2017

The Black Male Achievement Gap: Strategies for Intervention

Bryssa Koppie
University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, bryssak@icloud.com

The Black Male Achievement Gap: Strategies for Intervention

by

Bryssa Koppie, B.S.W., LSW

MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the
School of Social Work
St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Social Work

Committee Members
Katharine Hill, MPP, PhD, LISW
Erika Bauer, MSW, LGSW
Pamela Skaar-Meier, M.A.Ed.

The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University - University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

Table of Contents

Abstract

Black male students in America are graduating at a much lower rate than white students. The

purpose of this systematic review is to answer the question, "what interventions can school social

workers implement to improve high school graduation rates for Black male students?" The first

phase of this project included an examination of the existing research surrounding the

achievement gap in American schools. All research studies included in this project were directly

related to the ways in which schools could support better quality education for Black males.

Research studies were carefully selected using criteria of inclusion and exclusion to ensure their

relevance to this project. Criteria of inclusion were the words "Black", "male" and

"achievement". Articles older than ten years were discarded. Then, themes were gathered from

each of the six research articles that were deemed relevant. Finally, suggestions for social work

practice and policy are made in an effort to support equitable education for all students.

The Black Male Achievement Gap: Strategies for Intervention

As a result of historical and continued discrimination, schools are encountering what is commonly known as an achievement gap between the academic successes of white students in comparison to the academic success of students of color (as cited in Grogan-Taylor & Wooley, 2010). The achievement gap for Black male students continues to grow, as Black students graduate high school at a much lower rate than white students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). From financial freedom to gaining perspectives about the world and learning a trade, education is a tool that can provide a lifetime of security. American society values education (Fram, Miller-Cribs, Horn, 2007) and it is important to remember, "graduating from high school is the minimal requirement in order to proceed with further education and have financially stable and socially acceptable life outcomes" (as cited by Mundy, p.14, 2014). Black male students, specifically and as a whole, are not faced with an equal opportunity to be educated and succeed in the academic environment. Social workers must work toward creating equitable education for all students.

Systematic oppression is to blame for many of the barriers contributing to the lack of opportunity for Black males to succeed in school. To begin, "modern residential segregation in the United States is the result of a long series of racist federal and local policies" (Mandell, p. 305, 2008). Though *Loving v. Virginia* ended legally supported neighborhood segregation, structural racism in housing policy was never fully destroyed (2008). As the "white flight" movement (where white families left urban neighborhoods to settle in the suburbs) began, these families were leaving behind "urban school districts with higher poverty, more concentrated minority enrollment and declining property tax revenues" (Badger, 2014). Neighborhoods that can afford culturally responsive and well-trained teachers tend to have higher rates of student

success (Fram et al., 2007) and neighborhoods with lower tax revenues have higher classroom

turnover, difficulty retaining teachers, decreased parent involvement and higher instances of

students receiving special education support (Bager, 2014). "White flight" also allowed for

white families to move out of "the reach of legal busing or school-assignment policies that have

traditionally been used as levers of integration", essentially forcing children to attend schools

with peers who lived in their neighborhoods and thus not contributing to racial integration in

schools (2014). Though many Americans can agree that a problem exists within the education

system, not much is being done to solve it (Fram et. al, 2007).

Another form of systematic oppression that directly effects Black male students is the

high incarceration rate of Black male adults who are fathers to the students in our schools.

Rowley and Bowman (2009) found that the absence of a father figure is the most common factor

affecting Black male student achievement. An alarming statistic cited by Mundy (2014) says that

"only 47% of Black males graduated from high school in the United States in the 2007-2008

school year" and "of the 57% of Black males in their early thirties who dropped out of high

school, 52% had a prison record" (p. 1). Further research done by the National Association

for the Advancement of Colored People (2013) found that one in three Black males will go to

prison in his lifetime. If over half of Black men who dropped out of high school end up in prison,

what does that mean for the students in our schools left without father figures? Students in our

schools are directly suffering from this issue.

Though some research has been done to begin to identify what factors influence the

academic achievement of Black males, there is still much to be done on a national level to

address the problem. The current study, a systematic review, will examine the research that

currently exists and aim to answer the question: "What interventions can school social workers

implement to improve high school graduation rates for Black male students?" Social workers are

expected to follow the NASW Code of Ethics and act upon injustices within systems. The

systematic oppression and low high school graduation rates for Black male students are issues

concerning ethical values like: dignity and worth of a person, social justice and the importance of

human relationships (National Association of Social Workers, 2008). It is important that the

social work profession considers a multitude of interventions on the micro, mezzo and macro

levels to increase Black male graduation rates.

Background

Family Structure and Parental Guidance

Previous research indicates that family structure and parental guidance during youth play

a large role in Black male student achievement (Morrissey, Hutchinson and Winsler, 2013). As

the divorce rate rises in America, an increased number of youth are living in single parent

households – most commonly occurring in Black families where 55% of Black youth are living

without both biological parents in the same household (Vespa, Lewis & Kreider, 2013).

Consequently, Rowley and Bowman (2009) found that the absence of a father is the most

common factor associated with lower academic achievement and performance. From this

information, it can be assumed that one explanation for the existing achievement gap can be

attributed to Black youth most commonly growing up without a father.

These findings do not necessarily indicate that Black males raised by a single parent or

with the absence of a father are destined to fail. Whatever the family dynamics may be, there are

other factors that can positively influence academic achievement and contribute to a higher

likelihood of graduating high school. Though Black male students may face barriers to success

that other students do not, there are many strengths within African American culture that support

academic success. For instance, a Black male student's perception of his existing family

interactions, support, communication and involvement can affect his success in school (Rowley

& Bowman, 2009). When the student deems these factors as positive, his psychological well

being improves; and with that, his sense of capability in his academic work also improves

(2009). Additionally, research indicates that familial financial stressors affect Black male

psychological well being more so than Black females (2009). When a Black male student's

psychological well being is affected, so is his feeling of capability to succeed (2009).

Socioeconomic Status, Neighborhood Crime and School Climate

Factors such as socioeconomic status; neighborhood statistics and quality of education

affect Black male achievement. Fram, Miller-Cribbs & Horn (2007) found that "Black students

are 3.8 times as likely as white students to attend high-poverty schools." High poverty schools

tend to have teachers with less teaching experience and lower credentials, less funding for

classroom materials and an increased number of students at low reading levels (2007).

Additionally, high poverty schools are more likely to have teacher with non-regular licenses

(Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2008). Teacher training programs, such as Teach for America

(TFA), where teachers in training are based primarily in high poverty schools, are often criticized

for inadequately preparing teachers to be successful (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). These

opinions may indicate that Black male students who attend high poverty schools are subjected to

lesser quality educational experiences than their white male counterparts due to neighborhood

zoning, school attendance boundaries and flexible teacher licensure requirements between school

districts.

Classroom climate appears to have a profound effect on the success of students especially

Black males. A student's relationship with their teachers affects their perception of capability of

success and believing that school is important (as cited in Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010).

Also, "research has shown that students who see teachers as supportive have better attendance,

spend more time studying, have fewer behavior problems, and are more engaged in school"

(2010). Furthermore, increased social relationships can positively impact school success

specifically for minority students (2010). All in all, teachers who are better equipped to foster

positive relationships with students and guide students to create positive relationships with each

other have a profound effect on Black male success in school.

Neighborhood crime appears to play a role in Black male academic achievement. Larger

instances of criminal activity and violence in a student's neighborhood are related to more

occurrences of student behavior problems in school (2010). Additionally, "neighborhoods with

increased frequencies of abandoned buildings, drug dealing, and violent crime were associated

with fewer students' planning to finish high school and with lower grades" (2010). Because

socioeconomic status influences the neighborhoods in which students grow up which, in return,

influence the quality of education the students will receive, it is apparent that these factors are all

interconnected in inhibiting Black male graduation rates.

The Influence of Pre-School

Preschool in the United States became increasingly popular in the early 1960's as Head

Start was introduced as an intervention to combat the War on Poverty (Puma, Bell, Cook &

Heid, 2010). One important research study contributing to the success of preschool interventions

was The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project. This longitudinal study that began in 1962 and

only involved African American 3 and 4 year-old children found that students who attended an

active learning preschool program performed better on literacy and intellectual tests than

students who did not attend a preschool program (2010). Additionally, this study concluded that

the attendance of preschool for these children contributed to higher levels of schooling

completed, lower crime rates, increased economic status, improved family relationships and

better health into their 40's (2010).

A similar evaluation of longitudinal benefits of preschool, called the Abecedarian Project,

found similar results as the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project. The Abecedarian Project in the

1970's aimed to improve school readiness while also providing students' families with "referrals

to community social and health service providers" (p. 1-7, 2010). Students who participated in

this program had higher cognitive test scores through adolescence, performed better on reading

and math tests and completed more years of school than students who did not participate in this

program (2010). Though these findings bring hope to the improvement of our education system,

specifically for Black males, it is important to remember that the limitations to these studies are

that they were conducted fifty years ago and do not represent the current population of students

(2010).

It can be concluded from this study that preschool, Head Start and similar programs that

focus on early childhood learning are one of the earliest interventions to prepare Black males for

school success. It is important, then, to determine how school systems and school culture

continue to promote the success of Black male students. The following systematic review will

answer the question, "what interventions can school social workers implement to improve high

school graduation rates for Black male students?"

Methods

A systematic review is "a type of literature review in which authors systematically search

for, critically appraise, and synthesize evidence from several studies on the same topic" (Milner,

2015). A variety of journal articles have been examined from multiple databases to research the

background of why the Black males are graduating at a lower rate than their white counterparts, and social work interventions that can help to support the academic success of Black males. The research and findings from those articles will be presented in the following pages through a systematic review to seek an answer to the question, "what interventions can school social workers implement to improve high school graduation rates for Black male students?"

The search for research began by using the databases found on the University of St. Thomas library webpage. The databases searched through the University of St. Thomas website that were used for this systematic review are: Academic Search Premier, Child Development and Adolescent Studies, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson), ERIC, Family Studies Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts and SocINDEX. Within these databases, only peer-reviewed journal articles and a variety of dissertations will be included in the systematic review.

Criteria of Inclusion and Exclusion

The terms "Black male high school graduation" were included in the data search. Articles published in the last ten years, from 2006 to 2016, will be included in this systematic review. Exclusion criteria includes the term "female" and studies that include data about Black males who are enrolled in post-secondary education. Any articles that do not provide qualitative or quantitative data will also be excluded.

Research Synthesis

The original search terms of "Black male high school graduation" searched in the aforementioned databases originated 203 results. From there, articles that were more than 10 years old were discarded, narrowing the results to 94 articles found in ERIC, Academic Search Premier, Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson), SocINDEX and Child Development & Adolescent

Studies databases. From reading each of the abstracts from the 94 articles, 18 were deemed as relevant to this review. Upon further review, 6 of the articles were found to be useful for this study due to the clarity of the research presented and its pertinence to this specific study. Two qualitative studies, two quantitative studies and one mixed sample study are included in the review (Appendix A). The remaining article does not highlight the findings of a specific research study, however, it is presented as a report containing results of various research studies conducted with the intent to improve America's education system.

Findings

Research-based evidence of what is causing the phenomenon of low rates of high school graduation for Black males was scarce. However, of the existing research, there are a variety of research studies that pertain to this research study. The overarching themes within the data are: classroom climate, behavior management and discipline practices, attendance, school leadership and administration, curriculum changes and mentorship programs. Sub themes were formed under the larger themes of curriculum changes and classroom climate. Under curriculum changes, creative math and literacy curriculums were identified as sub-themes. Culturally responsive teaching practice was identified as a sub-theme under classroom climate.

School Setting

Classroom Climate. Black males must feel welcomed and valued within the school and classroom community in order to remain engaged (2013). When Black male students begin to disengage, it can lead them to miss school or skip class more often, act out behaviorally or even lead them to drop out altogether (2013). The suggestion that teacher expectations are higher for non-Black students than they are for Black students was a commonality in the research (as cited

by Lee-Currie, 2013). Low expectations can lead to student disengagement that goes on to

perpetuate the stereotype that Black males are simply unable or unwilling to learn (Welch, 2013).

Clash of culture(s) plays a large role in the climate of a classroom. Welch said it best by

stating, "if teachers are unaware or misunderstand and react to students' cultural identity, it may

lead to stereotype belief and ultimately school failure" (p. 14, 2013). White teachers may feel

intimidated or threatened by a Black male student's way of moving their body or loud

vocalization due to the stereotype that Black males are violent and hostile (2013). In a study led

by Bell (2014), Black male participants said that they felt their teachers were prejudiced against

them. Many students reported feeling like their teachers disliked them and that they did not

believe they could succeed. Students must believe that they are part of a learning environment

where their teacher believes they can succeed so that they can feel empowered to believe it

themselves (2013). Interestingly, research shows that Black males typically have the same

educational goals as white males, yet the rate of achievement of these goals is much lower

(2013)

Culturally Responsive Teaching. Culturally responsive teaching recognizes that norms

and expectations differ between cultures (Mundy, 2014). America's education system is based on

White American norms which "do not meet the needs of students who have different behavior

and cultural expectations" (as cited by Mundy, p. 40, 2014). A sense of security within the

student-teacher relationship is developed when Black culture is celebrated rather than dismissed

or unacknowledged (2014). Students may become offended when a teacher gives instructions or

shares ideas that may go against their culture norms and expectations (2014). In a qualitative

study conducted by Mundy (2014), Black male students voiced that they were able to recall

teachers who were supportive as well as teachers who were not supportive. The students

remarked that they were more engaged in school when a teacher used humor during instruction and facilitated learning in small groups (2014). Mundy (2014) supported these remarks and concluded that Black males are most successful when working in groups and suggested that teachers be culturally responsive in their manner of teaching.

Behavior Management and Disciplinary Practices. Black males are suspended at a higher rate than other groups of students. In 2007, the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey revealed that 50% of Black students had been suspended at some point in their educational career while, in contrast, only 21% of whites had been suspended during their educational career (2012). Interestingly, the particular study conducted by Fitzpatrick (2012) concluded that number of suspension days for Black male students did not directly correlate with 9th grade matriculation rates. In other words, high suspension rates were not always predictive of high school drop out. Reasoning behind these findings may be that students who are have historically been suspended more often throughout their years of schooling may be participants of intervention efforts that aim to keep students in school rather than suspend them (2012).

Classroom behavior management techniques and disciplinary responses seem to have a profound effect on Black male students. As discussed earlier, positive teacher and student relationships are predictive of school engagement for Black male students; which, in return, are predictive of high school graduation rates. Classroom management styles that were found to be ineffective for Black male students and perpetuated classroom misbehavior included: teachers yelling, using sarcasm and holding a "one-for-all" perspective (2012). Use of these tactics put students in a defensive state (2012). Students who participated in Mundy's (2014) study reported that they developed negative attitudes and feelings toward teachers who yelled as a disciplinary action. An effective form of discipline reported by one participant was using silent lunchtime as

a consequence (2014). The use of music and songs in the learning environment was determined to be a factor that deterred inappropriate behaviors (2014). Finally, participants in this study expressed that use of verbal warnings from teachers that were explicit acted as a deterrent to inappropriate behavior (2014).

Attendance. Student attendance patterns, beginning as early as 1st grade, can be predictive of whether a student will graduate from high school or not (as cited by Villavicencio, Bhattacharya & Guldry, 2013). Therefore, it is important that schools take action to improve attendance rates for student populations who are at risk. In a study of students in New York City, Black male student attendance in 1st grade is lower than that of other racial groups (with the exception of Latinos) and the pattern of below average attendance for Black students continues through 8th grade (2013). Research suggests that students who maintained average levels of attendance between 4th grade and 8th grade have a 75% rate of graduating high school. On the other hand, students who had below average attendance in 4th grade, and whose attendance did not improve in middle school, were faced with only a 25% chance of graduating high school (2013).

The patterns of correlation between attendance and high school graduation continue into high school. A study conducted by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, "determined that course attendance is eight times more predictive of course failure in the freshman year than eighth-grade test scores" (p.17, 2013). The study discovered that students who missed less than five days of school per semester were less likely to fail classes than students who achieved grade level test scores but missed more than five days of school per semester (2013).

It is clear that poor attendance can be a strong predictor of high school graduation rates. One factor that may contribute to poor attendance for Black males specifically could be that they are more likely to be suspended from school than white students (and therefore are absent from instruction) (Fitzpatrick, 2012). The relationship between school attendance rates and suspensions will be further examined in the next section.

School Leadership and Administration. Creating a single school culture, changing curriculum, improving non-academic support within the school by changing the curriculum and introducing a mentorship program can lead to improved test scores and graduation rates (2013). Effective school leadership and administration are the catalyst of change in a school setting. In a study conducted by Lee-Currie (2013), qualitative interviews were done with four high school administrators who were employed during two school years where student graduation rates increased and drop out rates decreased. The leadership team identified five obstacles getting in the way of Black male success: home life situations, lack of parental involvement, lack of motivation to complete classwork and/or homework, lack of motivation to exceed academically and lack of positive Black male role models (2013).

Curriculum Changes

Math. Curriculum changes that support and promote numeracy and literacy have an outstanding affect on high school graduation rates for Black males. For example, under a "Progressive Algebra" model implemented in the same high school in Atlanta mentioned above, math class was broken down into six-week long modules (2013). Students received credit for the course as they completed each module and were given up to three semesters to complete the full course (2013). The implementation gave students the opportunity to earn credit as they began to master specific course related skills, rather than failing a course altogether due lack mastery in all

areas (2013). The manner in which students earned credits under this model helped to keep Black

male students on track to meet graduation requirements (2013). The effectiveness of this model

can be attributed to the fact that students spent less of their time in school repeating Algebra

classes while continuing to earn credits toward graduation, which, in return, impacted dropout

rates (2013).

       Literacy. To improve literacy, the team implemented a plan that began with the creation

of "literacy homerooms" that were divided by reading skill level categorized as: "(a) above grade

level reading, (b) on grade level reading, and (c) below grade level reading" (p.77, 2013). All

teachers participated in the effort to build literacy and each taught one of the sections of students

for thirty minutes every day (2013). The teachers were active participants in strategizing and

planning for the implementation of this new model and attended professional development

meetings several times per month to create lesson plans (2013).

       Research also emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant curriculum and

conversations. Welch (2013) argues that Black males become increasingly engaged in their

education when their culture is integrated into their learning environment. Suggestions for

teachers to work to improve the inclusion of Black culture into the classroom in order to promote

student engagement include: discussion of Black history in subject matter, assigning homework

and news articles relating to current events within the community and/or about people who are

Black and validating the importance of the Black family in society (2013).

       In comparison to other racial groups, Black males are the most likely to fail English

(Fitzpatrick, 2012). The curriculum changes implemented in Lee-Currie's (2013) study for

English courses was relevant to Black male achievement as research suggests that "failure in

English is a predictive factor in failure to matriculate toward high school graduation"

(Fitzpatrick, p. 63, 2012). High school graduation rates for Black males improved during the

school years that the English curriculum changes occurred (Lee-Currie, 2013).

   Mentorship Programs. Black male students can benefit greatly from mentorship

programs. These programs allow for students to be supported by adults who come from the same

culture as them and are successful as professionals in careers other than athletes or rappers (who

are often times the only role models for Black males to emulate) (Fitzpatrick, 2012). Fitzpatrick

(2012) implied that lack of role models contribute to lower grades, poor attendance and increased

behavioral challenges. In Lee-Currie's (2013) study, which evaluated the effectiveness of school-

based mentorship programs, once recruitment of "Black male coaches, faculty and staff, as well

as community persons who were willing to serve as mentors to the males" was complete, the

focus of the program was to encourage relationship building outside of academics to aim to

alleviate additional stressors that the students were experiencing (2013). During the school years

when this model was implemented, Black male high school drop out rates decreased significantly

(Lee-Currie, 2013).

<div align="center">

Discussion

</div>

   These findings provide us with a variety of suggestions for interventions to improve the

graduation rates of Black male students. It is clear from the findings that this issue has been

identified as a large problem within the current education system and that some interventions

have proven to be effective. Social workers have a responsibility to change systems that are

unjust and do not promote equality. Micro, mezzo and macro level interventions can be

implemented in order to promote equitable education for all students.

Micro Level Interventions

The research indicates that positive relationships between teachers and students are highly correlated to better academic outcomes. School social workers can act as facilitators between teachers and students to give each party a chance to engage in courageous conversations about race and culture in school, thus strengthening the teacher-student relationship. School social workers can provide teachers with evidence-based suggestions of research-based culturally responsive teaching and behavior management techniques. Other evidence-based culturally responsive classroom activities can be provided to teachers by social workers in order to promote a safe classroom environment for all students.

Mezzo Level Interventions

These findings give insight into the importance of a common school culture. School social workers that advocate for more culturally responsive classrooms can also advocate for culturally responsive school-wide practices. Because poor behavior management techniques can have a profound effect on the academic success of Black males, school social workers can work to change these practices school-wide by advocating for restorative (rather than punitive) justice practices or requiring additional assessment of each suspension of a Black male (Mundy, 2014). Asking questions like, "does it benefit this student to be suspended and miss a full day of school, or are is there a better practice that could be implemented?" could be a step in the right direction. This review indicates that Black students respond best to explicit warnings when it comes to poor behaviors and essentially "shut down" when teachers yell. It is the role of school social workers to integrate this information into school-wide behavior practices.

School social workers should advocate for (and even facilitate) trainings for teachers and other school staff surrounding the importance of culturally responsive teaching and behavior

practices in order to promote a single school culture. It is important for Black males to feel

welcomed not only in one classroom, but the entire building. Welch (2013) mentions the

influence of teacher bias and/or prejudice against Black male students as being detrimental to the

learning environment. School social workers can facilitate conversations that engage teachers to

begin to think about ways that their prejudice may be influencing their classroom practices.

Joining school leadership committees and teams can be one catalyst in promoting school-wide

change that social workers can participate in.

Changing the math and literacy curriculum in one high school appeared to have a

profound effect on the high school graduation rates of Black males. School social workers have

the responsibility to be informed about the curriculum that is used within their schools. School

social workers can challenge curriculums in schools and work to change them if they are not

effective for students (as determined by student grades and test scores). Since teachers are also

clients of school social workers, teachers who do not believe the curriculum is effective should

be supported in finding alternative curriculum by the school social worker.

Poor attendance is an indicator of future high school drop out. School social workers are

responsible for implementing school-wide attendance intervention programs that promote

increased student attendance with particular focus on at-risk populations. To follow the theme of

positive school culture, school social workers can also implement school wide practices that

celebrate improved or perfect attendance. Incentives like small prizes, treats or an extra ten

minutes of recess may help to promote student attendance.

Mentorship programs can also help to promote attendance as well as improve behavior

for Black males. The research indicates that Black males may not have culturally similar role

models to look up to other than rappers and professional athletes. Social workers in schools can

help to coordinate community mentorship programs for students or work as leaders within the school to implement a school-based program.

Macro Level Interventions

Many of the suggested mezzo level interventions could also be implemented at a macro level; such as increased mandated trainings surrounding culturally competent teaching, changes to math and literacy curriculum and expectations and attendance interventions. Black male engagement in preschool seems to be correlated with increased cognitive functioning and test scores (Puma et. al, 2010). With this knowledge, social workers should advocate for an increase in preschool programs and work with families to enroll students in preschool.

Funding may be an issue in schools where Black male students are not succeeding. Social workers can advocate for increased funding or problem solve to change the manner in which funds are dispersed in schools and school districts. Additional funding could provide Black male students with the opportunity to have a mentor or other non-academic supports in the building that may be able to help students through other life stressors and increase Black male student's chances of graduating high school (Lee-Currie, 2013).

Teacher qualifications in high poverty schools are also an issue of concern that can be addressed on a macro level. Black male students are nearly four times more likely to attend high poverty schools (Fram, et. al, 2007) where teachers are more likely to have non-regular licenses than those in non high poverty schools (Clotfelter, 2007). Social workers can advocate for the implementation of systems that require teachers to have a minimum licensure level and/or teaching credentials.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the high rates of Black male incarceration have a considerable effect on Black male students. Rowley and Bowman (2009) correlated the absence

of a father to lower academic achievement for Black males. Social workers who are invested in

creating racially equitable education should also invest in other aspects of the lives of Black

males that directly influence their ability to achieve. Working toward reducing the rates of Black

male incarceration could be one of the first steps in creating a lasting effect on the academic

achievement of Black male students.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the biggest strengths to this study includes the variety of research designs and

varied research participants in each article. Participants included students from many age groups,

geographic locations and life experiences. Qualitative interviews in the Bell (2014) and Welch

(2013) articles added a deeper understanding of the ways in which Black students feel they are

included and excluded in school. The inclusion of administrators as research participants in the

Lee-Currie (2013) study brought a unique intervention to the forefront of the systematic review.

One of the limitations of the study was that the articles' scope of research was overall

fairly small. All studies used in this review were conducted in one school, city or region within

the United States. Another limitation to the study was that most of the examined research

focused on the way that school did not equitably support Black male students and did not take

into account other environmental factors like neighborhood crime, family of origin, poverty, etc.

Areas for Future Research

Future research studies should focus on the Black male high school graduation rates and

successful interventions to increase graduation rates across the country. Additionally, familial

communication patterns and support should be included in future research as positive familial

interactions is correlated to increased psychological well-being for Black males; which, in turn,

has an affect on their academic success (Rowley & Bowman, 2009). Finally, comparative data

and intervention techniques from other countries with higher instances of Black males graduating

high school could be helpful in deciding upon appropriate intervention strategies for schools in

America.

References

Badger, E. (2014). Housing segregation is holding back the promise of Brown v. Board of

    Education. Retrieved from

    https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/05/15/housing-segregation-is-

    holding-back-the-promise-of-brown-v-board-of-education/?utm_term=.58bafaf31460

Bell, E. E. (2010). Graduating Black Males. The Qualitative Report 2014. *19*(13), 1-10.

    Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1043551

Clotfelter, Charles T. & Ladd, Helen F. & Vigdor, Jacob L., 2007. "Teacher credentials and

    student achievement: Longitudinal analysis with student fixed effects," Economics of

    Education Review, Elsevier, vol. 26(6), pages 673-682, December.

Fitzpatrick, R. (2012). *The impact of early literacy and behavior sanctions on african-american*

    male high school students' matriculation in a selected south carolina school district (Order

    No. 3538703). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1333199651).

    Retrieved from

    http://ezproxy.stthomas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1333199651?acc

    ountid=14756

Fram, M., Miller-Cribbs, J., & Horn, L. (2007). Poverty, race, and the contexts of achievement:

    examining educational experiences of children in the U.S. South. *Social Work*, *52*(4),

    309-319. Retrieved from:http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.stthomas.edu/stable/23721151

Grogan-Kaylor, A., & Woolley, M. (2010). The social ecology of race and ethnicity

    school achievement gaps: Economic, neighborhood, school, and family factors. *Journal*

    Of Human Behavior In The Social Environment, *20*(7), 875-896.

    doi: 10.1080/10911359.2010.494927

Laczko-Kerr, I., & Berliner, D. (2002). The Effectiveness of "Teach for America" and Other

Under-certified Teachers. *education policy analysis archives, 10*, 37.

doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v10n37.2002

Lee-Currie, M. (2013). *School is your job: A case study on school leadership and black male

achievement* (Order No. 3590537). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses

Global. (1431981215). Retrieved from

http://ezproxy.stthomas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1431981215?

accountid=14756

Mandell, B. (2008). Racial Ratification and Global Warming: Truly Inconvenient Truth. *Boston

College Third World Law Journal* 28(2), 289-344.

Milner, K. (January). Systematic reviews. *Oncology Nurse Forums. 42*(1):89-93.

Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25542324

Morrissey, T. W., Hutchison, L., & Winsler, A. (2014). Family income, school attendance, and

academic achievement in elementary school. *Developmental Psychology, 50*(3), 741-753.

doi:10.1037/a0033848

Mundy, A. C. (2014). *Transitioning from elementary school to middle school: The ecology of

black males' behavior* (Order No. 3581292). Available from ProQuest Dissertations &

Theses Global. (1551595454). Retrieved from

http://ezproxy.stthomas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1551595454?acc

ountid=14756

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (2013). Retrieved from

http://www.naacp.org/issues/education/

National Association of Social Workers. (2008). *Code of ethics of the National Association of*

   Social Workers. Washington, DC. NASW Press.

National Center for Education Statistics (2016). Retrieved from

   http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coi.asp

Puma, M., Bell, S., Cook, R., Heid, C., (2010). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

   Administration for Children and Families. Head Start Impact Study. Final Report.

   Washington, DC.

Rowley, L., & Bowman, P. (2009). Risk, protection, and achievement disparities among african

   american males: Cross-generation theory, research, and comprehensive intervention. The

   Journal of Negro Education, 78(3), 305-320. Retrieved from:

   http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.stthomas.edu/stable/25608748

Vespa, J., Lewis, J. M., & Kreider, R. M. (2013, August). America's Families and Living

   Arrangements: 2012. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from

   https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-570.pdf

Villavicencio, A., Bhattacharya, D., & Guidry, B. (2013). " Moving the Needle": Exploring Key

   Levers to Boost College Readiness among Black and Latino Males in New York City.

   Report. *Research Alliance for New York City Schools* Retrieved from

   http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED543855

Welch, A. L. (2013). *The effect of poverty on the achievement of urban african american male*

   students successfully completing high school (Order No. 3588305). Available from

   ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1428148469). Retrieved from

   http://ezproxy.stthomas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1428148469?

   accountid=14756

Appendix A

Article Title & Author	Participants	Design	Data Analysis	Results	Limitations
Graduating Black Males: A Generic Qualitative Study Edward Bell (2014), *The Qualitative Report.*	15 Black males ages 18-55	Qualitative interviews Snowball sample	Qualitative analysis of interview Open-coding by themes Axial coding	Teacher prejudice Feelings of teachers and school as a whole not caring about them Internal motivation to succeed	Location limited to rural North Carolina Black male researcher (potential for bias)
School Is Your Job: A Case Study on School Leadership and Black Male Achievement Monica Lee-Currie (2013), *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.*	Four high school administrators	Qualitative Explanatory Case Study Purposive sampling	Thematic coding	Improving Black male success: Strategic planning, focus on math and literacy, goal setting, realization of need for Black male role models, thinking outside of the box, mentorship program	Results from one high school in one location No student input regarding success
"Moving the Needle": Exploring Key Levers to Boost College Readiness among Black and Latino Males in New York City Adriana Villavicencio, Dyuti Bhattacharya & Brandon Guidry (2013), *Research Alliance for New York City Schools.*	N/A	N/A	N/A	Identification of factors contributing to the academic achievement gap for Black and Latino men to inform the implementation of the Expanded Serviced Initiative	Data gathered and program initiated only in New York

The Effect of Poverty on the Achievement of Urban African American Male Students Successfully Completing High School Amy Welch (2013), *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.*	162 Black male high school students ages 14-19	Quantitative Descriptive correlational study	GPA, PLAN test scores and ACT scores to measure and compare progress	As poverty level increases, student achievement (GPA) decreases Reading scores lower than other academic scores	Results from one high school Achievement is measures only with test scores and GPA data
The impact of early literacy and behavior sanctions on African-American male high school students' matriculation in a selected South Carolina school district Raashad Fitzpatrick (2012), *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.*	2057 students of various racial and gender demographics–used as comparison data to draw conclusions about Black males specifically	Quantitative	English End of Course Exam Inferential statistics	Black males who failed the English End of Course exam were less likely to matriculate to high school graduation. Black males that did not matriculate had 3.7 more disciplinary actins against them	Findings from only one school district in South Carolina
Transitioning from Elementary School to Middle School: The Ecology of Black Males' Behavior Alma Mundy (2014), *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.*	Middle school students who attended one of the district's five elementary school 8 participants in the qualitative portion 241 total for quantitative data, 86 Black males	Sequential mixed methods: qualitative and quantitative Purposive Sampling Semi-structured interviews	ANOVA and ANCOVA (analysis of variance and analysis of covariance) Inductive coding	Black males have higher number of behavior referrals Worldview, maturity, peer influence and perception of teacher affected student behaviors	Limited sample size (qualitative interviews) Limited to one region of the U.S.