issues were the main three focuses of the GEAR UP program.

To aid in helping students graduate, tutors were hired for both in and out of class help for students and teachers. They were assigned to specific classrooms to help students one-on-one with the course material. They also were available to tutor students on Saturdays for in-class work as well as preparing for the state standardized test. Students received anywhere from one to sixteen tutoring sessions each week (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 459). Students participating in GEAR UP had opportunities to visit local colleges and speakers were brought in to talk about college to become aware of post-secondary opportunities. Parents were also given opportunities to learn about the different opportunities for their students through college and career counseling meetings (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 460).

Case managers gave presentations to students to teach about resolving conflict between peers and their parents as students who found themselves in conflict were more prone to truancy and eventually dropped out of school. As students were referred for behavior issues, case managers gave individual counseling and helped administrators when necessary. The average student participating in GEAR UP had two counseling sessions related to their behavior (Yampolskaya et al., 2006).

Throughout the year, GEAR UP case managers would give presentations to classrooms in an effort to recruit more students. These presentations included information about college preparation and challenges students face when headed towards high school graduation and post-secondary education, what financial opportunities are available for post-secondary education, and study skills like notetaking and managing stress and time (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 460).

The population of this study was 475 students which represented 29% of the student population at a large high school in Florida. Twenty-eight students dropped out of school or the program and were excluded from the analysis of the data so only 447 students were used. Seventy-five percent of the students in the sample were Black, 13% were Hispanic, and 11% were White. Fifty-two students did not participate in any GEAR UP activities while 101 only participated in academic-focused activities, 21 in behavior-focused activities, and 38 in social activities. Twenty-one percent participated in both academic and social activities, eight percent participated in academic and behavior-focused activities, and three percent participated in behavior and social-focused activities (Yampolskaya et al., 2006).

Researchers used GPA, the state standardized test scores for both reading and math over the course of the year, the number of disciplinary referrals a student earned, and days absent from school that were not related to suspensions as outcome measures for their study. They organized the sample into three groups in each category based on the amount of time students participated in GEAR UP programming: no participation, low participation, and high participation over the course of the semester. Students that participated in none of the

programming being analyzed served as the control group (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 462-463).

When comparing student GPAs with high participation in academic activities versus low participation, the students with high participation had GPAs that improved greatly compared to those students who did not participate as much. According to the results, their GPAs decreased over the year (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 466). Both state standardized test scores for math and reading increased over time for each group, with the high participation group showing more growth. There was no correlation between high participation in academic programs with discipline referrals or truancy (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 466-467). GPAs for the students in the control group were not significantly different. Both groups raised their state standardized test scores. Both groups were absent more days and received fewer disciplinary referrals (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 465-466).

For students who participated in behavior-related programs, the GPA decreased while the students that did not participate in programming had GPAs that increased. State reading and math scores improved for all students regardless of whether they participated in programming or not. Students who participated in behavior-related programming were absent more days while students who did not participate had absences that decreased. Discipline referrals decreased for both groups, but those who participated in behavior-related programming decreased at a higher rate (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 467). When comparing high participation versus low participation, both groups' state scores improved, the number of days absent increased, and the number of disciplinary referrals decreased (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 468).

For students who participated in social activities, there was a slight improvement in state standardized reading test scores. Non-participants had more improved math scores. All groups had a decreased number of disciplinary referrals but the group that participated in programming had a rate decrease higher than those that did not participate. There were no major differences between the low and high participation groups in GPA, state test scores, number of referrals, and number of days absent (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 469).

In general, researchers found that students need to spend a lot of time participating in academic-related activities over a long period of time to see substantial growth to GPA. This had the strongest effect on non-white students who started with lower GPAs (Yampolskaya, et. al., 2006, p. 471). Yampolskaya, et. al also noted that time spent on behavior-related activities reduced the number of disciplinary referrals but, contrary to what they hypothesized, the number of unexcused absences increased (2006, p. 471). Focusing more resources on absenteeism and increasing parental involvement were two areas of focus the researchers suggested.

### **Cultural Identity**

As researchers discussed cultural identity in students, they mentioned different locations where students go (i.e., school, church, home, neighborhoods, and stores). The people with whom students interact in those places were also part of the development of a cultural identity as each of those locations have their own cultural norms to navigate.

### **Racial Ethnic Identity**

When students worked on developing their cultural identity, their racial ethnic identity was also being formed. This identity was simply not just about understanding the places and

people by which they were surrounded but informed by their understanding of their own personal heritage, how they connected to that heritage and their Blackness, and their awareness of racism in everyday situations.

**Identity in Non-White Students.** Researchers Oyserman, Kimmelmeier, Frybert, Brosh, and Hart-Johnson focused their research on the relationship of racial-ethnic self-schemas (RES) to the level of academic engagement. Over the course of three separate studies, researchers hypothesized that students who do not have a RES or their RES was only in-group were at higher risk of disengaging from school and were vulnerable to in-group academic negative stereotypes (Oyserman et al., 2003, p. 336).

In study one, 94 eighth grade students (50 male, 44 female - 58 Black, 25 Hispanic, and 11 Native American) replied to a questionnaire that contained open-ended questions about racial-ethnic identity. Responses were coded aschematic, in-group, or larger society (Oyserman et al., 2003, p. 337). The results of this study supported their hypothesis that when RES included in-group and considered the larger society, students were more likely to engage in positive academic behaviors (Oyserman et al., 2003, p. 338).

Study two was meant to replicate the results of study one with a different population and used experimental manipulation as the research method. The new population consisted of 65 junior high and high school Native American students (30 female, 35 male) who attended rural and reservation schools. With this study, researchers used the same RES questions as in the first study but changed the order in which they asked them. However, with this study, they also asked students to work out a math task. Sometimes they would ask the RES question first to bring it to mind and other times they would ask it after the math task was completed

(Oyserman et al., 2003, p. 339). As in study one, when students were 'primed' with the question about RES, they showed more persistence on the math task (Oyserman et al., 2003, p. 340).

Study three took the experimental manipulation of study two and brought it to Israel with a group of Palestinian Arab Israeli students. This population was larger at 524 high school students (225 male, 299 female). As in study two, the results supported the hypothesis that if the RES was found in both the in-group and larger society, students persisted through the math task longer (Oyserman et al., 2003, p. 341).

Students who had only in-group focused RES or were RES aschematic were less academically successful than students who had both in-group and larger society RES (Oyserman et al., 2003, p. 343). Students with only in-group schemas were likely to disengage and withdraw from academic tasks because school was not a priority for the in-group and they did not fear being a stereotype and weren't defined by being a student (Oyserman et al., 2003, p. 344). Students who did not have a RES were most likely to be threatened by the stereotype because they had other ways that they self-defined themselves but when faced with race-ethnicity negative stereotypes, they did not know how to respond (Oyserman et al., 2003, p. 344).

Researchers Altschul, Oyserman, and Bybee's two-year longitudinal study was composed of randomly selected 139 eighth graders (98 Black and 41 Latino) from three low-income schools in Detroit (Altschul, et al., 2006, p. 1158). Their goal was to examine whether racial-ethnic identity (REI) changes towards the end of middle school as students were about to enter high school could predict academic achievement and whether these results were gendered. The three components of REI are connectedness, awareness of racism, and

embedded achievement (Altschul, et al., 2006, p. 1156). The researchers surveyed the students in the fall and spring of both eighth and ninth grade and found that connectedness, awareness of racism, and embedded achievement are stabilized by this age and able to be used to predict academic achievement. They found no support that the effects were gendered nor were there differences across ethnicities. There was an upward trend in each of the three REI components as students went from eighth grade to ninth grade, suggesting that transitioning to high school can create more awareness of their REI (Altschul, et al., 2006, p. 1165). Researchers also noted that students higher in all three components of REI attained better grades at each assessment, which showed schools should focus preventative interventions on developing all three components of REI to create successful pathways to academic achievement for students whether in racially and ethnically segregated schools or heterogeneous schools.

**Identity in Black Students.** Researchers Okeke, Howard, and Kurtz-Costes explored the relationship between racial stereotypes and academic self-concepts in middle school-aged students (Okeke et al., 2009, p. 366). They hypothesized that students who identify strongly with their racial group and believed the negative stereotypes about that group would have negative academic self-perceptions (p. 366, 2009).

In study one, 237 Black students (134 girls and 103 boys) from urban and rural districts included 42 seventh and 195 eighth graders. This group was given a questionnaire that compared Black and European American students in academic areas. The questionnaire gave students a 100mm long line to mark; on the left side was “not well at all” and the right side was “very well” (Okeke et al., 2009, p. 373). Along with academic stereotypes, students were given statements about other social groups (like boys and girls) to rank. To gather data for students’

academic self-concept, students ranked themselves compared to their peers by circling a stick figure in a column of twenty-five figures. The academic areas in which they ranked themselves were math, science, writing, language arts, and school grades. The higher the scores, the higher the self-concept the students displayed (Okeke et al., 2009, p. 373). Students' racial centrality was measured using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) which measures centrality, salience, ideology, and regard of Black identity. Researchers focused on six items within the centrality dimension that were appropriate for the age of the students in the study. These items measured the extent to which being Black was central to their identity and definition of themselves. A higher score showed that race was a central part of their identity (Okeke et al., 2009, p. 374). Descriptive results showed that students had a high academic self-concept and believed in fairly traditional academic racial stereotypes. There was a moderate correlation between academic achievement and academic self-concept (Okeke et al., 2009, p. 374).

The goal of study two was to replicate the results of study one and consisted of students who had previously enrolled in a longitudinal study focused on transitioning to middle school and academic motivation for Black students. That study began when the students were in fifth grade and the surveys were given during their seventh-grade year. Participants included 290 Black students (170 girls and 120 boys), whose average age was 13, from urban middle schools near the same location the students from study one was located. Descriptive results showed that students in this group reported high levels of academic self-concept and traditional race stereotypes. Comparing data from both studies, researchers found that students who

considered their being Black a central part of their identity had a lower academic self-concept when they believed the negative stereotypes about their group (Okeke et al., 2009, p. 381).

Researchers posit that Black students who view themselves as academically weak may be more open to believing stereotypes about Black inferiority than students with a more positive view of themselves regardless of achievement (Okeke et al., 2009, p. 383). They also note that schools that emphasized contributions by Black people in their curriculum led to higher academic self-concept and minimized the effects of group stereotypes (Okeke et al., 2009, 385).

Researchers Kerpelman and White studied the relationship between interpersonal identity and perceptions of social capital in adolescent Black adolescents from low-income and rural families. The sample of 374 twelve to nineteen-year-olds (161 males and 213 females) was taken from a larger sample for a larger project. These students were attending a small public school in a southern and rural county. The mean age was just under 15 years old (Kerpelman & White, 2006, p. 226).

Kerpelman and White identified two factors for social capital: how close they were to friends and parents and how students discussed support, both emotional and instrumental, from members of their social groups. Types of expressive support included encouragement and communication. Types of instrumental support included helping with homework and getting information about college and other future opportunities. Where interpersonal identity was concerned, researchers asked questions about friendship, family roles, gender roles, and dating. Based on these results and combined with interrelated identity processes of exploration and commitment, students were categorized into four different groups: achieved, foreclosed,

moratorium, and diffused (Kerpelman & White, 2006, p. 220). Achieved status described students that have had the opportunity to explore and commit to their identity. Students identified in the foreclosure group had commitment but not much exploration and this was often seen in adolescents who were close with their parents (Kerpelman & White, 2006, p. 224). Students in the moratorium group had explored their identity but lacked commitment. Diffusion meant that students hadn't explored or committed to aspects of their identity. (Kerpelman & White, 2006, p. 220).

Kerpelman and White predicted that students identified in the foreclosure group would have higher social capital and that commitment would contribute more than exploration in students' perception of social capital. Results from the surveys showed that students in the achieved status had higher social capital than students grouped as diffused or in the moratorium group. Students in the foreclosed group showed the same level of support from their moms, friends, and nonparents as students in the achieved group, and the only difference between them and the moratorium group was their closeness to their mothers. There was no difference in social capital quality for students in the diffused and moratorium groups (Kerpelman & White, 2006, p. 231). The results also supported the hypothesis that commitment would have a greater effect on social capital than exploration.

When gender was isolated, researchers found that female students had greater identity commitment and greater social capital quality, putting them at an advantage over their male classmates in having the support and social capital to achieve their goals (Kerpelman & White, 2006, p. 236). They also found that there was a direct link between students who were able to

work out problems with adults and people their age and having higher levels of exploration, commitment, and social capital.

Researchers Chavous, Bernat, Schmeelk-Cone, Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, & Zimmerman studied how Black students' "beliefs about self, race, and society influence their academic beliefs and behaviors" (Chavous, et al., 2003, p. 1080). Regarding racial identity, the researchers focused on the concepts of centrality (how being Black was central to their definition of themselves), private regard (how they felt about being included in the Black group, both positively and negatively), and public regard (how they felt people outside of their group viewed Black people as a group positively or negatively).

Their longitudinal study had a sample size of 606 Black students. Students were selected during their ninth-grade year based on their eighth-grade grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or lower. Initial data were collected in their 12th-grade year. Two years later, researchers did a follow-up interview where only 72% of the original 606 students participated. All of the interviewers were trained and were Black and White males and females from the community with at least a high school diploma or GED. Researchers attempted to match the interviewers and students by race and gender when able but sometimes scheduling prevented matching from occurring (Chavous et. al., 2003, p. 1080).

Results of the study showed that students with high values in each of the areas of centrality, private regard, and public regard also had more positive academic beliefs (Chavous et. al., 2003, p. 1087). They also found that students who had more positive public regard tended to be more academically focused. The correlations between the elements of racial identity and post-high school paths were inconclusive, though, as centrality and private regard

were the significant factors in whether students continued their education after 12th grade or not. The study's findings show that sometimes students' private regard and beliefs about society were motivating for academic success but for others, they were discouraging (Chavous et. al., 2003, p. 1088). Researchers note that some of these contradicting results may stem from social contexts in friends, school experiences, and family and community feelings about academics.

Researchers Gibson, Roach, Tone, and Baron studied how racial demographics within the school students attended as well as parents' attitudes towards their race and how those attitudes were communicated to their children explain implicit race bias within the Black student population. Two hundred sixteen Black people living in greater Atlanta participated in the study: one group of 86 children ages 6-11 and another group of 130 young adults ages 18-20. Forty-eight percent of the sample attended 90% or higher Black schools while the rest of the sample attended schools where the Black population was 10-20% total.

Results of the implicit and explicit bias tasks showed that African-American children showed no implicit bias for their racial ingroup (Black) or their racial outgroup (white) regardless of the demographics of the school they attended (Gibson, et al., 2017, p. 13). This differed significantly from the sample of young adults whose data showed an implicit ingroup preference, particularly from those participants that attended a Historically Black College (Gibson, et al., 2017, p. 13). Data for the explicit bias tasks showed that Black children and young adults had an explicit bias for their ingroup regardless of the demographics of the school they attended (Gibson, et al., 2017, p.13). Data also showed that the older the participants, the more strongly they identified with their ingroup in both the implicit and explicit measures

(Gibson, et al., 2017, p. 14). One of the measures used was specifically geared towards parents and the messages they send to their children about race. Results show that Black parents' attitudes and messages about cultural history and racial pride impacted their children's explicit racial identity both positively and negatively (Gibson, et al., 2017, p. 14-15).

Researchers Cokley and Chapman's study was designed to determine whether racial and ethnic identities - including anti-white attitudes - influenced academic achievement in a group of students that attended a Historically Black University. Their sample included 274 Black students (268 women and 58 men) whose ages ranged from freshman to graduate students. The surveys used included questions regarding ethnic identity, academic self-concept, whether students believed teachers and other employees of the university cared about them, anti-white attitudes and other-group orientation, and whether devaluing education were predictors of academic achievement. The results showed that, on their own, a positive academic self-concept was a predictor of earning higher grades, as was having positive attitudes regarding other ethnic groups (Cokley & Chapman, 2008, p. 359). Conversely, anti-white attitudes and devaluing education were negative predictors of achieving higher grades. Having a positive ethnic identity had no effect on achieving higher grades, but it did link positively to the positive academic self-concept which did correlate with achieving academic success (Cokley & Chapman, 2008, p. 360). Schools and teachers should create opportunities that allow students to develop a positive ethnic identity as it is positively linked to a positive academic self-concept and negatively linked to devaluing education - both of which predict academic achievement.

**Identity in Black Male Students.** Researchers Swanson, Cunningham, and Spencer studied how Black males' perceptions in both school and their community affected their

academic achievement (Swanson, et al., 2003, p. 619). They also studied coping responses, like bravado attitudes, of resilient and vulnerable Black males. Their research question was, “do adolescent males who perceive negative social and educational experiences regarding Black males adopt reactive coping attitudes (Swanson, et al., 2003, p. 619)?” The longitudinal study of 219 Black males was conducted over their eighth, ninth, and 10th-grade years of school. The purpose of this study was to see how persistent poverty affected the development of Black youth. Fifty-eight percent of the sample met federal poverty guidelines.

Cunningham and Spencer developed the Black Male Experiences Measure in 1996 and this was given to each participant. Students responded to items asking about their experiences in public locations in their neighborhood like malls/stores and parks. Another measure used was a bravado construct for the male students to address stereotypes of male attitudes and behaviors (Swanson, et al., 2003, p. 620-621). Researchers also used the scale of Teacher Expectations of Black Males. This scale measured how students believed their teachers felt about their academic performance and the expectations they held for them. The items in this were written for the students to answer how they thought their teachers would respond.

Results showed that when Black male students did not feel their teachers were holding positive/high expectations for them, they had more bravado attitudes. If Black males believed the adults in their school supported their goals and development, then school was a place for them to receive positive reinforcement. If Black males believed the adults in their school did not support their goals and development, school was no longer a place for them to receive positive reinforcement and more bravado attitudes would surface (Swanson, et al., 2003, p. 625). Researchers recommended having programs that build positive achievement in Black

males within school while simultaneously training the adults who are with them in school each day. For the bravado attitudes to change, so must the environment in which they experience the need to react (Swanson, et al., 2003, p. 629).

Researchers Irving and Hudley (2008) tested hypotheses related to identity and academic achievement in Black male students. Researchers expected to find the following:

- Cultural mistrust, oppositional cultural attitudes, and ethnic identity would have a positive intercorrelation
- Expectations for academic outcomes and the value placed upon them would be inversely related to cultural mistrust, oppositional cultural attitudes, and ethnic identity
- Socioeconomic status (SES), cultural mistrust, oppositional cultural attitudes, and ethnic identity, and the academic outcome would be significant predictors of academic outcome expectations and academic grade point averages.
- Resistant cultural identity (oppositional cultural attitudes and cultural mistrust) would be inversely related to academic achievement and SES (Irving & Hudley, 2008, p. 682)

One hundred and fifteen Black male students in 11th and 12th grade in southern California were participants in the study. Students responded to a survey of 72 items - all on a 4-point Linkert scale - that spoke to cultural mistrust, academic outcome expectations, outcome values, cultural attitudes, and ethnic identity affirmation (Irving & Hudley, 2008, p. 683). Their results showed that cultural mistrust, resistant cultural attitudes, and low academic outcome expectations were intercorrelated. Researchers noted that as Black males' mistrust increased, their academic outcome expectations decreased. As their mistrust increased, so did their oppositional cultural attitudes (2008, p. 691).

They also found that cultural mistrust, academic outcome expectations, outcome values, cultural attitudes, and ethnic identity affirmation correlated with academic achievement on their own (2008, p. 690). SES was inversely correlated with cultural mistrust and oppositional cultural attitudes yet had a positive correlation with outcome value and GPA. SES did not correlate with academic outcome expectations and ethnic identity affirmation (Irving & Hudley, 2008, p. 692). Researchers recommended that identifying students who exhibit cultural mistrust or have a resistant cultural identity early can help identify students at risk for underachieving. They also recommend that schools set policies and practices that support cultural identity work within the school as this may cause students to create an identity that includes academic achievement (Irving & Hudley, 2008, p. 694).

Researchers Hines and Holcomb-McCoy examined the relationship between the enrollment of Black male high school students in honors courses and parenting styles. The sample included 153 Black eleventh and twelfth-grade males in the Northeast United States - 54% reported living in the suburbs while the rest lived in an urban or rural neighborhood. Both schools had high Black and Hispanic populations and almost 90% of the participants were 17-18 years old - 77% of them were seniors (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013, p. 70). Forty-three percent of the students participating were enrolled in no honors courses like international baccalaureate or advanced placement. Thirty-four percent were enrolled in one or two honors courses. Sixty-four percent of students were not enrolled in college preparatory classes while just over one-third of the students attended high schools that had affiliations with Upward Bound, Gear Up, Talent Search, or College Summit (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013, p. 71). While no significant relationship was found between the four different parenting styles

(authoritarian, authoritative, neglectful, and indulgent) and enrollment in honors courses, positive predictors of GPA were father's education and having a two-parent household. Father's expectations were a negative predictor of GPA which was perplexing to the researchers as this contradicted their research that found that when parents had high academic expectations, there was a positive predictor of GPA (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013, p. 73).

Researchers Harrison, Martin, and Fuller interviewed twenty-seven Black male athletes who attended academically rigorous universities on the West coast to study the academic motivation of high achieving Black college athletes and how their peers shaped their achievement. These men competed in football, basketball, track, and field, or soccer, and earned a GPA of at least 2.8. Harrison, Martin, and Fuller used this study to see how self-determination theory is related to the results of this study. Self-determination theory describes a person's 'inherent motivational drive to master their social environment through self-determined actions,' (Harrison, et al., 2015, p. 81).

This study consisted of two phenomenological interviews; after the first interview, researchers analyzed the content for themes and then conducted a follow-up interview. The first interview lasted an hour and the second interview was no longer than twenty minutes. The first interview had four open-ended prompts that asked the participants to describe their academic experiences, how they were perceived on campus as Black student-athletes, how they balanced athletics and academics, and how they stayed motivated to maintain good grades. Participants were given a transcription of the first interview and were allowed to revise it for clarity (Harrison, et al., 2015, p. 83).

Results of the interview and the themes that arose showed that Black male student-athletes were aware that their self-determined actions, attitudes, and behaviors were necessary to their success, but the other athletes, athletic departments, coaches, and campus community were helpful or harmful towards their self-determined behaviors (Harrison, et al., 2015, p. 88). Relatedness, the sense of belonging to a community and caring for/being cared for by others (Harrison, et al., 2015, p. 82), was the greatest social factor that increased intrinsic motivation in the participants (Harrison, et al., 2015, p. 88-89). However, the athletes often discussed that they often had to dissociate from teammates, peers, and family members to take on their achievement alone as teammates and peers would often create situations misaligned with their goals (Harrison, et al., 2015, p. 89). The results of this study contradicted Ogbu's oppositional culture theory in that the Black male athletes valued education and that as they got older, that valuation increased rather than diminished.

### **Systems**

Research tended to reach consensus that Africentric programs involving rites of passage were important in building a cultural and racial ethnic identity with Black male students. These programs had mentorships in place for both students and their families from people within the community. For these types of programs to be successful, it was important for those leading them to be of the same race as the attendees.

**Africentric Programs.** Researcher Piert's qualitative study focused on the experiences of Black students who participated in their high school's rite of passage program (Piert, 2007, p. 173). The high school where the study took place was a K-12 African-centered college preparatory charter school in an urban city in Michigan. The foundations of the school were

based on deconstructing American influence, promoting a positive self-concept, and acknowledging the Black cultural heritage of the students. Piert chose this school for the aforementioned reasons but also that it had been running for 30 years and as a K-12 school, would likely have a sample group who had experienced the Afrocentric schooling for most of their school experience (2007, p. 174-175). Participants of the study were seven former students three of whom graduated in 1996, three in 2001, and one in 2002. They were initially interviewed for 60-90 minutes with open-ended questions and were allowed to answer as detailed as they wanted. From the interviews, Piert noticed that the rite-of-passage experience was a primary part of the schooling of the participants (2007, p. 176).

Participants recalled that the first rite-of-passage occurred in eighth grade and was understood to be the adult rite, giving them more responsibilities both at home and school. For a week, students' school assignments were completing tasks at home like cleaning or speaking with grandparents or other elders in their families. Over the years, the rite that took a week began covering months starting with a preparation period (Piert, 2007, p. 176).

The second rite-of-passage occurred in high school and male and female students experienced different programs. The male students went on week-long field trips and camping excursions with male community members, school faculty, and parents. On these trips, the young men were trained in community values and other 'manhood' related things like fatherhood, providing for their family, leading the community, building relationships, sexuality, and strength training (Piert, 2007, p. 177). Female students were not taken on retreats or trips - their rite-of-passage was a "communication fast (2007, p.177)" where they were not allowed to speak to the male family members and spent all of their time with the female family members

and elders in their community. They were assigned tasks to complete and received counsel from these women. As the program grew, the female participants took it upon themselves to formulate ways to be disciplined and went on hiking trips and created a drill team (Piert, 2007, p. 177).

Something that was repeatedly discussed by the former participants is that the rite-of-passage experience was not explicitly tied to puberty. The rite happens when the elders believe you are mentally ready to enter young man/womanhood. Some students' rites-of-passage may last two months, others longer (Piert, 2007, p. 177). Manhood and motherhood, in terms of sexuality, were handled differently. The male students were told to "understand the consequences, the responsibilities of what happens, statistically why it happens, when and where... (2007, p. 178)." Female students, on the other hand, were taught that, in African culture, pregnancy and having a child was a gift from the Creator and that children are always welcome and a blessing (2007, p. 179).

Community importance was one of the pinnacle things taught to students in the rite-of-passage program. Female students were taught that women need to value and appreciate other women rather than view them as an enemy. Male students developed a multi-age brotherhood of different experiences and ideas that made them stronger. This was only able to happen because of how the entire school, family, and community leaders were part of the creation of the program specific to that community. This showed that the African cultural teaching of "children always being welcome" was being practiced by the school and community. The time and energy that the adults put into this program showed the students that they were important to the community and that their connection to the community was a

way of survival and bettering of the whole community (Piert, 2007, p. 180). The culmination of the rites-of-passage is a celebration with their same-gender community members as a way to symbolize the ending of childhood and the beginning of adulthood (2007, p. 180).

Researchers Harvey and Hill focused their research on the effect of an Africentric rites of passage program on at-risk Black males and their parents. This program was developed by the MAAT Center for Human and Organizational Enhancement in Washington DC to work with students between the ages of 11 and 15 who lived in and around DC. The goal was to reduce the rate at which Black youth were using substances and to diminish antisocial behaviors (Harvey & Hill, 2004, p. 65). Its approach was to educate from multiple places in the child's life: individually, within their friend group, family - both immediate and extended, and their community. The goal was that children became cooperative, respected themselves and others, and gained a sense of belonging and responsibility for themselves and their connection to their community (Harvey & Hill, 2004, p. 67-68). Children in the program went through an eight-week orientation period and then had weekly meetings where they learned about their African culture using the Nguzo Saba. Finally, there was a ceremony where the children got to show their family, friends, staff, and other community members their growth over the course of the program. Children in the Rites of Passage program received interventions in three ways: after school, family activities, and individual and family counseling (Harvey & Hill, 2004, p. 68).

During the after-school program, students were taught social skills, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, which aimed to increase their self-esteem. They met three days a week for three hours each time. Each day began with a ritual rooted in African culture and a review of the principles of Nguzo Saba: Umoja (unity), Kujichajulia (self-determination), Ukima (collective

work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith). After the ritual and review, the children participated in three activities focused on knowledge and behavior (encouraged healthy behaviors for themselves, their family, and community), learning motivation (learned hands-on skills to keep a home that also used math and science skills), and creative arts (experienced time to explore their creativity from experienced craftspeople and artists) (Harvey & Hill, 2004, p. 69).

Once a month, MAAT held sessions and retreats for families to help enhance and empower parents in their parenting skills, participating in their child's life, and advocating for their children. In the third year, the retreat was a joint parent and youth session to enhance the bonds between the children and their parents. They participated in intensives to build self-esteem and skills, learn more about African culture and practices, and family activities they could do together. The end of the retreat had a naming ceremony where the parents and children were given African names (Harvey & Hill, 2004, p. 69).

For the study, the sample consisted of boys that were 11-15 years old and their family members. The boys were referred to the program from public schools, juvenile justice system, and other programs with the strict guideline that they did not have a history of drug use. Family members that participated were not limited to just parents. Other adults of significance, siblings, and guardians were also participants (Harvey & Hill, 2004, p. 70). There were 17 students in the first cohort, 13 in the second, and 27 in the third. The boys took a pretest with questions about racial identity, cultural awareness, knowledge of drugs, self-esteem, academics, and what they think the program could do for them. The parents and guardians that participated also took a pretest with topics and questions about racial identity, cultural

awareness, parenting skills, community, PTA participation, parental advocacy, and what they think the program could do for them. At the end of the program period, they took a posttest about the same topics (Harvey & Hill, 2004, p. 70).

Because the pretest was taken by the boys at the end of the first eight weeks, the effect of the program may not be as measurable. The boys learned a lot and already, after eight weeks, showed positive results in the different areas of concern. There were significant gains in the pre and post-test for self-esteem and drug knowledge. There were gains in racial identity and cultural awareness, but because the pretest was given so much later than intended, the growth was not considered significant. There were no gains in academic orientation. Overall, the program developed positive relationships and self-esteem to the point where many of the boys felt like they were equipped to resist negative peer pressure (Harvey & Hill, 2004, p. 72)

The effect on parents and guardians was also positive though the pretest and posttest results were not statistically significant because of the small sample size of 10. Anecdotally, parents and guardians reported that the bonds with their sons had improved and the bonds were observable by the researchers (Harvey & Hill, 2004, p. 73).

Researchers noted that from evaluations, the most effective programs were focused on the individual, family, peer group, and community (Harvey & Hill, 2004, p. 73). Researchers also suggested that when creating programs for at-risk youth, using culturally competent interventions, and having the staff working in the program the same race of the youths was important for the success of the program outcomes (Harvey & Hill, 2004, p. 74).

Researchers Bass and Coleman's study focused on whether learning the seven principles of Kwanzaa (which are the same as the principles of the Nguzo Saba above) in an academic

setting improved student behaviors in school and to determine if being grounded and supported within one's own culture is necessary for being competent in another culture (Bass & Coleman, 1997, p. 49). Their sample group consisted of six Black male sixth-grade students who were identified by school social workers or psychologists as being at risk for academic underachievement (Bass & Coleman, 1997, p. 49). These six students met over twenty weeks with Bass where they were taught the principles of Kwanzaa, set academic goals, and built relationships and trust within the group. In the final ten weeks, the focus shifted to putting the principles into practice.

Students met monthly and were responsible for self-evaluating their classroom behaviors and whether they were achieving their academic goals (Bass & Coleman, 1997, p. 50). At the end of the twenty weeks intervention, Bass and Coleman found that over 80 percent of the students achieved their academic goals and the group's GPA increased over 45 percent from 1.9 to 2.51. The behaviors that the students had control over improved and the disciplinary referrals dropped from an average of 11 to 0.5 over the course of the last ten weeks.

Researchers received and recorded comments from teachers and parents about the program and three of the teachers commented that classroom behavior and academic performance had improved. Two students' parents commented how the program suddenly helped their children as they noted the improvement in grades and lack of detention. The results of this research, though the sample was small and no control group was evaluated, showed that schools should spend energy creating opportunities for Black students to learn

about their culture's symbols and traditions so they can have a positive sense of self, both culturally and personally (Bass & Coleman, 1997, p. 50).

Researcher Wyatt studied the effects of an after-school counseling and mentoring program on the graduation rate of Black male students in a large urban school district. Standards for the program were drawn from the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), Nguzo Saba, and empowerment theory. The ASCA standards focused on what students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills should be by the end of the program and included weekly and monthly lessons on academic achievement, inter- and intrapersonal relationships, and college and career options (Wyatt, 2009, p. 465). Empowerment theory supports the program in that it promotes the students to better their current family and community situation by developing their own power in relationships and politics. It also gives the facilitator of the group the goal of creating students that were successful in their academics (Wyatt, 2009, p. 465). The male mentors utilized the seven principles of the Nguzo Saba in multiple ways over the course of the month showing that the principles apply to most situations the students face (Wyatt, 2009, p. 465).

The Brotherhood met each Friday after school for 30 weeks. A curriculum addressing the aforementioned goals was created and group coordinators used data from students about other topics and issues that were relevant to their development (Wyatt, 2009, p. 465). At the end of each meeting, members in attendance write in a journal to comment on any thoughts, feelings, or things that need to be addressed in the future (2009, p. 465). Wyatt gauged the effectiveness of The Brotherhood by collecting GPAs and giving a survey at the end of the fifth year (2009, p. 465). Participation in The Brotherhood is voluntary and encompasses an average

of 1,700 students per school year. The demographic breakdown is 90.5% Black, 3.4% Hispanic, and the remaining 6% as Native, White, or other (2009, p. 465). For the purposes of this study, permission to review GPAs was given by parents of 307 students who participated in any of the years from 2004 to 2008 (2009, p. 465). These GPAs were compared to final GPAs of Black and Hispanic males' and Black and Hispanic Females' GPAs in the district. Wyatt also created and administered a questionnaire given to 36 current and former members to evaluate the impact of The Brotherhood (2009, p. 465). Questions were focused on the three standards of ASCA to gauge whether The Brotherhood was effective in understanding how important academic achievement was to the real world, whether the interpersonal skills learned to help them respect themselves and other people, and how effective The Brotherhood was in helping them feel college and career ready (Wyatt, 2009, p. 466). Members were also given an opportunity to give their own thoughts about their experiences in The Brotherhood while attending school (2009, p. 466).

Between 2005 and 2008, there was a 16% increase in GPAs for members of The Brotherhood. In 2006, members of The Brotherhood had a cumulative GPA of 2.88 while Black and Hispanic males' not participating in the program had a cumulative GPA of 1.80. In 2007, the GPA of the students in The Brotherhood was 2.79 while those not participating had an average GPA of 1.88. In those same years, the Black and Hispanic females' GPAs were 2.40 and 2.43 respectively showing that the students participating in The Brotherhood performed at a higher level than the females (Wyatt, 2009, p. 467). More often than not, the current and former students in The Brotherhood answered questions about the ASCA goals with "always" or "sometimes" and "never" was not chosen once.

These results showed that being a member of The Brotherhood was a key strategy in academic success. It also made program directors decide to do quarterly checks to make sure students were on track over the school year (2009, p. 467). The questionnaire results caused the program directors to reevaluate how counselors helped students plan out their learning plan from 9th to 12th grade. These results also showed that students wanted more lessons and training on life skills over the course of the 30 weeks (2009, p. 467). In general, the results from the data showed that continuous academic help, mentoring, and college and career counseling was necessary for academic success and that counselors should create themed counseling groups that are relevant to students and make sure students have a say in what the goals and objectives are for the group (Wyatt, 2009, p. 469).

**University Level Programs.** Researchers Spurgeon and Myers studied the relationship between racial identity and self- and social-wellness of 203 Black male junior and senior college students attending HBCUs (103) and PWIs (100) (Spurgeon & Myers, 2010, p.531). Using the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS), the Five-Factor Wel (5F-Wel), and a demographic survey, Spurgeon and Myers found that Black male students attending PWIs scored higher on the RIAS Internalization scale and the 5F-Wel physical self scale while those attending the HBCUs scored higher on the social self scale. No relationship between racial identity and wellness scales was found for either group (Spurgeon & Myers, 2010, p. 536).

Spurgeon and Myers were not expecting this result as there was an assumption that a greater internalization would correlate with a greater sense of well-being. Identifying what 'wellness' means for Black men at either institution is a recommendation by the researchers for future studies (Spurgeon & Myers, 2010, 2010, p. 538). Higher scores on Internalization in the

RIAS for students who attended PWIs than HBCUs was interesting because the assumption was that Black students had more opportunities, both academic and social, at an HBCU to embrace their race within the culture of America and that their identity as Black males would be solidified because of friendships with other Black males (Spurgeon & Myers, 2010, p. 537).

Researchers recommended that counseling offices on campuses needed to create programs that help Black males make connections and form relationships with each other, especially at PWIs, and pair that with physical wellness programs that utilized best practices from nutritionists and physical trainers. Setting up upperclassmen as mentors to underclassmen would also create a community and develop racial identities (Spurgeon & Myers, 2010, p. 539).

Researchers Luedke, Collom, McCoy, Lee-Johnson, and Winkle-Wagner explored the effectiveness of a university program (Project Scholar) aimed at helping first-year students of color be successful in higher education. The goal of the program was to intentionally give access to research opportunities for first-year undergraduate students of color while simultaneously fostering their cultural identities in an effort to increase the number of students able to apply for the McNair Scholars program (Luedke et al., 2019, p. 1532). The McNair Scholars program was created to support and prepare first generation and low-income students of color to pursue doctoral programs and increase the diversity in the pool of applicants for college and university faculty positions (2019, p. 1533).

Membership to Project Scholar required students to be non-white or a former participant in one of the federal programs geared towards low-income students and students of color such as GEAR UP, Upward Bound, or Talent Search. Grade point averages of 3.0 or higher or an ACT composite score of at least 20 were the other requirements (Luedke et al., 2019, p.

1533). Members committed to attend the university where Project Scholar was being instituted as well as participate in the week-long summer intensive week. They also received a \$500 scholarship each semester enrolled in the Project Scholar courses each of the first two semesters of college (2019, p. 1533).

During the one-week summer intensive, students were introduced to the university, participated in group team building activities and seminars to help them transition from high school to college, and heard from different faculty members as well as other staff and students on various panels. The purpose of the enrollment in the semester courses was to establish a network of peers and faculty on campus and gain an understanding of different resources available to them. Parts of this course also included a multicultural heritage lecture series (Luedke et al., 2019, p. 1533).

Along with the social and cultural aspects of the course, students were also given opportunities to learn about research concepts and invited to participate in research projects outside of the program. Their final project was to research a question relevant to their intended field of study or major that culminated in a poster presentation open house at the end of their freshman year (2019, p. 1533).

The sample population of this research study was four staff members and 11 students from the first year. Three of the students were Black, two Latina, two Hmong, and four multi-racial (Luedke et al., 2019, p. 1534). The four staff members were the founder, director, program staff, and a graduate assistant and all were Black - three male and one female (2019, p. 1535). The students in this first group were recruited by contacting administrators to identify possible candidates. Once those students committed, researchers asked the students for help

in finding others to join the group. The researchers informed the group of the study (Luedke et al., 2019, p. 1534). The data collected for this analysis were interviews conducted by the authors and another graduate student and were all people of color (2019, p. 1536).

The researchers found that offering the simultaneous cultural and scholar identity opportunities that Project Scholar provided positively benefited students in their first year of university level work in terms of cultural and scholar capital (Luedke et al., 2019, 1536). The founder's goal of Project Scholar was to produce what he referred to as "aggressive learners" and students who would go to graduate school and complete a Master's degree to pursue a Doctorate (2019, p. 1536). Project Scholar provided opportunities for students to learn how to conduct research at an undergraduate level and network with the campus honors and research programs. By participating in these honors and research programs, students gained cultural capital by gaining access to more campus resources which then facilitated in fostering a scholar identity as well (2019, p. 1537). This was referred to, by the researchers, as "the socialization of students as scholars" which described the ways in which Project Scholar deliberately taught students specific presentation skills, provided opportunities to hear from different programs on campus, and created opportunities for this group of students that other freshmen didn't have access to (2019, p. 1537).

During the second semester, articles were chosen to complement the different lectures that students were hearing in an effort to bring their racial identities into their research and feel connected to what they were studying at a deeper level (2019, p. 1538). Program directors also facilitated conversations and discussions with students about their lived experiences. Project Scholar was one room on campus during the week where students existed with other

students who looked like them and had similar experiences. This further verified that they had created a veritable support group which was additional social and cultural capital (2019, p. 1538).

One student commented on the importance of the guest lecturers being people of color and how seeing and hearing from successful people of color motivated her to believe that she could be successful in many different career paths (2019, p. 1539). Another student commented that the relationship between the staff and students was similar to that of a family and how that comfort level with the people in the group made her feel safe and at home, even at a predominately white school (p. 1539). A third student commented that they became more empathetic as they related to the different struggles that other students and speakers spoke about regarding their heritage (2019, p. 1540). They realized that many of the struggles they struggled with were similar to struggles that others experienced which made them feel affirmed and proud of their heritage (2019, p. 1540).

The main finding the data revealed was that supportive relationships that celebrate and develop students and their background along with deliberate scholarly pursuits like research can create safe spaces for students of color to develop academically (Luedke et al., 2019, p. 1543). The four socialization strategies that researchers noted that could be utilized elsewhere are:

1. “Encouraging aggressive learning where students become owners of their learning processes;
2. Early and continued culturally inclusive and culturally validating exposure to research as well as to opportunities to conduct undergraduate research;

3. Building community and exposure to scholars through guest speakers, peer-mentoring, and social events that honor students' backgrounds (e.g., intentionally inviting Scholars of Color to campus, etc.); and
4. Deliberately encouraging students to bring their identities into their learning and into their research experiences." (Luedke et al., 2019, p. 1543)

Luedke et al. concluded that students should not have to change who they are when they step onto a campus. Rather, universities should intentionally create opportunities for students to be proud of their culture and identity in social spaces, academic spaces, and in looking ahead to the future (2019, p. 1544).

## CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

### Summary of Literature

This review of the literature answered the question, “what effect does developing scholar and cultural identities have on positive school behavior and academic achievement amongst Black male students?” Research showed that building a scholarly identity in Black males within their culture improved academic performance as well as fostered positive academic behaviors.

There were external and internal motivators that students experienced when developing their scholar identity. External motivators often focused on interactions between Black students and their teachers and peers while internal motivators focused on how a student perceived themselves as a learner. How teachers interacted with and held expectations for their Black male students predicted academic success (Davis & Jordan, 1994). The more they focused their time on instruction instead of discipline and the higher the expectations they held for their students, the higher the achievement of their Black male students (Bell, 2015; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Harris, 2006). Conversely, teachers who focused their time on discipline instead of instruction and held low expectations and believed that their students were incapable of doing the work gave lower grades and disciplined their Black students more often (Bell, 2015; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Downey & Pribesh, 2016). Students who were engaged in class cared about how they performed and were eager to demonstrate their knowledge to their teacher and classmates (Hudley, 1997; Tyson, 2002). However, students who had a history of performing poorly were more likely to give up while working and reported that they did not like school (Hudley, 1997; Tyson, 2002). Black students perceived greater returns and had higher

education goals than their white counterparts even with perceptions of being limited in their educational opportunities at play (Tyson, 2002). Black students sought help more often and worked on homework as much as white students and spent time participating in educational activities and clubs (Tyson, 2002). Black students who performed well in school got along better with their peers and reported that they had friends (Tyson, 2002).

There were several programs and systems utilized in schools and communities to foster academic achievement and positive school behaviors. Many of the programs included enrichment, counseling, and tutoring and for students who participated (Martin et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2010). Researchers found that achievement increased while discipline referrals, expulsions or suspensions, and truancy decreased (Martin et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2010). Many of these programs also noted that community involvement was critical in producing results (Huerta et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2010). AVID was a program that introduced students who were in the 'academic middle,' classified as underrepresented, and likely to be first-generation college students to more rigorous coursework as early as middle school while offering in-school support and mentoring and tutoring from local college students and community members (Huerta et al., 2013; Pugh & Tschannen-Moran, 2016; Smith et al., 2010; Wooldridge, 2017). Research about AVID showed that the sooner a student engaged with rigorous courses and college preparation in the form of planning, note-taking, and organization, the more prepared they were for, and likely took more, rigorous high school and college courses (Huerta et al., 2013; Pugh & Tschannen-Moran, 2016, Wooldridge, 2017).

Federal programs such as Talent Search, GEAR UP, and Upward Bound were created to give students from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds the opportunity to

attend and be successful in post-secondary school. Each of these programs had academic tutoring, counseling, and financial literacy opportunities for students. Researchers found that students who engaged and participated in the programs at a high rate were more academically successful, developed self-efficacy, and continued on to post-secondary school (Almarode et al., 2014; Walsh, 2007; Yampolskaya et al., 2006).

When studying Cultural Identity, researchers found that students from non-White backgrounds who had identified strongly and positively with their racial group had higher levels of academic achievement and self-concept (Altschul et al., 2006; Chavous et al., 2003; Oyserman et al., 2003). When focusing the research on Black students, researchers found that students understood what traditional academic stereotypes were but also that students with an academic self-concept had higher academic achievement (Chavous et al., 2003; Cokley & Chapman, 2008; Okeke et al., 2009). Schools that emphasize lessons about Black people and their contributions to the world led to higher academic self-concept and minimized the effects of the stereotypes (Cokley & Chapman, 2008; Irving & Hudley, 2008; Okeke et al., 2009). When narrowing the research further to include just Black male students, researchers found that when they trusted the adults in their school and those adults held positive and high expectations for them and supported their goals, then school was a place for them to receive positive reinforcement (Irving & Hudley, 2008; Swanson et al., 2003;). Researchers also found that when family, community members, and peers had high expectations or were aligned with their goals, there was a positive correlation with a higher GPA (Harrison et al., 2015; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013).

There were many Africentric programs and systems to help develop cultural identities in young Black people. Rites of passage programs were developed to transition male and female children into adulthood by giving more responsibilities at home, school, and the community (Harvey & Hill, 2004; Piert, 2007). Female students were often paired with their mothers and other female family and community members to complete cleaning tasks and interviewing elders in their community. Male students met, worked, and camped with male family and community members to be trained in community values and what it means to be a man in terms of fatherhood, community leading, sexuality, and building relationships (Piert, 2007). Harvey & Hill's research showed no correlation between learning the seven principles of Nguzo Saba and academic orientation, but the gains in self-esteem, positive relationships, and bonds with their parents were significant (2004). Researchers also found that mentorships with same race people were essential to successful outcomes (Harvey & Hill, 2004; Spurgeon & Myers, 2010). The more intentionally schools help Black males make connections and form relationships with each other, especially in predominately white institutions, the better Black students will be both academically and socially (Spurgeon & Myers, 2010).

### **Limitations of Research**

I limited my research to mostly middle and high school-aged students unless the research was looking at the transition from one 'school' to another. As such, there were some elementary school and college-aged studies included. Because much of my own work is in sixth and eighth grade, it was important to me to limit my research to late elementary age to ninth grade as that is where my area of influence lies.

Many of the researchers referenced Ogbu and Fordham and Ogbu's work from the 1970s and 1980s and most of the research completed by Ogbu and Fordham were ethnographic studies that seemed designed to confirm their oppositional culture theory. Until the late 2000s, many studies used their theory as the framework for their work. As such, it felt like studies were designed to confirm the oppositional culture theory rather than give room for it to be dismissed.

Some research was done with small samples of students from predominately white schools while others were done with large samples from schools in predominately Black communities. Some studies used national level data as a one-and-done snapshot while others used national level data over time. Where national-level data is concerned, is there an assumption that national-level data is unbiased and helpful when it is disaggregated?

Most of the research I found where academic achievement was concerned had little overlap with other studies. Many of the researchers commented that they looked for, but couldn't find, other research assessing the same thing that they were studying. While most of the studies in this literature review were conducted by research teams containing at least one Black researcher, another limitation to consider is the race of the researcher.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Many of the studies focused on building the scholar and cultural identity in late middle and high school, however Black males' educational experiences – for good or bad – begin at an early age alongside their white counterparts. More research should focus on engaging students and families in elementary school with tutoring, counseling, and mentoring. Since much of the research shows that Black males need to feel validated and seen and held to high expectations,

studying the effects of intentional culturally responsive teacher training on the disciplinary and academic outcomes for Black male students would be valuable in this area. One more thing to study in the future is the effect of in-school versus after-school programming for both cultural and academic support.

For the sake of our Black students, more studies aimed at challenging the oppositional culture theory of Ogbu and Fordham should occur so more timely and relevant research is being used in teacher training. As an undergraduate in the school of education back in the 1990s and early 2000s, I remember having tidbits of this theory taught almost as a warning about Black students in our classroom. This “education” causes white teachers to be on the offensive when entering their own classroom and assume their Black students want nothing to do with what they are offering educationally which only develops a power dynamic.

### **Professional Application**

At the beginning of the article by Fordham and Ogbu, they discuss a story they came across in the Washington Post in 1982. The Black mother in the story was talking to her son and he told her of a time in fifth grade where his white teacher accused him of plagiarizing an essay about squirrels. Even though he denied plagiarizing, the teacher gave him a low grade indicating that she did not believe him. That instant in fifth grade caused him to stop trying in school and he graduated with a high school diploma and never pursued higher education. At the age of 20, he felt tricked into underachieving by society and was mad that he got in his own way of showing where his talents lie. As a white teacher of middle school-aged students, I cringed a bit reading that story and wondered if I served as that teacher for any of my students in the fifteen years of teaching I’ve completed.

Recently, I went into Best Buy to pick up an item I ordered online and every person behind the register were high-school or college-aged Black males. The one helping me mistyped my name and his friends were laughing and giving him a hard time and apologized to me for it taking so much time to get my order handed over to me. I simply responded that I was not in a hurry and the fact they were having fun and experiencing joy the day after Black Friday shopping was miraculous. As I stood there listening to them, I was thinking about whether that situation was any different than when my Black male students interact in my classroom and whether I try to squash the joy or let them feel it.

One important thing I gleaned from the research was to be sure to validate my Black students' presence in my classroom. By validating my Black students' presence, this should never be with an air of colorblindness to it. By "not seeing their color" I literally invalidate what is likely the primary thing they identify with – their Blackness.

Another important thing from the research is the necessity of teaching study skills and other positive school behaviors. Many of our Black students come to our middle school from other schools and we/I need to do a better job in observing the positive school behaviors that they already have and foster the ones that are underdeveloped. Our school can also do a better job of on-boarding new students and their parents with all the new technology, routines, and expectations they will be experiencing as they start with us. It often feels like, for the sake of getting started on teaching content, we assume that students chose to come to our school so they must know what is expected rather than teaching them the skills to help them be successful. Research shows that parents are an important part of student success in school so partnering with them is necessary.

The third thing I need to continually remind myself of is holding my students to high and positive standards while providing rigorous opportunities for learning. This is where differentiation plays a key as what is rigorous for one student may be not rigorous or too rigorous for another. Our school is working schoolwide to develop units that give our students opportunities to create beautiful work and go deeper with learning. This gives space for students to create work within the scope of what they can do while still being pushed towards something deeper and meaningful which is a different type of rigor.

Lastly, classroom expectations need to be clear and consequences fair, clear, and equitable. I often assume that students just know how to behave in school by middle school rather than inform them (or let them tell me) what should be expected in the science classroom and logical consequences for if/when someone behaves outside of the expectations. I am good at giving warnings but not always following through with consequences when things happen again. Making sure that when I decide to follow through with consequences that it is not with my Black students first (or only) is important. I try to be conscious when I must make a seating change for behavior reasons that I am not always moving the Black students.

It is important that our non-white students have an opportunity to learn about their cultures from people that look like them. As a teacher in a school where every teacher in our middle school is white, it is imperative to include teaching about non-white people in my curriculum but it would be irresponsible for me to “teach culture” using Africentric principles as it is not my culture. In my previous school, I spent time looking for a curriculum that would support the goal of our advisory group in fostering their racial and scholar identity while we all acknowledged our reality that I was a 30-something-year-old middle-class white woman who

lived in the suburbs north of the city. I never claimed to be an expert on being Black and male and actively chose not to bring in the elements of Kwanzaa as our foundation as those are not part of my cultural touchpoints.

Schools need to be places where Black male students can be mentored and shown what it looks like to be scholarly AND Black and that the two things are not mutually exclusive. Providing mentorship opportunities with Black adult males, intentionally hiring more Black faculty and staff who work in front of students and not in the background, and getting family members in the building to learn how to advocate and support their students proactively instead of reactively is a place to start.

### **Conclusion**

Schools need to provide opportunities for Black male students and their families to learn about and develop their cultural identity as there is a positive correlation between academic achievement and a positive racial identity. As research has shown, much of how Black male students feel about school is related to how they are treated by the adults there. Because of this, schools need to provide training to teachers to hold positive and high expectations, plan rigorous lessons, and create classroom environments that are supportive and validating for Black students. Teachers also need to make sure that behavior expectations are clear and enforced fairly for all students in the class.

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