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Are You My Brother's Keeper: Challenging the Systemic Racism That Fosters Low Expectations for Black Males in Public Schools

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ARE YOU MY BROTHER'S KEEPER:

CHALLENGING THE SYSTEMIC RACISM THAT FOSTERS LOW

EXPECTATIONS FOR BLACK MALES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Education

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By:

Shana Denise Nelson

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ARE YOU MY BROTHER'S KEEPER: CHALLENGING THE SYSTEMIC RACISM THAT FOSTERS A CULTURE OF LOW EXPECTATIONS FOR BLACK MALES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Abstract

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By

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Dissertation supervised by Dr. Rick McCown

This dissertation in practice investigates the problem of systemic racism fostering a culture of low expectations for Black males in public schools. This work frames this problem as a matter of social justice and utilizes Critical Race Theory to examine how it robs Black males of their academic potential. It utilizes improvement science to introduce change into a real school setting and details the challenges and successes of one school as they engaged in the journey of transformation. This work argues that to address this problem, educators must engage in learning opportunities that help to identify and challenge their race-based assumptions and stereotypes, develop their racial consciousness, cultural competencies, and professional practices, and recognize, interrupt, and address systemic racism. It details the designs for action, professional development and school structures that were created in the context of school-wide equity efforts. Provided is a working agenda that offers recommendations for how to implement designs for action at a district level that will build networked improvement communities to work toward the improvement of the quality of education offered to Black males.

Dedication

To the five generations who have loved, strengthened, and supported me

My Late Great Grandmother
Ethel Jones

My Late Grandparents
Bernice & Andrew Johnson

My Mother
Paula Denise Nelson

My Brothers
Ramon & Damon Nelson

My Nephew
Damon Nelson Jr.

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Introduction to a Problem

Regardless of socio-economic or geographic background, males of color disproportionately face challenges and obstacles to academic success. In response to the disproportionate challenges and threats to academic potential faced by Black and Hispanic males in the U.S., on Feb. 27, 2014, President Barack Obama signed a presidential memorandum establishing the My Brother's Keeper Task Force. This White House Initiative is designed to take a multi-disciplinary approach to determine which public and private sector efforts are working successfully to support males of color and to help build ladders of opportunity to aide in unblocking their full potential (Obama, 2014). While there is a wide body of research describing the need for such an initiative, little empirical attention has been directed toward understanding how systemic racism hinders student academic potential at the school-level. In addition, there is a lack of research regarding the specific role educational leaders play in developing designs for improvement or ladders of opportunity to support and empower boys and young men of color.

A Necessary Journey

Following the recent call to action from President Obama, a sense of urgency has been ignited to focus on supporting the academic potential of males of color. Considering the dismal state of the education of males of color, educators, educational researchers, and policy makers have a responsibility to immediately address and interrupt the role systemic racism plays in robbing these students of their academic potential. Systemic racism, defined briefly here and expounded upon in Part I, is the racialized exploitation and subordination of people of color by the dominant group. It encompasses

the racial stereotyping, prejudices, and emotions of Whites, as well as the discriminatory practices and racialized institutions engineered to produce the long-term domination of people of color (Feagin & Barnett, 2005). Nationwide, across schools and even within the same classrooms, systemic racism acts to ensure male students of color are not receiving the same quality of education as other student groups. They are experiencing lower expectations in classrooms and ultimately being robbed of opportunities to learn. Black male students suffer most from the effects of systemic racism as their academic achievement continues to lag behind that of their peers of all races and genders. This is undoubtedly evidenced in reading as Black males are the lowest performing student group, with 86% reading below proficiency level by fourth grade according to Fact Sheet Opportunity for All: President Obama Launches My Brother's Keeper Initiative to Build Ladders of Opportunity For Boys and Young Men of Color (2014). This is a matter of social justice as the enactment of racial power is utilized to create inequitable access to a quality education for a specific group. Advocacy and action are necessary, and without interruption, schools will continue to reproduce the gross racial inequities that currently exist in society.

Road Map: DiP as the GPS (Dissertation in Practice as the Global Positioning System)

Through the investigation of a problem of practice, this research contributes to the current understanding of the role systemic racism plays in the schooling of Black males. Further, this work serves as an educational leader's working agenda to address that problem through improvement science. This investigation is conducted in the form of a dissertation of practice. According to Duquesne University's Professional Doctorate in Educational Leadership's (ProDEL) Dissertation in Practice Guidelines (2012), "A

dissertation in practice is scholarship focused by a lens of social justice on a problem of practice that is addressed by a design for action that yields generative impacts on the practice of educational leadership the aims of educational improvement" (p. 4). Structurally, this DiP is organized in three main parts: Part I-Problem of Practice, Part II-Design for Action, and Part III-Generative Impacts. In Part I- Problem of Practice, systemic racism creating a culture of low expectations for Black males is identified as the problem of practice or driver. This problem is investigated as a matter of social justice as it challenges a current social injustice regarding Black males and confronts the power structures that produce this inequity. Through a comprehensive review of relevant literature on race, racism, and critical race theory, and through engagement in the process of systematic and intentional inquiry, a thorough understanding of the problem of practice that steers this work is derived. In Part II- Designs for Action, the following research approaches are used to create a series of designs for action to address the problem of practice: scholarship of teaching and learning, design-based research, and improvement science. More specifically, this section offers several mini-designs that engage schools and central office professionals in a localized context to engage in significant learning. The learning designs require practitioners to

- engage in opportunities that help to identify and challenge their race-based assumptions and stereotypes;
- develop their racial consciousness, cultural competencies, and professional practices; and
- recognize, interrupt, and address systemic racism.

In Part III- Generative Impacts, this work argues that through this significant learning created by the designs for action a school system will be supported to develop networked improvement communities, improve the capacity of the system to address the problem of systemic racism creating a culture of low expectations for Black males, and increase the systemic capacity to address other problems of practice. Based on the designs for action, the anticipated generative impacts that this work will foster and the agenda that it creates are discussed. Evidence from local implementation efforts in the Pittsburgh Public Schools are shared and other broader impacts are projected. Generative impacts are discussed as they relate to the three categories for the aims of education declared by the Carnegie Foundation which include, (a) engaging education for all students, (b) effective in advancing learning, and (c) efficient in its use of resources (Bryk, 2012). While this offers the overarching structure of this work, each section will begin with an introduction that offers a more detailed roadmap to orient the reader to its organization and goal. Finally, this dissertation in practice concludes with a charge to move this work from discourse to duty. The major arguments are revisited and implications for future work are discussed.

Scholarship: A Vehicle of Argument

This dissertation in practice uses the vehicle of scholarly argument to explore and foster an understanding of how systemic racism creates and perpetuates a culture of low expectations for Black males in public school settings. According to McCown, Moss, Generett, and Miller (2010), sound arguments are in fact scholarly. Through argument, this dissertation in practice demonstrates scholarship by: (a) communicating the sharing of significant learning in a public manner, (b) inviting others to engage in critical review,

and (c) allowing others to build upon the shared learning (ProDEL, 2012). Scholarly argument is also chosen for the presentation of this work based on the thoroughness and clarity with which it helps to organize information to inform the reader. The arguments in this work remain sound by consisting of claims, reasons, and evidence as defined by Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2008). The principle claim of this work is the problem of practice; systemic racism creates and perpetuates a culture of low expectations for Black male students in public schools. The reasons and evidence offered to support this claim are derived from academic research and the experiences of practitioners in the field of education. In addition, the reasons and evidence offer various perspectives from across the boundaries of schools, the academy, and the community to support the development of a more critical understanding of the problem. Finally, scholarly argument is offered as a way to argue compellingly in accordance with the criteria for the Dissertation in Practice Guidelines (ProDEL, 2012).

Passion: Fueled by Social Justice

While argument serves as the vehicle with which this work is carried, social justice acts as the fuel by which it is propelled. A goal of this work is to transform the practice of educational leadership and to do so as a matter of social justice, therefore, the examination of the role of the educational leader is essential. Within this work, there is no one definitive definition of social justice, instead, it recognizes and builds upon many definitions while proposing a generalized theme. It displays understanding of John Rawls (1971) work in which his focus is to assure the protection of equal access to liberties, rights, and opportunities while also advantaging the least advantaged in society. It acknowledges the more recent work of David Miller (2003), that takes context and

circumstances into play as it examines the distribution of advantage and disadvantage in society. This work accepts the guiding theme of social justice put forth in the Dissertation in Practice Guidelines (2012) stating, "Social justice, broadly defined, refers to a condition whereby all people are afforded fair opportunities to enjoy the benefits of society". While this is one generalized statement of the theme of social justice, it succinctly summarizes the lens of social justice that guides this work. This work views the current state of education for Black males as a social inequity that directly threatens this notion of social justice. This research discusses definitions and explanations of the concepts of race and racism. It employs Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework to guide the exploration of this problem of practice claim as a matter of social justice. The advocacy nature of this theory is used to compel readers to move from argument to action by joining with those who passionately work to improve the state of education for Black males in public schools in America.

Pittsburgh: A Starting Point for the Journey

An interesting location to examine how systemic racism lowers expectations and robs Black males of their academic potential and the role of an educational leader in creating designs for improvement is Pittsburgh, PA. Pittsburgh is a city that was voted by Forbes magazine as America's most livable city and within six months was also reported as leading the nation in Black poverty (US Census Bureau, 2010 and Levy, 2010). Pittsburgh is considered a highly segregated city and referenced as highly racist by many inhabitants of color (Baird-Remba & Lubin, 2013). According to the 2010 census, 64.8% of the population is White, 25.8% is Black, 0.2% is American Indian or Alaskan Native, 4.4% is Asian, 0.3% is other, and 2.3% is mixed. It is often referred to as a Black or

White city and little recognition is given to residents of other races based on their relative population sizes. The city's school district, Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), serves 25,906 students, 54% of which are African American, 34% of which are White, and 13% of which are classified as other races. The district's data reflects clear racial disparities in achievement, graduation, suspensions, and special education identification. In 1992, the district had a claim filed against it with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) by the Advocates for African American Students regarding the treatment of African-American students (PPS, 2014). In 2006, the parties reached a Conciliation Agreement that included 94 action steps addressing how the District could reduce racial achievement disparities, provide instructional support, and create an environment of equity for its African-American students. Today, eliminating racial disparities is noted as a district priority, the district receives over four million dollars in funding to support efforts around equity, teacher evaluation involves a component around implementing lessons equitably, and school leaders participate in training for leadership for racial equity. In addition, PPS in collaboration with the business and philanthropic community, has started the We Promise Program, a mentoring program for Black males, focused on empowering students to take ownership of their college and/or career readiness goals in order to successfully transition from high school to college and/or full time employment. However, despite these efforts at incremental change, inequities persist and Black males remain the largest and lowest performing student group in the district. These factors make PPS an attractive setting for the study of how systemic racism lowers expectations and robs Black males of their academic potential and how school leaders can utilize improvement science to try to make improvements for Black males. Further, PPS is

selected for study as I have a personal and professional investment in the district. It is the district that I attended for my K-12 schooling. It is the organization that has employed me as an educator for the last 10 years. It encompasses many schools that my family members currently attend. It is the place I choose to offer my service to work for improvement.

Part I: The Problem of Practice

This section, Part I: The Problem of Practice, is aimed at deeply understanding the nature of the problem systemic racism creates and perpetuates a culture of low expectations for Black males in public schools. The goal of this section is to use data, research, theory, experience, and argument to develop a well-understood problem. Within part one, there are three sections: Narrative, Naming, and Framing. In Narrative, my personal account is shared to connect my background and experiences to the identification of the problem of practice and acknowledge biases I bring to the investigation of this problem. The second section, Naming, argues that the problem of practice identified is (a) a high-leverage problem likely to yield educational improvement, (b) defined through the process of systematic and intentional inquiry, (c) informed by critical review of data and perspectives across the boundaries of school, academy, and community, and (d) informed by critical review of data through multi-disciplinary lenses. The third section, Framing, frames this problem of practice arguing that it (a) is informed by critical social theories and epistemological frameworks, (b) is situated in relation to institutional networks of power, (c) recognizes inequitable structures of power between dominant and subordinate communities, and (d) addresses one or more cultural dimensions of power. Throughout this work, examples from the

Pittsburgh Public Schools will be used to illustrate or render an account of the problem of practice. Part I concludes with a case study illustrating the problem in the context of the Pittsburgh Promise Scholarship.

Narrative

"Counter-story telling developed as both a method of telling the story of those experiences that have not been told (that is, those on the margins of society), and as a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story is a natural part of the dominant discourse—the majoritarian story (Love, 2004, p. 232).

While my story is not one of a Black male, my experiences, passion, and pain compel me to this work. I've often heard the saying, 'We see and understand things not as they are but as we are.' I interpret this to mean that we bring to our understanding of the world all of our background knowledge, previous experiences, beliefs about the world, and personal values developed through our lifetimes. This creates biases as we seek to conduct research to better understand the world we live in. Bias in this sense is not necessarily negative as it allows learners to glean from people with different perspectives as new knowledge is socially constructed. The danger or risk run with bias is in the failure of researchers to acknowledge its existence in their work perpetuating a falsified sense of objectivity. Furthermore, the risk is heightened when one perspective is normalized, traditionally that of the dominant White culture, and the unique perspectives of people of color are marginalized. I acknowledge this notion so that I may bring to surface how my own personal biases impact how I proceed with the name and frame of what I perceive to be a problem of practice. A heightened awareness to my own biases will position me to seek out perspectives that differ from my own to gain a deeper understanding of my identified problem. I also acknowledge that my narrative shapes this

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problem in a manner that challenges the dominant narrative on the education of Black males.

As a Black woman, my personal experiences with public schools, specifically the Pittsburgh Public Schools, have influenced my beliefs about the intersection of race and schooling. My school experience was influenced by *racism*, a term that will be discussed with greater detail later but is defined here as an inequitable structure of power that advantages Whites over other races. Racism in its various permutations, *institutionalized*, the structural factors that protect the interests of Whites at the expense of other racial groups, *internalized*, my personal acceptance of dominant White racist views, and *personally-mediated*, the racist acts and beliefs of individuals, were present throughout my education. Each type of racism is illustrated here in my narrative and revisited with further detail in a later section of Part I.

My school-based racial autobiography starts in the second grade when I was labeled as gifted. As a child, that one word on my record opened up a different educational path for me. Having that label in elementary school meant I boarded a bus each week to travel to the gifted center for project based and experiential learning opportunities. That label meant that in my classes, I was to be challenged, pushed, and my learning was enriched in the name of differentiation. I was to be given choice in my assignments, provided opportunities to self-manage in the classroom, and exposed to 'best practices'. In middle school, the label provided me with fewer students in my classes, access to algebra, and a higher degree of preparation for grades 9-12. In high school it meant I had the smallest class sizes, was assigned the stronger teachers in the school, was granted admittance into AP level courses, and placed on the trajectory to

college. Having this label placed on me at the age of seven shaped what my teachers perceived my potential to be and their expectations for me every year thereafter. Further, based on their beliefs it shaped how they interacted with me in the classroom, providing me with a more rigorous education than I would've received without the label. My teachers believed I had potential and expected me to maximize it, which directly impacted my level of achievement. I recognize how I benefitted greatly from having that label and the perceptions it created for others about me. It is only now that I look back that I am also able to understand how much I suffered from it as well and the damage it did to the perception I held of myself.

As a gifted student in Pittsburgh Public Schools, I was often the only Black face in 'White space'. Each year I processed my presence in a seat of privilege and questioned whether or not I belonged and why I was separated from those who looked most like me. I felt isolated from my Black peers and never fully accepted by my White ones. My White friends told me I was somehow different than the other Black students and I interpreted that as a painful insulting compliment. In school, I shuddered when the topic of race arose for fear of having my Blackness magnified. I wasn't comfortable exposing that my perspective was different than the others in the room and at times thought it meant my perspective must be wrong. In my young mind, I could never ask for help. I felt that if I struggled or faulted on anything, it somehow confirmed negative stereotypes people held about Black students. These thoughts choked me to silence in the classroom.

Based on my label, I moved through school with more privilege than most Black students but not as much as any White student. The treatment and expectations I would have received for the descriptors of being young and Black were mitigated only because I

was labeled young, gifted, and Black. I was treated differently by teachers, was misled into thinking I was smarter than others and entitled to more, and was encouraged to hold onto this factor of Whiteness as if it were property (Bell, 2004). Even then, I knew this was wrong but I didn't have the words to express why. I wonder if I had the words back then, would I have risked forfeiting the benefits I reaped. I know now that I was experiencing the weight of systemic racism throughout my schooling. The weight of institutionalized racism being so heavy it became internalized.

Years later, I am now a principal in the same PPS district in which I attended school. I have a clear understanding that my experience isn't a unique one, and in fact, my two older brothers have stories that parallel mine and pain my heart. Systemic racism is the way we did school in Pittsburgh. As a school leader, I am aware that I now control aspects of the system that create similar and worse experiences for students. I am also conscious of the damage the system does to the academic potential of the students with the greatest level of need in my care. In my work as a principal today, I fight to protect the hearts and minds of the students I serve and work to guard and nurture their academic potential. This compels me to wrestle with the question, *what is the specific role of the school leader in addressing the systemic racism that robs Black males of academic potential?*

Naming

The way in which conversations about racial achievement disparities are named and framed is important, as often the name and frame of a problem point to who holds power and what one thinks the solution to the problem should be. This "Naming" section, works to develop a thorough understanding of the data, key terms, and perspectives, that

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lay the foundation for the claim systemic racism creates and perpetuates a culture of low expectations for Black males in public schools.

Named as a high leverage problem. The claim that systemic racism creates and perpetuates a culture of low expectations for Black males in public schools is named as a high leverage problem for several reasons warranting the engagement of schools, institutions of higher education, and the community. One reason this is considered a high leverage problem is the breadth, scope, and longevity of this crisis. The exclusion from education during slavery (1619-1865), the segregated and unequal provision of education after slavery (1896-1950), and the current miseducation occurring in schools (1950-Present) lay the foundation for inequities in expectations and racial disparities in achievement. For over 50 years scholars and practitioners have focused on addressing the problem of the racial achievement gap. Despite genuine scholarly efforts, no substantial progress has been made and generations of Black males have suffered educationally. While in schools, Black males continue to be subjected to mistreatment and are held to lower standards as they are more frequently suspended, retained, referred for special education, labeled as emotionally disturbed, and kept out of enrichment programs and academically challenging classes (Noguera, 2008). Educators persist in failing the majority of Black male students as according to Steele (1992), the longer Black males stay in school the more they fall behind. Dropping out becomes the choice for many, as national statistics show only 47% of African American males are graduating from high school (Schott, 2010). This problem is not localized, as Schott (2010) reports in 33 states, Black males are the least likely to graduate from high school compared to all other racial

or gender groups. This issue directly impacts a large portion of the population and indirectly impacts the rest.

A second reason this is a high leverage problem is the impact it has on Black males in life beyond the classroom. In a country where the saying 'the more you learn the more you earn' is a stark reality, a failure to effectively educate Black males at high levels and hold them accountable to high expectations sets this group up for a multitude of difficulties in life, including condemning them to a lifetime of below average earnings (Schott, 2010). In examining a variety of quality of life indicators, Black males are consistently reflected in the negative statistics. According to Noguera (2008), recent statistics on Black males reveal the following:

> They lead the nation in homicides, as both victims and perpetrators, and…now have the fastest growing rate for suicide. For the past several years, Black males have been contracting HIV and AIDS at a faster rate than any other segment of the population, and their incarceration, conviction, and arrest rates have been at the top of the charts in most states for some time…In the labor market, they are the least likely to be hired and, in many cities, the most likely to be unemployed. (p. 17)

Clearly, troublesome school experiences for many African American males limit future life opportunities. Conversely then, a successful focus on improving the education provided to Black males may offer leverage for improving the quality of their lives and help to make progress toward a more equitable society.

A third reason this is a high leverage problem is the systemic nature of the racism that robs Black male students of opportunities to reach their fullest potentials. It manifests

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as the laws, rules, policies, and processes that act as power to protect the interests of a dominant racial group at the expense of others (Singleton & Linton, 2006). It is the "differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race. It is structural, having been codified in our institutions of custom, practice, and law, so there need not be an identifiable perpetrator" (Jones, 2000, p.1212). The racism present in schools impacts Black male students through many areas, including but not limited to, hiring and staffing policies, class placements, academic instruction, curriculum, teacher-student relationships, exposure to quality early-learning opportunities, standardized assessments, disciplinary practices, and school climate. It is not a problem that is mediated between a few individuals and a group of students. Instead it is a problem embedded in our schools' structures, policies, operations, employees and values. It is enacted consciously and unconsciously to withhold quality learning and resultantly wealth and power from a particular group of people. It is the same systemic racism negatively impacting other institutions. However, it is in schools where this form of oppression is first being taught and learned by our next generation.

  Named through systematic and intentional inquiry. Clearly, this problem of practice is a high-leverage problem that warrants the intervention of schools, the academy, and the community. It has warranted investment by the government as mandated by President Obama's My Brother's Keeper Initiative. The process of systematic and intentional inquiry has secured my personal and professional investment in this problem of practice.

  In the book, *The Reflective Educator's Guide to Classroom Research (2008),*

Teacher inquiry is defined as systematic, intentional study of one's own

professional practice. Inquiring professionals seek out change by reflecting on

their practice. They do this by posing questions or 'wonderings,' collecting data to

gain insights into their wonderings, analyzing the data along with reading relevant

literature, making changes in practice based on new understandings developed

during inquiry, and sharing findings with others. (p. 6)

As a principal, this process of systematic and intentional inquiry is also beneficial for

supporting reflection and growth in professional practice. For me, the process of

systematic and intentional inquiry began with observations and a wondering that

continued years into my career as it helped to shape my professional agenda. In my daily

practice as a new principal at a predominately African American school, I observed Black

males being referred to my office for discipline concerns more frequently than any other

student group. I also reflected that most of the suspension letters that I signed were for

Black males. These observations were frustrating, as I understood the connection

between suspensions from school and missed opportunities to learn. I reflected on what

suspensions meant for struggling students, as each day they weren't in their classrooms

learning was another day they fell further behind. This led me to wonder why these

patterns were occurring. I began to ask questions to myself first and then to others to gain

multiple perspectives. I reflected on the additional patterns noted with my Black male

students. I reflected that during classroom instructional observations, I would commonly

see Black males with their heads down, positioned in the rear of the room away from

their peers, and/or disengaged from instruction. I noticed common themes in which Black

male students walked out of classes, verbally expressed their dislike for school, and

refused to do work. The observations and wonderings led to the search for additional

data. I recall one of my professors, Dr. Rick McCown, suggesting that I begin to count

things. Informally, I began to count. On my way from one classroom to the next, I'd

count how many Black males I saw in the hallways. I'd count how many Black male

students had their heads down in a particular classroom during a lesson. I counted how

many times Black male students responded, 'I don't know' and were allowed to opt out

of trying in a classroom. I didn't make charts and graphs of my findings but I anecdotally

took note, which for me validated this problem as real and more than just my perception.

It fueled me to reflect more and ask additional questions.

While observing, wondering, counting, and questioning, I also began to review

concrete school data with a lens on the school experiences of Black males. I learned that

during the 2011-12 school year, 77% of the suspensions at my school, Pittsburgh King,

were for male students, compared to 23% being for females. This was alarming

considering only 51% of the school population was male. The data forced me to examine

the school processes, school culture, and my role in creating this disparity. This analysis,

reflection, and desire to improve are parts of an on-going learning process that

continually refines my practice as an administrator. During the 2012-13 school year,

improvement was made in that there was a 29% decrease in the total number of school

suspensions. Of the suspensions that year, 64% were for males compared to 36% being

for females. While an unacceptable disparity remained, growth was being made and a

continued analysis of the data should assist in targeting further improvement efforts.

Further data analysis showed other distinct patterns such as (a) African American

male students in my school are likely to achieve at lower rates on standardized tests than

any other student group, (b) African American males have a greater likelihood of having a failing grade point average or failing a grade level in comparison to all other student groups, (c) African American male students are over represented in the special education program, and (d) African American males are not at all represented in the gifted education program. According to all indicators of school success, other student groups consistently outperform African American male students at my school. According to my school's student perception data, my African American male students are also the student group least satisfied with their school experience and the group that feels most disconnected and least supported and/or challenged from their teachers. My Black male students are also the student group that self-assesses the highest in hiding academic effort. In addition to school-based data, I also examined district and national data regarding the achievement of Black males. My data review confirmed that the narrative of my school was consistent with the national narrative in regards to our failure to effectively educate Black male students at high levels. Further, a review of the associated literature told the story of what I observed and practiced each day as if my school was the population of study for every article and book written about the ineffective schooling of Black males.

In the on-going exploration of this problem, there was an intentional resistance of the normalized belief that these patterns spoke to student abilities. These patterns told nothing about the abilities of Black male students, but instead provided a wealth of information to explore concerning the low expectations we as educators were holding them to. They spoke nothing of students' potentials to learn, but said much of our failure as a school and as an educational system to effectively educate Black males and

capitalize on their limitless potential. These patterns pointed me toward a high leverage problem. Most importantly these patterns caused me to ask more questions and challenge the assumptions that are made regarding Black male students.

Some of the questions I posed and continued to grapple with to guide this investigation included:

1. In what ways does systemic racism permeate schools causing inequitable access to quality teaching and learning experiences for Black males?

2. How do Black male students experience systemic racism in school?

3. What is the role of the school leaders in creating designs for improvement to address the problem of systemic racism creating a culture of low expectations for Black male students?

4. How do teachers' beliefs concerning students' abilities influence teachers' behavior?

In addressing these questions through my working professional agenda, my goal is to reveal and challenge the assumptions that are uncovered in these areas. Through developing a greater understanding of racism in schools, I hope to equip educators to interrupt systemic racism and provide a higher quality of education for Black males.

Named through multiple perspectives. A critical review of data from the school, academy, and community is utilized to inform this discussion regarding systemic racism creating and perpetuating a culture of low expectations for Black males. Through analyzing the problem from these three particular perspectives, there is hope to gain a

better understanding of the problem and learn how to engage stakeholders from each arena in addressing the problem through designs for improvement.

National school achievement data demonstrates similar racially predictable patterns in public schools across America (Noguera, 2008). These patterns point to the failure of our nations' school systems, particularly with Black males. As the number of students of color continues to increase in our public schools, this has become of greater concern for our country (Delpit, 2006). The failure of schools to effectively educate Black males has become one of the most-commonly talked about challenges in the field of education. The issue of racial achievement disparities, however, reaches far beyond the scope of K-12 schools.

Higher education is challenged by the same problem of practice from a different angle. Institutions of higher education struggle to increase the representation of Black males on college campuses considering the alarmingly low number who graduate from high school and are eligible. According to the 2000 Census, only 18% of Black males ages 20-21 were enrolled in college (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). One has to question the design of the systems in place that work to produce such an alarming result. For the small number of Black males making it to college, the problems faced in K-12 schools do not go away. Steele (1992) tells us "70 percent of all Black students who enroll in four-year colleges drop out at some point" (para. 1). He further explains that low grade point averages make it difficult for many Black male college graduates to pursue graduate level work. The pursuit of graduate degrees becomes even more difficult in light of the following data shared in *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2006),

On all of the standardized tests for admission to graduate and professional

schools, the racial scoring gap is large and in many cases wider than the gap

between Blacks and Whites on the ACT and SAT standardized tests for

undergraduate admissions. In all cases the gap on these graduate admissions tests

has remained unchanged or widened in recent years. (para. 1)

Even in pursuit of higher levels of education, Black males face the same inequitable

opportunities that result in low enrollment numbers, high dropout rates, low-test scores,

and academic failure.

Another concern the academy must consider with regard to this problem of

practice is how to prepare educators to effectively engage, teach, and build relationships

with Black male students. Feistritzer (2011) highlights the demographic reality of the

teacher workforce in America, in noting that 86% of teachers are female, 14% are male,

84% are white, and only 16% represent teachers of color. In Pennsylvania, the White

female domination of the field is even greater in that 97% of the teacher workforce is

White, 2% is Black, and 1% is noted as Other (Boser, 2011). Based on these

demographics, the majority of Black males are taught by the group they have the least in

common with along the lines of race and gender. Teachers must be prepared to teach in

culturally relevant ways as described by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1992) and Geneva Gay

(2000).

A review of data from the community outside of the field of education helps to

further inform this problem of practice and to highlight the need for community

involvement. Data suggests, that for each student the U.S. fails to educate, there is a

financial cost to the individual and to taxpayers that is estimated to run into the hundreds

of thousands of dollars (Darling-Hammond, 2010). It also suggests, "dropouts cost the country $200 billion a year in lost wages and taxes, cost for social services, and crime" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 25). The cost to the community is great and often increased when Black males failing to receive a quality education end up in jail, trapped in the school to prison pipeline. According to the Mauer and King (2004), "One of every 21 adult Black men is incarcerated on any given day. For Black men in their late twenties, the figure is one in eight…Given current trends, one of every three (32%) black males born today can expect to go to prison in his lifetime" (p. 122). If there is any doubt whether incarceration rates have anything to do with a lack of quality education for Black males, the correlation should be made clear in recognizing "most U.S. prison inmates are high school dropouts, and many are functionally illiterate and have learning disabilities" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 24). There is a cost to the community for failing to effectively educate Black males and Darling-Hammond (2010) warns of it in stating, "The strong relationship between under-education, unemployment, and incarceration creates a vicious cycle, as lack of adequate investment in education increases the need for prisons, which now compete with funding available for education" (p. 24). It can be stated that by failing Black males, we are unable to reach our full potential as a nation.

Named by multiple disciplines. The challenges and threats facing Black males are extensive and multi-dimensional. While several data points have been articulated from the broad lenses of schools, the academy, and the community to gain a critical understanding it is also necessary to review this problem and relevant data from a multi-disciplinary approach. Here, it is acknowledged that this problem has influential factors and implications in the fields of sociology, law, and economics.

From a social science perspective, it is impossible to address racial achievement disparities without addressing the role race and consequently racism plays in the equation. Extensive research has shown that factors such as family income level, language barriers, and mobility are important when examining achievement disparities (PEG, Nov. 2011). However, none of those factors trump race as being more independently correlated with academic performance. In looking at family income level across all income levels, Black students are consistently outperformed by all other racial groups (PEG, Nov. 2011). Black students from families with higher levels of income are outperformed by non-Black students from families with lower levels of income (PEG, Nov. 2011). While the general trend is that with greater income comes greater academic achievement, greater income does not eliminate the racial predictability in achievement data. This suggests that the role race plays in education is worthy of examination. The fact that one race correlates with academic achievement while another correlates with academic failure calls one to question the role racism is playing in producing such patterns. Recognizing schools are designed to produce the results they are currently getting, leads one to question, *In what ways does systemic racism permeate schools causing inequitable access to quality teaching and learning experiences for Black males?*

Researchers offer different interpretations of how racism plays out in school settings. According to sociologist Pedro A. Noguera (2008), "…we have very deeply embedded stereotypes that connect racial identity to academic ability…These kinds of stereotypes affect both teachers' expectations of students and students' expectations of themselves" (p. 10). Noguera simplifies the stereotypes and calls out the existing belief

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that if a student is White he/she will do better than if a student is Black (2008). Mitchell and Stewart (2011) support this argument pointing out the following,

> The unique social and cultural position historically occupied by African Americans in the United States is replete with racial and stereotypical assumptions about their humanity and potential. They also contend that functioning in environments where they are perceived to be devalued and diminished negatively affects African American students' social identity, self-esteem, and academic performance. (p. 5)

Low expectations for Black males held by teachers and internalized by students have been shown to negatively impact student performance (Mitchell & Stewart, 2011). This research highlight a need to look further into the question, *how do teachers' beliefs concerning students' abilities influence teachers' behavior?*

From a legal perspective, one might argue no reform has brought to light the racial inequities in education more than the federal No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB). As school systems nationwide raced to have all students proficient by 2014, academic disparities between Black students and other student groups became a focus. Black students lagged behind their peers in a various measures of academic achievement, and the law acknowledged it. Black male students were last in this race. Years after implementation and revisions to NCLB, data would suggest that the achievement gap has not significantly narrowed rendering the law unsuccessful, and leaving Black males the furthest from the finish line (Schott, 2010).

At one point in time, NCLB also required schools to examine more closely whether or not they were ensuring all students had equitable access to highly qualified

teachers in accordance with the law. According to Darling-Hammond (2010), "By every measure of qualifications—certification, subject matter background, pedagogical training, selectivity of college attended, test scores, or experience—less qualified teachers are found in schools serving greater numbers of low-income and minority students" (p. 43). Ladson Billings also suggests that by routinely assigning minority students to high quality teachers, the achievement gap would be reduced. Upon examining why this seemingly simple solution fails to occur, one would find structural barriers created by systemic racism present. These structural barriers such as inequitable funding, antiquated human resource policies, and discriminatory hiring practices act to disadvantage Black male students by lowering the quality of their education and denying them equitable access to quality teachers.

The law is also a lens through which advocates for Black students have looked through to push for systemic change. For example, in 1992, the Advocates for African-American Students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, a grass-roots community group led by the late Dr. Barbara A. Sizemore, filed a complaint with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission against the Board of Public Education of the School District of Pittsburgh. In the complaint the advocates alleged that PPS practiced discrimination in the following ways:

- Hiring as Superintendent a White candidate who was less qualified than an African American candidate who had applied for the position,
- Suspending and disciplining African-American students at a higher rate than White students,
- Distributing class grades disproportionately,

- Maintaining a large academic achievement gap between African American students and White students,

- Excluding African American students from certain special programs and projects such as the Gifted and/or Scholars programs because of their race.

As a result of this complaint, a conciliation agreement was written itemizing 94 issues of concern that PPS must address to work toward racial equity in the district. The conciliation agreement is still in place in 2014, twenty-two years later, as are the racial achievement disparities among the students the district services. Complaints of this nature and lawsuits have the potential to become more common as the same issues identified in 1992 persist in school districts across the country perpetuating a standard of low quality education for Black male students. This calls into further question, *how do Black male students experience systemic racism in school?*

If this problem of systemic racism creating and perpetuating low expectations for Black males is addressed it has the power to yield great educational improvements. According to Dr. John H. Jackson, President and CEO of the Schott Foundation, "Research shows that, from one generation to the next, equitable access to high performing public educational systems can break down the barriers to success and change the future trajectory of historically disadvantaged students" (Schott, 2010, p. 1). This can be done, as evidenced by a small number of schools that have successfully educated Black males at high levels such as Urban Prep Academy for Young Men in Chicago (Urban Prep, 2011). Through addressing racism in schools we will be able to provide more equitable access to quality learning opportunities for Black males. In improving the education for Black male students we directly improve the potential for their quality of

life. Through transforming the educational system to better serve students of color and promote high expectations, we will ensure more equitable schools and progress toward a more equitable society.

The improvement of schooling for Black males and an increase in the number of Black males obtaining higher education would have benefits that reach across all color lines in our population. According to the RAND Corporation (2009), all tax payers benefit in the following ways when students attain higher education: (a) more highly educated people contribute more in taxes, (b) those with more education draw less from social support programs, (c) more highly educated people are less likely to incur incarceration costs, and (d) raising students' level of education yields net benefits to the public budget.

The study of the racial achievement disparities has taken several approaches, many of which utilize a White-culture deficit model as a frame and seek to name something about students of color, genetics, socio-economic status, culture, and/or the environment, which inhibits them from finding success in academic settings (D'Souza, 1995, Delpit, 2006). This analysis places the blame for failure on students of color and calls upon educators to 'fix students' so that they can be better served by a system that was never built to serve them. Fewer researchers have chosen to examine the racial achievement gap through studying the systemic racism present in school systems and how it acts to lower expectations and rob students of color of their academic potential (Solorzano, 1997, King, Houston, & Middleton, 2001). The latter naming of the problem seeks to avoid further victimization of students of color by not blaming them for a lack of success in a system that is designed for them to fail. Instead, it decenters Whiteness and

calls on educators to examine how systemic racism creates and perpetuates educational disparities seeking to 'fix the system' to better serve students of color. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) discussed a similar notion as she challenged the U.S. to shift from the term achievement gap to the use of a more appropriate and telling term, the education debt. She argued that there is a historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral debt that is owed in our country and these debts have created disparities in achievement between different groups.

Framing

This research is a qualitative study of the conditions of low expectations that systemic racism creates for Black males in public schools. This work is grounded in bodies of literature that support race and racism as social concepts and those that endorse a critical examination of the realities that result from the construction and function of race and racism in America. A common understanding of the epistemological frameworks and critical social theories that inform this problem of practice are central to the understanding of this research. This section illuminates how the literature base frames this study. The terms *race* and *racism* are defined as they support the use of a Critical Race Theory lens in education and the understanding of the current context in which the study occurs. Critical Race Theory is then explained and positioned as a functional and appropriate theory in which to situate this problem. The relationship between Critical Race Theory and education is articulated. Purposefully excluded from this review are the distinctions of race and racism from religious perspectives and post-racial views, not because they are insignificant, but because their applications do not align to the chosen theoretical frame or assist in building understanding for the problem of practice under

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study. This section acknowledges that while this research strives to acknowledge the work of both past and current experts in the field, it is unfinished and will always remain unfinished as long as there is more to learn. This work is on-going and dynamic in that it continues to evolve as I gain knowledge and experience as a researcher and a practitioner.

Race. There are various definitions for the term race. These definitions have evolved over time and are influenced by the historical, social, and political context in which they originated. Themes in the literature commonly examine the concept of race from biological or sociological perspectives. Both approaches to understanding race are discussed as they work together to inform this problem of practice and the context in which it is situated. This work makes no attempt at resolving the debate between the two perspectives, but instead seeks to learn from both.

Race in natural science. Smedley & Smedley (2005) contend, "races have been seen in science as subdivisions of the human species that differ from one another phenotypically, based on the basis of ancestral geographic origins, or that differ in the frequency of certain genes" (p. 18). Race has also been explained as a "notion of a distinct biological type of human being, usually based on skin color or other physical characteristics" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 153). Harris (1988) claims that biologically race is an isolated, inbreeding population with a distinctive genetic heritage (p.98). While these multiple definitions of race didn't originate within science, they were positioned in science to help validate the existing ideas that were once held about specific groups of people.

Johann Blumenbach's *On the Natural Variety of Mankind* written in 1776 is often referred to as the origin of race as a scientific study (California Newsreel, 2003). While

this anthropological study of mankind didn't focus explicitly on race, or even mention the term race, it laid the foundation for the scientific study and classification of humans. Blumenbach's work identified five human varieties: Caucasian, Mongolian, Malayan, Ethiopian, and American. He utilized physical appearance to place humans in a hierarchy, with Caucasians at the top promoting the foundation of white supremacy.

In the 1820's and 30's, Dr. Samuel Morton, a proponent of polygenism, contributed to the notion of race science as he claimed to study skull sizes to measure brain capacity and prove differences between races. His work supported classifications placed in a hierarchy as he attributed the highest brain capacity to Europeans first, attributing the second greatest capacity to the Chinese, third to Southeast Asians and Polynesians, fourth to American Indians, and the smallest brain capacity was assigned to Africans and Australian aborigines. Morton's work argued for Black inferiority and offered scientific support for slavery.

The works of Blumenbach and Morton were supported and expanded upon by such writers as Thomas Jefferson (1781), Josiah Nott & George Gliddon (1854), and Louis Agassiz (1857). At the time, these works provided scientific justification for racial supremacy and pro-slavery ideologies. In 1859, Darwin shifted the conversation on racial difference as he announced his theory of evolution and introduced the threat of competition and extinction to racial comparisons. Spencer (1859) subsequently framed this shift in the term 'survival of the fittest' as he reinforced the hierarchy of races as a product of nature that couldn't be interfered with (California Newsreel, 2003). This line of 'scientific reasoning' later fed into the development of eugenics and the work of Francis Galton (1883) that introduced the concept of a model society created through

selective breeding (California Newsreel, 2003). It was this line of thought that later promoted the philosophy of mass extermination by Nazi's during the Holocaust.

Early in the 20th century, scientists turned to intelligence tests to document differences between racial groups claiming there were innate differences in intelligence along racial lines (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Later in the 20th century, the genetic conception of race became more popular as scientists looked to identify genetic differences between racial groups. However, in 1972 geneticist Richard Lewontin identified there was more variation within races than between races, supporting the argument that racial categories were biologically meaningless. Research has since utilized larger data sets to support Lewontin's findings that suggest statistically race does not explain a great deal about human behavior (American Anthropological Association, 2011). A 2002 study by Noah Rosenberg supported and strengthened the argument against race having biological meaning by finding that differences among individuals account for 93-95 percent of all genetic variation and race accounts for less that 5 percent of all human difference (American Anthropological Association, 2011). Today, research such as the Human Genome Project and research on human genome variation increasingly challenge the term race as previously used in scientific literature and the notion that people were born with innate differences. Despite these landmark findings, some persist in the belief of race as a biological construct and argue that since genetic make-up can't be changed, neither can the societal realities that have been created around racial lines, rendering anti-racism and social justice efforts useless.

Application to this study

While this study rejects the notion of race as a biological construct, it does acknowledge several points that are learned from this perspective in the positioning of this problem of practice. First, this conception of race helps to unfold the history of some of the negative stereotypes regarding Black males that exist today; lack of intelligence, laziness, irresponsibility, resentful and violent (Gilbert, Carr-Ruffino, Ivancevich, Lownes-Jackson, 2003). In this work, a goal will be to surface and challenge such race-based stereotypes and assumptions, therefore, it is helpful to know about their source. Second, this biological approach to race illustrates the history of Whites using 'science' to justify and/or rationalize the mistreatment of Blacks. Having recognized this historical strategy, it will be more readily recognizable when applied to the assessing and identifying of Black males using biased instruments such as standardized assessments and intelligence tests. Last, this approach to defining race calls into question the construction of knowledge and what is viewed as truth in society. It stresses the importance of challenging normalized narratives and dominant discourse as they relate to race. The rejection of race as a biological construct offered in this work is not meant to deny the beautiful variations in skin color and physical characteristics that people manifest. Instead, it views these differences on a continuum of diversity rather than as reflecting innate genetic differences (Rosenberg, 2002).

Race in social science. Many researchers have examined race as a social invention (Omi & Winant, 1994). Consistent with critical race theory is the argument that races are a product of social thought and relations. "Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7).

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Within the literature that supports this social science approach to race, a distinction is made between race as a social construct and race as a social category. This study supports essential aspects of each social invention approach and will utilize both to define race. The differences between race as a social construction and race as a social category will only be addressed as they inform application to strategy in leading for racial equity.

Singleton & Linton (2006) contend race is a social construction with material implications attached to a variety of physical attributes including skin color, hair texture, bone structure, and various others. This designation suggests race is a result of historical, economic and social processes that shape beliefs, perceptions, and practices along the lines of color. In this definition, visual differences aren't ignored, instead the focus is on the meaning and realities society has come to ascribe to those characteristics. Omi & Winant (1994) emphasize the malleable nature of race as they argue racial meanings have varied drastically throughout history and between different societies. The history of race in the U.S., specifically as it relates to being Black, is replete with examples that illustrate how race has been socially constructed over time to further specific agendas.

Race was first introduced in America during the transatlantic slave trade as a way to justify and legitimize economic relationships (Omi & Winant, 1994). Colonial America was characterized by a labor shortage, a failing model of indentured servitude, and the increased availability of African slaves. At the same time, African slaves were increasingly desired for labor based on their skills in farming, resistance to disease, visual distinguishability, and lack of familiarity with surrounding lands. These circumstances led to the legal establishment of racial slavery, as laws were written to enslave Blacks while legally securing rights, privilege, and opportunity for Whites.

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After the conception of racial slavery, later known as chattel slavery, the construction of race continued in ways that categorized Black people according to the agendas of Whites. In 1787, the 3/5 Compromise mandated that all non-free (Black) people be counted as 3/5 of a person in regards to representation and taxation, securing political power for southern states. This agreement among White people regarding the value of Blacks garnered additional legal support for ideologies of White superiority and Black inferiority.

The history of the state of Virginia as told by the California Newsreel (2003), further illustrates the social construction of race,

In 1705, Virginia defines any "child, grandchild, or great grandchild of a Negro" as a mulatto. In 1866, the state decrees that "every person having one-fourth or more Negro blood shall be deemed a colored person." In 1910, the percentage is changed to 1/16th. Finally in 1924, the Virginia Racial Purity Act defines Black persons as having any trace of African ancestry - the infamous "one-drop" rule... Other states also define Blackness differently. As historian James Horton notes, one could cross a state line and literally, legally change race (Race Timeline, para. 1).

"That society frequently chooses to ignore… scientific facts, creates races, and endows them with pseudo-permanent characteristics is of great interest to critical race theory" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 8).

Application to this study

The understanding of race is significant as it assists with examining how race is lived. This research emphasizes understanding race as a social construct and category to

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help study how Black males in public schools experience race and consequently racism. In recognizing race as a social construction, an acknowledgement is made that race can be deconstructed and reconstructed in less oppressive ways. It calls into question issues of knowledge, representation, and culture. A social construct approach allows the researcher to examine and challenge the assumptions and beliefs educators hold that form their knowledge-base pertaining to Black male students. However, this approach alone is insufficient, as even if a new understanding of race is constructed, problems of racial inequity will persist as long as systems support categories that oppress people of color. This critique is addressed through also recognizing race as a social category. In recognizing race as a social category, an acknowledgement is made that it is material and intricately interwoven with economic relations. This approach calls into question systems, distribution, and categorizing. A social invention approach to the understanding of race, both construct and categorical in nature, means the activists' role is both one of deconstructing and de-categorizing. This combined approach lends itself to supporting a critical race theory frame and studying the multifaceted ways in which race interacts with schooling. This understanding will also influence the designs for improvement.

Systemic Racism

This problem addresses racism, an inequitable structure of power that advantages Whites over other races. Some researchers make the claim of a post-racial society and argue racism no longer exists (D'Souza, 1995). Those who subscribe to a post-racial belief dismiss themselves of responsibility for the massive inequities that remain. On the other hand, advocates of social justice view the racial predictability of achievement data, unemployment percentages, wage reports, and prison rates as evidence that racism still

exists (U.S. Census, 2000). Critical race theorists argue racism remains present in every institution in our society, including education. This work operates under the assumption of the reality of racism.

To begin to examine racism in the design and function of public schools, first, it must be clearly defined. For the purpose of this discussion, racism will be defined as "the conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional enactment of racial power, grounded in racial prejudice, by an individual or group against another individual or group perceived to have lower racial status" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 40). The type of racism manifested in our societal institutions, including our public schools, will be referred to as systemic racism. The term systemic refers to racism in education being part of a larger system of oppression that is interwoven among U.S. institutions and social processes. This perspective acknowledges that even individual acts of racism that occur in schools are part of a larger system more powerful than any one individual actor. According to Feagin and Barnett (2005),

> Systemic racism involves the racialized exploitation and subordination of Americans of color by White Americans. It encompasses the racial stereotyping, prejudices, and emotions of whites, as well as the discriminatory practices and racialized institutions engineered to produce the long-term domination of African Americans and other people of color. At the heart of systemic racism are discriminatory practices that generally deny Americans of color the dignity, opportunities, and privileges available to whites individually and collectively. (p. 1103-4)

Systemic racism is discussed through three subcategories:

1. Institutionalized racism manifests as the laws, rules, policies, and processes that act as power to protect the interests of a dominant racial group at the expense of others (Singleton & Linton, 2006). According to Jones (2000), it is the "differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race. It is structural, having been codified in our institutions of custom, practice, and law, so there need not be an identifiable perpetrator. Indeed, institutionalized racism is often evident as inaction in the face of need" (p. 1212). In the school context it includes the following:

   - Incorporation into school/district policies and practices of attitudes and values that wok to the disadvantage of students of color,

   - The unquestioned acceptance by schools/districts of white-middle-class values, and

   - Schools being passive in the face of prejudiced behavior that interferes with students' learning or well-being" (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

2. Internalized racism- described as personal conscious or subconscious acceptance of the dominant group's racist views, stereotypes, and biases of one's own racial group by people of color. "It gives rise to patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving that result in discriminating, minimizing, criticizing, finding fault, invalidating, and hating oneself while simultaneously valuing the dominant culture" (Lipsky, 2010, Internalized Racism, para. 6). It can also be recognized as an acceptance of Whiteness, characteristics of White culture being viewed as the norm and the right way to be.

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3. Personally-mediated racism- "defined as prejudice and discrimination, where prejudice means differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intentions of others according to their race, and discrimination means differential actions toward others according to their race" (Jones, 2000). This involves racist acts and beliefs of individuals.

The following table is provided to summarize the work of Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones (2000) on levels of racism and to summarize each level.

Table 1

Characteristics of Three Levels of Racism

Institutionalized Racism	Internalized Racism	Personally Mediated Racism
Initial historical insult	Reflects systems of privilege	Intentional /Unintentional
Structural barriers		Acts of commission
Inaction in face of need	Reflects societal values	Acts of omission
Societal norms	Erodes individual sense of value	Maintains structural barriers
Biological determinism		
Unearned privilege	Undermines collective Action	Condoned by societal Norms

These three subcategories work together in systematic ways to saturate public schools. Each level of racism is briefly exampled in the context of Pittsburgh schooling:

Institutionalized racism- One of the most noted forms of institutionalized racism in public education is the funding of schools through property taxes. In wealthier neighborhoods where property values and taxes are higher, the schools receive greater funding and resources. In poorer communities where property taxes are lower, the schools receive less

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funding and resources. This pattern maps on to race and fuels White flight from Pittsburgh Public Schools as White families move to suburban neighborhoods, private schools, and charters in search of what they deem better opportunities for their children. The declining enrollment in PPS, 29,445 in 2006 to 24,525 in 2013 documents this trend (PPS, 2014). In a time of budget constraints, District decision-making processes are increasingly influenced by the threat of White flight as leaders aim to attract and appease parents who can choose to leave the district. These factors result in racially segregated schools and practices that continue to privilege Whites who remain in the district. Beyond state funding regulations, PPS selects to utilize a district model that supports schools receiving funds based solely on the number of students enrolled without regard to student needs, an equality-based model as opposed to an equity-based one. Despite PPS' claim that in the 2011-2012 school year approximately $21,000 was spent per student, the following characteristics exist at one predominantly Black school in Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh King Pre K-8: high class sizes in specific grade levels, the lack of textbooks and workbooks for students to utilize at home in some subjects, no full-time librarian to provide students access to the library, and unfilled teaching positions.

Internalized Racism- Michael, a third grade Black male student, approached me in the hall with a hug and stated he'll miss me next year. When asked where he would be next year, he explained that he'd be transferring to a 'better school'. The school he mentioned was a nearby school with more resources. I had my own thoughts about why he thought his new school would be better than his current one. I imagined his eight-year old lens would point to things such as it has more computers, fancier school lunches, or a nice playground and field for recess. Curious to hear his thoughts, I asked him what made his

new school better. He responded, "White kids go there." Taken aback, I muttered, "Huh, tell me more." He proceeded to share how White kids are smart and teachers want to make them smarter so they teach better when White kids are in the school. He continued in his comparison adding that Black kids aren't as smart and don't always want to learn. Pained by his response, I thought to myself, how do I begin to deconstruct in one hallway conversation what society has taught him daily for eight years.

Personally Mediated Racism- Last school year, I received a hand-written letter from a student expressing his distaste for going to art class. It detailed a list of things he hated about going to the art room. One item on his list included, Ms. Dee is racist. This didn't surprise me as my classroom observations and interactions with this teacher echoed his sentiments. After discussing the letter with Ms. Dee, she requested a mediation session with the student and me. Following speaking to both of them individually, I conducted the mediation. During that conversation, the student clearly explained his position and shared his reasons as to why he felt that way. He shared that Ms. Dee treated him and his friends differently based on his race. He recalled comments the teacher made comparing his behavior to that of an animal. He spoke of how he was treated differently in terms of seating in the room, use of art materials, and teacher attention. Ms. Dee listened and in no way denied his claims. They agreed on the actions occurring, but disagreed on the motivation behind the actions. When asked blatantly why she treated him differently, she indicated that she was afraid of how he and his friends would act if she didn't stay on top of him. This reminded me of a study discussed in Lewis, Butler, Bonner III, Joubert, 2010 and Weinstein Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran (2004) that found inexperienced White teachers often perceived lively debates occurring between Black males as suggestive of

aggressive behaviors, when in fact the Black males perceived their engagements to be merely culturally expressive communication.

According to Weissglass (2006), these types of racism persist for the following reasons,

1. Lack of information, as well as misinformation,

2. The tenacity of belief systems that advocate superiority and inferiority based on race,

3. Lack of opportunities to heal from hurt, and

4. The internalization and transfer of racism. (as cited in Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 266)

Application to Study

The above definitions will help to guide and inform the discussion on the systemic racism present in school systems. For the purpose of this work, systemic racism is operationalized as behaviors, policies, structures, and practices that create or maintain disadvantage for people of color, specifically Black males. In identifying when and how systemic racism is present in the school setting, the researcher will examine the behaviors, policies, structures, and practices that are in place and the disparities that result. In many cases, it may be necessary to start with the disparate results and work backward to identify the mechanisms through which systemic racism is acting. This is because systemic racism is often hidden, couched in American culture, and/or viewed as the normal way to do things.

Critical Race Theory

"If you can show me how I can cling to that which is real to me, while teaching me a way into a larger society, then I will not only drop my defenses and my hostility, but I will sing your praises and I will help you to make the desert bear fruit".

– Ralph Ellison (1986, p. 75)

In my preparation as a teacher, a principal, and a supervisor of curriculum and instruction I understood, but could rarely relate to, the research I was required to read. At times, I thought 'what am I being prepared to do', as the theories, practices, and beliefs I read had no relevance, practicality, or applicability in my reality. It frustrated and discouraged me that the assigned texts were void of my context. There seemed to be no path from the ivory tower to my urban village. It wasn't until I was introduced to Critical Race Theory (CRT) that the pathway between academia and my Black experience became clear. Then, I began to understand my role as a Black, boundary crossing, scholar-practitioner. CRT helped me to understand academia's exclusion of my narrative. It simultaneously taught me to name and value the power inherent in my narrative as a tool to more critically understand, use, critique, and deconstruct the body of work and life experiences that once frustrated and excluded me. It heightened my consciousness and prepared me to be more knowledgeable and strategic in my advocacy. It is through the theoretical lens of CRT that my work is informed, discussed, and positioned to bear fruit.

Critical Race Theory was conceived in the late 1970s and birthed in the early 80s as an outgrowth of Critical Legal Studies that sought to place race as the central feature of scholarly pursuits (Delgado, 1995). CRT was positioned as scholarship to challenge the dominant discourse on race and racism as it related to the law by examining how legal doctrine was used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups (Solorzano, 1997). In

the past, CRT was defined as the work of progressive legal scholars of color attempting to develop jurisprudence that accounted for the role of racism in American law and that worked toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination in society (Mari Matsuda, 1991, as qtd. in Solorzano, 1997). Over time, the movement was broadened to examine the ways in which racism and White privilege operate to dominate institutions and systems beyond the context of law (Gooden, 2012). This dynamic nature of CRT led is characterized as "an iterative project of scholarship and social justice" (Tate, 1997, p. 235).

The current understanding of CRT is based on the foundational works of Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Kimberle Crenshaw, three of the most noted contributors to the development of critical race theory along with several others (Tate, 1997). The works of these theorists don't offer a clear all subscribing definition of CRT, but instead provide a series of guiding tenets that act together to represent a distinct CRT perspective. There are five tenets of CRT that are highlighted here to act as tools and/or strategies to help make sense of racial inequities and to challenge the racism that creates them. For this work, the tenets of CRT will include the following:

1. The Permanence of Racism- The notion that racism is a regular part of American society. It is so ingrained in our beliefs and practices, legally, culturally, and psychologically, that it is viewed as the norm (Tate, 1997). Recognizing that racism is ever present, critical race theorists ask where and in what form is racism present in a given circumstance. "The strategy of those who fight for social justice is one of unmasking and exposing racism in its various permutations" (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 213).

2. Critique of Liberalism- "CRT asserts that racism requires sweeping changes, but liberalism has no mechanism for such change" (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 213). This critique makes the following assertions against dominant views: (a) the notion of incremental change/ gradualism is unacceptable for people experiencing racism, (b) equality is not the same as equity and the two terms can't be used interchangeably, (c) race-neutrality, color-blindness, and the myth of meritocracy are detours or camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of Whites (Pacific Education Group, Oct. 2011, Solorzano, 1997). This critique reminds social justice advocates that systems are not self-improving, but are instead self-perpetuating, which means activism is a necessity.

3. Interest Convergence- A term coined by Derrick Bell that makes the assertion "black rights are recognized and protected when and only so long as policymakers perceive that such advances will further interests that are their primary concern" (Bell, 2004). Another way Bell described interest convergence was "The interests of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites" (Bell, 1980, as cited in Tate, 1997). Advocates can help institutions or systems identify the places in which acts of racial justice have served or will serve the interests of Whites and seek to set the terms for future convergence.

4. Counter Storytelling-A method of telling a story that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). It is a tool utilized to challenge privileged

discourses and expose and critique normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial

stereotypes (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). It supports the idea that there is power

in hearing the voice of the subordinate tell the story. People of color must

have a chance to tell their stories because as Tate (1997) notes, "(a) reality is

socially constructed, (b) stories are powerful means for destroying and

changing mind-sets, (c) stories have a community building function, and (d)

stories provide members of out-groups mental self-preservation" (p. 219). The

counter-story prevents the silence in the ears of the powerful from being

misrecognized as the silence of the subordinate (Freire, 1993).

5. Whiteness as Property- There are a bundle of rights associated with the

ownership of property, that include but are not limited to: (a) the right of

possession, (b) the right of use, (c) the right to disposition, (d) the right to

transfer, (e) the right of use and enjoyment, and (f) the right of exclusion

(Harris, 1993). These rights and associations have been utilized to establish

and secure Whiteness as a form of property. White privilege, the social

advantages, benefits, and courtesies that are attributed to white people are

viewed as having value in the sense of property. An awareness of such

privilege can be used as leverage to work for or against social justice

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Critical Race Theory in Education

Having first been articulated as an outgrowth of a legal movement, CRT was later

introduced to the field of education as a way to analyze and critique educational research

and practice (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) are credited with having introduced CRT to education by bringing race to the forefront of the discourse on inequity in education with their 1995 article titled, *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education*. Three years later, Ladson-Billings (1998) followed up expanding on the relationship between CRT and education in her article titled, *Just What Is Critical Race Theory, and What's It Doing in a Nice Field Like Education?* These two landmark articles are summarized based on their contributions to the understanding of CRT in education and how they support this study.

In the first article, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) outline three points that are essential to understanding CRT as a tool to analyze educational inequity:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining the inequity in the U.S.

2. U.S. society is based on property rights.

3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and consequently, school) inequity. (p. 48)

To support their first point, they reference statistical and demographic data around race-based inequities. They emphasize that while race remains untheorized it matters greatly in understanding inequity as class and gender-based explanations can't explain all of the inequities in education.

In support of their second essential point, Ladson-Billings and Tate unpack the tension between property rights and human rights, arguing that society was built on property rights and civil rights litigation only appealed to human and civil rights. They then explain how the ability to define, possess, and own property has been a characteristic

of power in America and the history of the country contains many struggles over property. They begin with a literal discussion of how property is tied to inequitable school funding through property taxes. They then illustrate how the definition of property can be expanded figuratively to include such things as curriculum, opportunities to learn, and necessary resources.

Next, the authors identify features of critical race theory as they apply to the understanding of educational inequity. The following are guiding principles of CRT Ladson-Billings and Tate illustrate in education-based examples:

1. The Permanence of Racism- the condition of schools and schooling represent institutional and structural racism for African American students in public schools.

2. Reinterpretation of Ineffective Civil Rights Law- the shortcomings of civil rights strategies are acknowledged through the example of *Brown v. Board of Education* leading to White flight and a loss of Black teaching and administrative positions instead of the improved educational opportunities it was aimed at creating.

3. Critique of Liberalism- the voices of people of color are required for a complete analysis of the educational system and to challenge the claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy that exist.

4. Whiteness as Property- the idea of Whiteness, that which is based on White culture and can only be possessed by Whites is valuable and is property, shapes schools and is utilized to victimize people of color.

It is in the explanation of the fourth principle that Ladson-Billings and Tate make the most explicit connections to the context of inequity in education. They explain that Harris (1993) identifies property functions of whiteness with examples that include:

1. Rights of Disposition- Property can be transferred. When students are rewarded or accepted for conforming to white norms, white property is being transferred.

2. Rights of Use and Enjoyment- Whites can use and enjoy the privileges of whiteness such as the use of school resources that aren't available to students of color, and the structure of the curriculum that allows access to rigor and critical thinking to White students.

3. Reputation and Status Property- Damaging one's reputation is like damaging one's property. School or program reputation is damaged when it is associated with anything non-white such as bilingual education or urban schools.

4. Absolute Right to Exclude- Whiteness is understood as the exclusion of Blackness. Blacks were first denied access to school, and then sent to segregated schools. Within schools, the concept of exclusion is present in tracking, gifted programs, honors programs, and advanced placement classes.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) conclude with a discussion on the limits of the multicultural paradigm. They critique multiculturalism for being "mired in liberal ideology that offers no radical change in the current order" (p. 62). They explain the analogous relationship between critical race legal theory and civil rights law with critical race theory in education and multiculturalism.

Ladson-Billings (1998) revisited some of the essential concepts and strengthened the relationship between CRT and education. In this article, the specific areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation were identified as a frame to share exemplars of the relationship between CRT and education. In each of the identified areas, Ladson-Billings painted a picture to help to illustrate existing racial inequities.

In reference to the curriculum, Ladson-Billings positioned it as a tool to maintain White supremacy and silence voices of color. She explained it as "…not just the distortions, omissions, and stereotypes of school curriculum that must be considered, it also is the rigor of the curriculum and access to what is deemed 'enriched' curriculum via courses and classes for the gifted and talented". This illustrated the functions of property in reference to the use and enjoyment as well as the right to exclusion.

In reference to instruction, Gloria Ladson-Billings contends it is erroneously thought of as race-neutral and when it fails to connect with or engage African American students, the students are viewed as deficient. Ladson-Billings notes that many teachers search for instructional strategies that aim at controlling and remediating presumed deficiencies held by African American students. She then highlights successful teachers of African American students tend to not have a race-neutral approach and are knowledgeable about the intersection of race and schooling.

Next, Ladson-Billings (1998) argued assessment is used to legitimize the continued subordination of Blacks and to perpetuate racial stereotypes in the name of scientific proof. The curriculum and instruction fail to prepare African American students to perform well on traditional (often biased) assessments. In addition, assessments

regularly fail to measure what students know and are able to do and results promote a myth of White supremacy.

School funding is then described by Ladson- Billings as a function of institutional and structural racism as states continue to fund schools based on property taxes producing poor schools in poor areas and wealthy schools in wealthy areas. CRT highlights the fact that property acts as a large factor in determining academic advantage and disadvantage and African American students disproportionately suffer the consequences of poor schools.

Finally, Ladson-Billings (1998) explained that desegregation has been promoted in schools only in ways that serve the interests of Whites. She described how this interest convergence approach to desegregation failed to offer a resolution to social inequity as intended; but instead it created additional challenges for African American's to overcome.

Application to Study

Critical Race Theory has been chosen as the theoretical lens for this discussion as it is a theory that is contemporary, allows for a multi-racial perspective, is multi-disciplinary, promotes intersectionality, and is focused on activism with a heart for social justice. The research offered by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Ladson-Billings (1998) highlights the ways that CRT can be a strong explanatory tool for the sustained inequity that students of color experience in public schools. This study will mimic this use of CRT as it examines the inequities experienced by Black males in public schools.

Some critique the scholarly worth of CRT based on the use of storytelling, the focus on activism, and the respect attributed to the voice of color. These criticisms can

each be attributed to Whiteness, or finding basis in the beliefs established as norms in White culture. This is an example of the very force that CRT seeks to deconstruct. In one critique of CRT, Nancy Levit (1999) wrote,

> Storytelling is inherently problematic, argue the traditionalists, because stories cannot be verified, are inevitably subjective, and may be atypical of real world experiences. Narrative methodology "reject[s] the linearity, abstraction, and scientific objectivity of rational argument." Stories may limit public dialogue because they may be told as conversation-stopping moves that brook no disagreement…Farber and Sherry accuse the storytellers of "careless treatment of factual issues," "inattention to facts," and "casualness about truth." For the traditionalists, storytelling is neither legal nor academic, and threatens the credibility of the scholarly enterprise. (p. 798)

It is easy to identify the racist beliefs that cause some to discredit this theory. The role of storytelling is considered valuable when told from the position of power in the ways that much of our country's past has been recorded. Stories told by dominant groups in society have been written as facts and titled as history or research. At the same time, stories from non-dominant groups are discredited and discarded. This dissertation in practice is research-based and founded on scholarly argument. However, its significance to the field of educational leadership is increased through the story it tells; offering in-sight into the interpretation and application of theory in the context of professional practice. Reading and writing are valid ways to learn. However, it is the application to practice and the vulnerability of the rendered narrative that make this study a generative display of significant learning. Critical Race Theory has been given due respect in courtrooms and

in legal decisions. Therefore, its worth in academia will not be doubted here. It will serve as a resource to the author as a scholar practitioner. In addition, it will be used as a tool to highlight the selective deafness in the ear of the dominant and amplify the volume of the voice of the subordinate.

Culture of Low Expectations

In arguing that systemic racism develops and perpetuates a culture of low expectations for Black male students, it is necessary to also operationally define what a culture of low expectations means and looks like in observable terms. School culture can be thought of as the shared orientations, values, norms, symbols, and practices that characterize a school. Further,

> school culture may be understood as a historically transmitted cognitive framework of shared but taken-for-granted assumptions, values, norms, and actions—stable, long-term beliefs and practices about what organization members think is important. School culture defines a school's persona. These assumptions, unwritten rules, and unspoken beliefs shape how its members think and do their jobs. They affect relationships, expectations, and behaviors among teachers, administrators, students, and parents. They give meaning to what people say and mold their interpretations of even the most minor daily events. Everything in the organization is affected by its culture and its particular forms and features. (School Culture and Change as Learning, n.d., p. 4)

A culture of low expectations for Black male students would be one in which actions and beliefs, spoken or unspoken, demonstrate a lower level of standards for academic achievement and behavior in comparison to the expectations/standards that exist for other

student groups. Lowered expectations can be identified in relation to three overarching categories:

1. Instruction- Lisa Delpit argues, the key is the attitude underlying the instruction. When teachers do not understand the potential of the students they teach, she claims they will underteach them no matter what the methodology (Lisa Delpit, 2006).

2. Discipline- Although Black males aren't any more disruptive than their peers of other races, they receive harsher punishments, that more frequently remove them from learning opportunities (Lewis, Butler, Bonner III & Joubert, 2010).

3. Labeling- The process of naming Black males as the 'other' to magnify characteristics about them that do not fit into the normative White culture in schools.

The following table, Characteristics of a School Culture of Low Expectations for Black Males helps to identify observable examples of low expectations in each category as it relates to Black males:

Table 2

Characteristics of a School Culture of Low Expectations for Black Males

Instruction	Discipline	Labeling
Can't Learn at High Levels	Lack Self Control	Must be Othered
- Lower level thinking questions posed to Black males - Less wait/struggle time being extended to Black males - Poorer quality teachers being assigned to classes with higher numbers of Black males	- Black males more frequently separated from instruction inside/outside of the classroom - Non-threatening behaviors being reported as higher level infractions - Higher rates of referrals for disruptive behaviors	- Black males being overly identified for special education services - Black males being under identified for gifted services - Black males being assigned lower track classes/interventions not based on data

- Lack of culturally relevant pedagogy utilized in teaching Black males - Black males being permitted to intellectually opt out of lessons. - A lack of multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency - Lower levels of engagement/time-on-task with Black males - Repetitious work with no rigor - Black males being called upon less	- Higher rates for suspensions/expulsions for Black males - Lack of praise/positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior for Black males - Black males being allowed to put their heads down/sleep/refuse to work - Fewer opportunities extended to correct inappropriate behavior prior to written referrals	- Failure to debunk stereotypes - Enrichment opportunities not extended to Black males as frequently as White students - Black males being over represented in emotional support classrooms.

While teachers are not the sole creators of school culture and don't act alone in shaping expectations for students, research suggests teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement among the factors that are controlled by school systems (Rand Corporation, 2012). Research also supports that teacher expectations of students have great impacts on student achievement (Parks & Kennedy, 2007, Pigott & Cowen, 2000, Rubie-Davies, 2006). Therefore, additional attention is paid to the expectations established by teachers, however, it is recognized that an organizational culture can establish expectations that are out of an individual teacher's control.

Additional Key Terms

The following is a list of key terms that will be utilized in this discussion as scholars in the field of education define them:

Anti-racism- "Conscious and deliberate efforts to challenge the impact and perpetuation of institutional White racial power, presence, and privilege (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 45).

Culturally Relevant Teaching- "A pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20).

Educational Equity- "Raising the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the highest and lowest performing students and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 46).

School Culture Re-boot- A process that makes the implicit explicit. Within a climate of mutual respect, trust, honest self-awareness, and openness to new ideas, teachers and administrators look closely at their own beliefs and behaviors and identify the ways they inadvertently add to the school's and students' difficulties (School Culture & Change as Learning, 2014, pg. 1).

Conceptual Map

The relationship between systemic racism and schooling can be conceptualized at a basic level, depicted in Figure 1.1 as a causal relationship in which systemic racism acts to foster a culture of low expectations for Black males in public schools. Education is viewed as one social institution that is interconnected to other institutions to support a system of racism. Within the institution of education, the district, school, classroom, and student are highlighted as four levels in which systemic racism exists. Each level influences and is impacted by the other three levels. For example, the district, classrooms,

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and students each influence schools. At the same time, schools have an impact on the district, classrooms, and students. At each level, various mechanisms exist that help shape school culture and consequently school expectations for students. Mechanism that exist at the different levels include but are not limited to school funding, curriculum, assessment, instruction, discipline, staffing, stereo-type threat, and hidden effort. Systemic racism is perpetuated through the beliefs and actions that occur within and between each level transmitted through the various mechanisms. Based on the negative and oppressive nature of systemic racism, a school's culture is shaped by the mechanisms in ways that breed lower expectations for Black males. A critical race theory lens can be used to examine the mechanisms that are used to maintain racism at each of the levels. An advocates' role becomes to recognize, address, and interrupt the presence and functioning of racism at each level of the system.

Figure 1

Conceptual Map: Systemic Racism Creates a Culture of Low Expectations
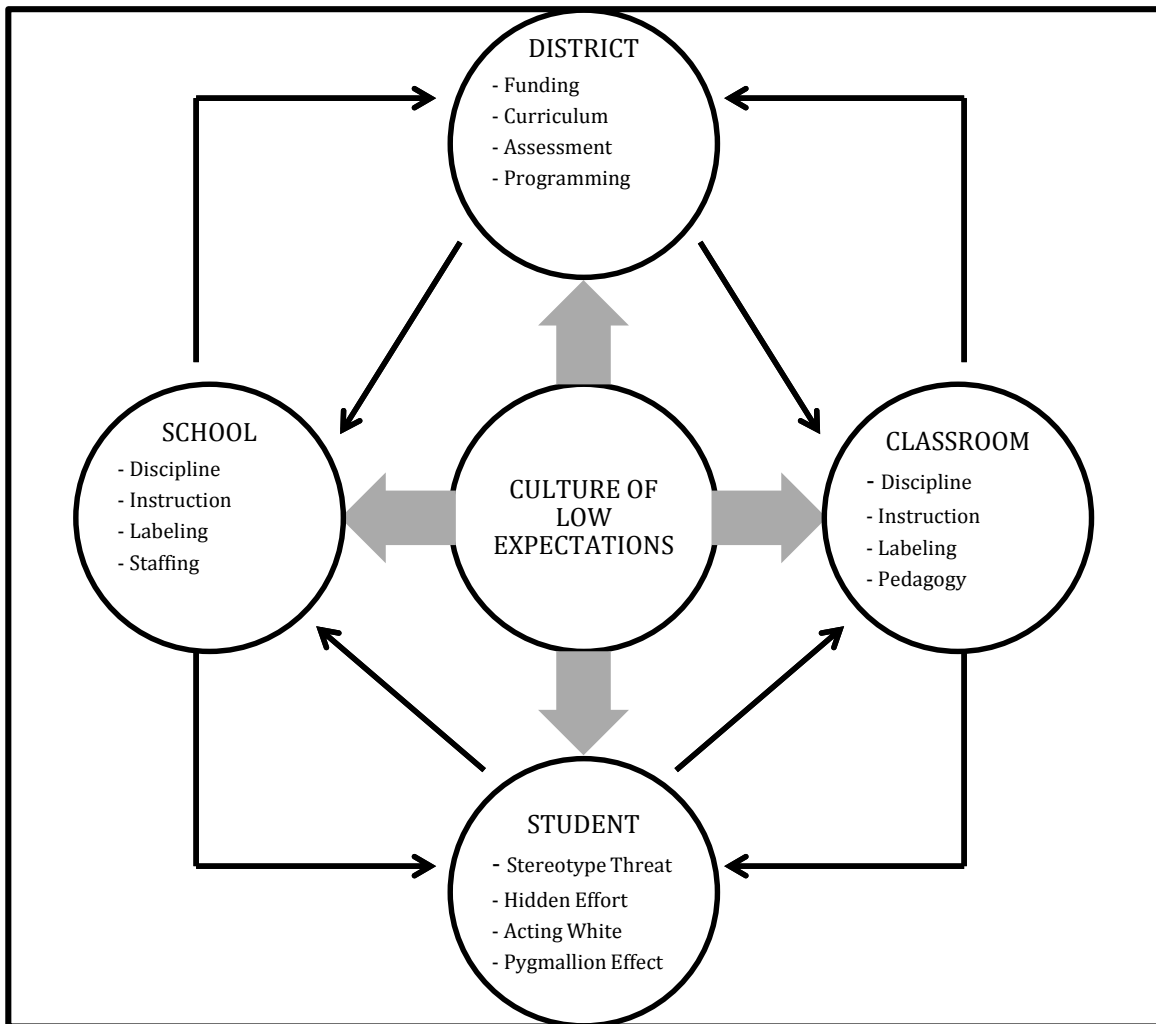
Conclusion of Part I: Problem of Practice

The naming and framing of this discussion are intentional. Resultantly, characteristics of the methodology, analysis, and discussion will not include White students referenced as the norm, Black students described as having deficits and/or deficiencies, and improvements measured only through the use of standardized testing (Pacific Educational Group, Oct., 2011). Instead, characteristics of this discussion will include the highlighting of unequal opportunities, denied access, inequitable resource allocation, and lowered expectations (Pacific Educational Group, Oct., 2011). This frame points to a belief that the solution lies in a systems' ability to effectively challenge and address systemic racism.

If the saying is true that systems produce what they are designed to produce educators and researchers must begin to look beyond failing results to question the design of the systems saturated with systemic racism that persist in producing failure for Black students. Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton, authors of Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools (2006) state, "the racial achievement gap exists and persists because fundamentally, schools are not designed to educate students of color, and educators continue to lack the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to affirm racial diversity. Consequently, educators need to begin a deep and thorough examination of their beliefs and practices in order to "re-create" schools so that they become places where all students do succeed" (p. 5). Linda Darling Hammond (1997) explains the need to analyze and reevaluate our school systems this way:

> The fundamental problem is that we have pushed the current system as far as it
> can go, and it cannot go far enough. If we care about all students and about the

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fate of the society as a whole, we cannot ignore real problems or merely seek to

"get around" the present system. We must re-create it so that it, in turn, reshapes

the possibilities for the great majority of schools. (p. 27)

In the effective schools research, Dr. Lawrence Lezotte, (2011) adds to this notion by

acknowledging this major structural flaw in stating, "The current system of public

education, while designed to provide access to all students, was never designed or even

intended to successfully teach all students a high-standards curriculum…the public

school system is currently being asked to successfully fulfill a mission for which it was

never intended" (p. 3).

A response to the call to investigate the failing system is both appropriate and

necessary at this crucial period of time. This study and the working agenda it will

produce are rendered in service to the call. Through collectively addressing this gross

inequity, improvements to the education of Black males will be made. These

improvements will generate hope and greater capacity to impact inequities in other

aspects of society including but not limited to higher education, workforce, incarceration,

and healthcare.

Case Study: An Illustration of the Problem of Practice

The Pittsburgh Story: An Unfulfilled Promise

The challenges with the implementation of the Pittsburgh Promise Scholarship are

unique. In this initiative, one can clearly see how schools, the academy, and the

community are directly impacted by systemic racism and low expectations resulting in

the under-education of Black males. In Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), the goal is that

at least 85% of students graduate from high school. Furthermore, PPS desires for at least

80% of graduates to pursue and complete a four-year degree or workforce certification. According to a study by the RAND Corporation (2011), currently the graduation rate for Black students in PPS is at 59% and for male students it is also at 59%. The rates for non-Black students and female students are at 70% and 69% respectively. To reach their goals, PPS must learn to successfully educate all students, specifically Black males, who comprise the largest proportion of PPS students, 7,140 students representing 28% of the district. This cannot happen as long as systemic racism and a culture of low expectations continue to rob Black males of their academic potential.

The Pittsburgh community supports PPS with their goal as the community cares about the economic, intellectual, and social revitalization of the Pittsburgh region. This care was demonstrated in the creation and sustaining of the Pittsburgh Promise, a scholarship fund for Pittsburgh Public students attending accredited post-secondary institutions in Pennsylvania. PPS and the community worked together to help eliminate financial hardship as one of the barriers keeping PPS students from attaining higher education by developing a scholarship of up to $40,000 per student. To be eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise students must meet the following criteria: (a) graduate from a PPS high school or one of the charter schools, (b) be a student in the district and a resident of Pittsburgh continuously since at least the 9th grade, (c) earn a minimum of 2.5 GPA, (d) maintain a minimum attendance record of 90%, and (e) earn admission to any accredited public or private post-secondary school located in Pennsylvania. While the Promise has the potential to benefit all students, racism and low expectations are acting as barriers that create inequitable access to the Pittsburgh Promise for some students. This is preventing Black males from accessing the Pittsburgh Promise at rates comparable to that of other

student groups. From 2008-2010 the data referencing the number of scholarships granted by gender and ethnicity is disturbing. During this time, 724 White females and 602 White males accessed the Promise. In that same time frame, only 656 Black females, and an alarmingly low 372 Black males accessed the Promise. Again this is in a district where Black males represent the largest student group. This is a problem for the Promise Community and for the Pittsburgh region at large.

Institutions of higher education in Pennsylvania wrestle with racial achievement disparities and the reverberating impacts of the under-education of Black males. The Promise eligible colleges and universities have demonstrated their commitment to the goals of PPS and the Promise Community by agreeing to accept the Promise funds for student tuition. There is a converging interest from the academy as participation in this initiative has the potential to increase the diversity of campuses across Pennsylvania and help increase retention rates by removing financial hardship as a reason for students to drop out. However, the benefits aren't being maximized, as the largest student group in PPS, Black males, is disproportionately ineligible for the Promise Scholarship or for admission to many of the colleges and universities in Pennsylvania.

Part 2: Design for Action

Part I of this work, named and framed a problem of practice; systemic racism creates and perpetuates a culture of low expectations for Black males in public schools. Based on relevant research, data, and personal experience, it argued systemic racism is a high leverage problem and a matter of social justice worthy of study. A literature-based explanation of race, racism, school culture, and expectations were used to describe how race interacts with schooling in ways that perpetuate inequitable structures of power

between those who shape the system and those whom the system fails to educate. After developing a thorough understanding of this problem, naming it, framing it, and learning more about it through systematic and intentional inquiry, it is clear that successfully addressing this problem will yield great educational improvements and help to produce a greater level of equity in schools. This study builds on research and practice to understand how systemic racism operates at a school level, through the various perspectives of students, teachers, and principals.

Part II explains the research approach and methods of this study while placing them within a rich historical tradition established by Black educators and researchers. This section describes a series of designs for action that address the problem of practice. The designs provide opportunities for others to learn about the problem of practice while making the passion for improving the nature of the problem contagious. Through explicating, contextualizing, and critiquing the designs, a series of arguments will be made suggesting the appropriateness of the designs for action. This section includes products that were produced from the designs noted in the section.

Research Questions

This is a qualitative investigation of an authentic problem of practice. This problem acts as an obstacle to educational leaders striving in practice to support the academic success of Black male students. While this study is guided and informed by theory, it is lived experiences, day-to-day challenges in schools, and the relentless hope for change that drive the research-practitioner to grapple with the following questions:

1. In what ways does systemic racism permeate schools causing inequitable access to quality teaching and learning experiences for Black males?

2. How do Black male students experience systemic racism in school?

3. What is the role of the school leader in creating designs for improvement to address the problem of systemic racism creating a culture of low expectations for Black male students?

4. How do teachers' racialized beliefs concerning student abilities influence teachers' behavior?

Utilizing a case study to explore answers to these questions will assist the researcher and other educational leaders in addressing this problem of practice.

Learning from Historical Tradition

In this research I am examining my own leadership as a Black female educator and finding my voice to identify and promote practices that support the success of Black male students. This research approach isn't unique as it builds upon a rich educational tradition of great authors such as Michelle Foster, Vanessa Siddle-Walker, and Barbara Sizemore who examined the practices of Black educators that were proven successful for students of color. Michelle Foster (1998) conducted interviews with Black teachers following school integration in her book *Black Teachers on Teaching*. From the voices of the Black teachers interviewed, Foster offered teaching practices that were proven successful with Black children, shared an appreciation for the benefits of segregation for Black students, and gave an understanding of the negative impacts of integration for the Black community. In *Hello Professor: A Black Principal and Professional Leadership in the Segregated South* author Vanessa Siddle Walker (2009) studied the leadership of Ulysses Byas, a successful Black principal who led his school and his community in Gainesville, Georgia in the 1950s and 1960s. Through her work I learned about the

following aspects of Black leadership in the Jim Crow Era: the challenges overcome by leaders working for Black achievement in a White racist context, the role of the highly effective professional development networks that offered formal and informal structures of support to Black schools in the South, and the multifaceted role of the Black principal who served Black students, Black teachers, the Black community in a system designed to serve Whites. Finally, from Barbara Sizemore (2008) in her book *Walking in Circles: The Black Struggle for School Reform*, I learned from her reflections having served as a teacher, principal, director, and superintendent of schools who successfully worked and fought for Black achievement. With Pittsburgh Public Schools as a back drop for some of her work, I learned historical and relevant information about the strategic, courageous, and unconventional efforts of Black leaders who worked the system to produce successful outcomes for Black students. I personally celebrated and gained strength as Dr. Sizemore noted the success of my elementary school principal, Dr. Janet Bell, who encouraged me to become a principal when I was in the fifth grade. From Sizemore, I also learned of my district's refusal to learn from the success of Black schools and the intentional destruction of the potential for district-wide reform aimed at making schooling more equitable in Pittsburgh. My research gains strength and direction from the brilliance of these educators and leaders of the past, those who have proven what practices work for Black students. My work also continues to fight against a system that marginalizes the leaders and the practices that support the success of Black students, instead favoring those that maintain the status quo.

Research Approaches and Rationale for the Study

Among the research no silver bullet has been found to fix this problem. However, pockets of excellence have been identified in which focused and concerted efforts have produced localized improvements to teaching and learning that were proven successful for Black males. This work seeks to replicate that success in that it aims to produce localized improvement for the education of Black males. The difference in this work is that it seeks to be generative and produce significant learning for others through the use of the following three research approaches: scholarship of teaching and learning, design-based research, and improvement science (ProDEL, 2012). Information about each approach will help to further describe the design of this study.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Ernest Boyer (1990) and later Lee Schulman were credited with having introduced the scholarship of teaching and learning to discuss research that advances knowledge about teaching. According to Huber (2013), SoTL can be explained as an approach to teaching that views learning spaces as sites for inquiry, innovation, and knowledge-building. Huber contends that SoTL causes educators to look closely and critically at students' learning to improve learning opportunities. She explains that in SoTL educators "…go public with insights, experiences and results that colleagues can evaluate and build on. By engaging in the SoTL, you advance the profession of teaching in higher education by joining pedagogical conversations in and across institutions and fields" (Huber, 2013, Part I). Essential to this approach is the obligation to ensure efforts to improve teaching and learning are made public, available for critique and evaluation, and accessible for others to use and build upon (Secret, Leisey, Lanning, Polich, & Schaub, 2011). This approach is extended in this study to include the learning about teaching that occurs through a principal's deep

study of the learning of his/her teachers, that is made public, opened for critique, and shared with others in the education community to use and build upon.

Design-Based Research. "In education, design-based research is a way to investigate empirically the effects of our efforts to influence teaching and learning (i.e., the effects of schooling): we design ways to help teachers and students engage more effectively and efficiently in the teaching-learning process" (ProDEL, 2012). Anderson and Shattuck (2012), characterized design-based research in the following ways,

- Situated in a real educational context,

- Focuses on the design and testing of a significant intervention,

- Uses mixed methods,

- Involves multiple iterations,

- Involves a collaborative partnership between researchers and practitioners

- Leads to the development of contextualized design principles.

The flexibility and responsiveness of this approach to research offers a level of practicality that is welcomed in educational settings. Further, the reflective nature of this approach lends itself to the fostering of innovation and significant learning in educators.

Improvement Science. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2014), promotes improvement science as an approach to research that supports system reforms. It is anchored in six core principles, quoted from the Carnegie Foundation website (2014),

The Six Core Principles of Improvement

1. **Make the work problem-specific and user-centered.**
   It starts with a single question: "What specifically is the problem we are trying to solve?" It enlivens a co-development orientation: engage key participants early and often.

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2. **Variation in performance is the core problem to address.**
   The critical issue is not what works, but rather what works, for whom and under what set of conditions. Aim to advance efficacy reliably at scale.
3. **See the system that produces the current outcomes.**
   It is hard to improve what you do not fully understand. Go and see how local conditions shape work processes. Make your hypotheses for change public and clear.
4. **We cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure.**
   Embed measures of key outcomes and processes to track if change is an improvement. We intervene in complex organizations. Anticipate unintended consequences and measure these too.
5. **Anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry.**
   Engage rapid cycles of Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) to learn fast, fail fast, and improve quickly. That failures may occur is not the problem; that we fail to learn from them is.
6. **Accelerate improvements through networked communities.**
   Embrace the wisdom of crowds. We can accomplish more together than even the best of us can accomplish alone.

This improvement science approach focuses on the aims of education as recognized by the Carnegie Foundation; engaging education for all students, effective in advancing learning, and efficient in its use of resources (ProDEL, 2012).

Together these three methodologies create the design of this study. In culmination, they produce an approach that is aimed at creating learning opportunities, changing practice, and making improvements to schools, all as a matter of social justice.

Plan of Inquiry

This study occurred in the context of the Pittsburgh Public School District. It examined improvement efforts through the case of one school, Pittsburgh King Pre K-8, as the school leader and staff endeavored to create a school-wide focus on racial equity. The school's efforts to address the level of expectations for Black males and consequently the quality of education offered to this population were numerous. The efforts were designed to influence teachers, challenge their assumptions and mindsets, and grow their practice so that they in turn would be better prepared to support success

for the Black male students they serve. The following guiding assumption drove this plan of inquiry: (a) teachers must be successful learners if Black males are to be successful learners, (b) racially conscious, culturally relevant, racial equity focused teachers are more equipped to teach Black males, and (c) it is school leader's role to model leadership for racial equity and create conditions that support teacher learning and growth around equity. The school leader identified six of the school's key initiatives, referred to henceforth as designs, as having the potential to create the greatest comparative impact on mindsets, practices, and school culture to ultimately impact student achievement. These designs occurred during the course of the last three school years, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and were supported by Pacific Education Group (PEG) and influenced by the conceptual framework shared in Part I. While the designs were created to address the interaction between race and schooling for all students, it was emphasized at the school level that particular attention must be paid to the Black male student population, as they were the student group experiencing the least amount of school success. The designs were utilized to identify the presence and role systemic racism played in perpetuating a culture of low expectations for Black males in practice. They were also instrumental in helping the team to understand how the oppressive force of racism could be interrupted in the school environment. The designs included: (a) Inquiring, (b) Beyond Diversity Training, (c) the Formation of Journey Partners, (d) Equity Team Development, (e) Collaborative Action Research for Equity, and (f) the Construction of Equity Focused Evaluation Tools. Based on the learning that occurred from these designs, the recommendation for a seventh design, Surveying, was put forth.

The common theme unifying these designs was a focus on the shaping of a school culture that allowed staff, students, parents, and the community to engage in open and productive dialogue concerning racism and the achievement of Black males. Within each design, entry points were provided to engage stakeholders in conversations and personal reflection around beliefs and/or practices pertaining to Black males. They were aimed at creating an environment in which every voice was heard and valued. The designs were positioned to work together to accomplish the following: (a) involve stakeholders, (b) yield data to be rendered as evidence, (c) place value in the service of Black male students,(d) provide for continuous improvement, (e) provide information and actions useful in the field, and (f) serve as a basis for advocacy. Details pertaining to each design as well as information regarding how the designs have influenced teachers follow below in this section. In Part III, the measuring of generative impacts and the outcomes for Black males that result from each design will be addressed.

Inquiring

The school leadership team, composed of the principal and six teacher leaders, engaged in inquiry around the school experiences of Black males at King. The goal of informally inquiring and conversing about racism was to allow these educators opportunities to hear the voices of Black males as they shared their narratives and to inform and solicit feedback on other improvement efforts. The underlying belief in this design was that Black male students were the best resource to consult as the team tried to learn how to better serve Black male students. The leadership team constructed interview questions based on their desires to learn more about their students' experiences. The principal extended the conversations to include Black males who graduated from PPS,

but were in some way affiliated with King. The team identified Black males to speak with as opportunities to engage in race-based dialogue were presented in the course of natural practice. Questions were posed in various formats including face-to-face conversations, phone interviews, e-mail exchanges, and focus groups. In addition, participants were also encouraged to respond freely without the use of the prompts to allow them to steer the conversations. The questions were designed to gather insight into the Black male perspective, elicit specific examples of racism experienced, and promote productive dialogue. However, they were used only as a guide to support the conversations that were occurring naturally in the school context.

1. The inquiry questions developed included the following:

2. *How have you experienced racism in school?*

3. *In what ways do teachers communicate their expectations for students?*

4. *How do expectations for students vary depending on student race?*

5. *Have you been stereotyped by teachers in your school? How? When? Why?*

6. *How do you think teachers' expectations influence student efforts?*

7. *Does student race impact how teachers interact with students? How?*

8. *Do teachers hold Black males to lower expectations than other racial groups? How?*

9. *Please recall your earliest experience with race in school. Please share.*

10. *Please recall your most recent experience with race in school. Please share.*

11. *What do you believe your teachers believe about you?*

12. *What does racism look like in schools?*

13. Why do you believe Black male students aren't achieving at the same rates as other student groups?

14. How do you feel schools can better serve Black male students?

15. Do you think teacher expectations influence student abilities? How?

16. What would you like educators to know about being a Black male in school?

The members of the leadership team, individually and collectively, reflected upon information gathered from students. The data rendered from their inquiries was shared during cohort meetings and in the context of equity trainings. The information was discussed openly among the group to further their learning in reference to the study of teaching and learning among Black males and to advocate for what students' needed. At times, key themes and ideas were shared with the broader school community when the team felt it was beneficial. This process helped the group keep themselves grounded in the work by connecting improvement efforts with specific ideas, challenges, and/or successes shared by individual Black male participants. In addition, it helped the team gain practice in having conversations about race and racism among team members and with those outside of the group.

The following is an excerpt of a reflection shared by Tony, a Black male who graduated from PPS as the principal of King posed questions to inquire about how he experienced race/racism in school. It is offered as an example of the type of powerful information that was learned by the team through the process of inquiry:

Background: In high school, Tony was the only Black male in his calculus AP course. While a bright student who excelled in most of his classes, Tony struggled in that particular class and eventually dropped out of it. After graduating from a PPS high school he attended a historically Black college and pursued a career in education. Years later he went on to become a school leader in a STEM focused high school.

Question: How did race/racism impact your experience in Calculus AP?

Tony: Race impacted my experience in AP Calculus indirectly. I didn't experience blatant racism from classmates or the instructor but my experience was not one that was pleasant. I was different than the other students in the classroom. I was the only African American male and my experiences in math were not as successful as most. The interaction I had with other classmates was limited due to who I was and where I came from. They lived around each other and did most things together. The instructor in this course did not create an environment that relived any anxiety that I had for math or an environment that made me feel welcomed. Due to my anxiety and lack of success, I shut down and did not display teacher-pleasing behaviors. This caused the instructor to direct efforts elsewhere. I gave up due to frustration. The instructor didn't treat me as if I was gifted like the other students.

Question: In what ways, (if any) did your teachers' expectations for you differ?

Tony: After I gave up the teacher allowed me to sleep in class. I put my head down because I didn't feel like I was able to be successful. I felt non-existent in this class. After a conversation with this teacher about acceptance to college and multiple full ride scholarships, he told me I didn't deserve them and that they should be taken away because of my progress in his class.

Question: How did you feel while in this class?

Tony: I felt alone and as if it was a waste of my time every single day. After having a talk with another teacher and a family member over a weekend I came to class with a new attitude, completed homework, and had questions to ask, but it didn't matter. The teacher already made a decision about me.

Question: Years later, as you reflect back, how does this experience make you feel?

Tony: This experience along with a few others makes me feel extremely angry. Each student in every setting should be treated as if they are gifted. As a student I didn't feel as if I had the support I needed to be successful. The teacher was a nice guy to everyone in the classroom except for me. If he was the same way to me as he was to everyone else I would have understood. I feel that he threw me in the deep end of the pool without a safety net. I wanted to succeed and never made a D or F in any subject. I took the AP Calculus course to prepare for college and to have a challenge. I felt defeated leaving that classroom every single day. When I think back on this experience, I can't believe that the experience even happened. I drive past his vacation home on my way to work every single day. It's a reminder of that experience.

Prompt: Please share anything else you feel is relevant to this discussion.

Tony: The same semester I had the teacher for Geometry 1st period. He was a completely different teacher. The makeup of the classroom was completely different from Calculus.

Most of the class was underclassmen and African American. He didn't teach much he sat at the desk. During Calculus he was more interactive with the students in the class. When I asked questions in Geometry he was very short and to the point but more helpful to me than others.

This particular reflection led the school leader to speak with the staff regarding how similar dynamics may be playing out for Black male students at King. While Tony's experience can't be generalized to represent how Black males experience schooling, it does provide one powerful perspective that once shared others were able to learn from. This particular design opened opportunities for this perspective and others like it to be shared with educators in a school context where previously such conversations were not occurring. This design also helped to elevate the perspectives of Black males in our school, while raising awareness of the staff, and opening our school practices for feedback from our students. In the process of learning from students and changing practice, teachers were able to grow to become better able to meet student needs.

Beyond Diversity Training

Pittsburgh King partnered with Pacific Education Group (PEG), a company founded by Glenn Singleton, to provide Beyond Diversity (BD) training for the entire King staff, select parents of King students, and various community partners. According to PEG (2014),

> Beyond Diversity I is an introduction to *Courageous Conversations* and a foundation for deinstitutionalizing racism and eliminating racial achievement disparities. A powerful, personally transforming two-day seminar… Beyond Diversity has equipped leaders, educators, students, parents, and community

members to understand the impact of race on student achievement and the role that racism plays in institutionalized racial disparities. (Beyond Diversity, p. 1)

The first full staff BD experience occurred at King during the summer before the 2011-2012 school year. Based on the high percentage of staff turnover at King, an average of more than 50% over the last three years, it was necessary to offer BD at the beginning of each of the subsequent school years for new staff members. The principal and a teacher leader at King were trained as Pacific Education Group affiliates and were licensed to deliver BD training within PPS to assist with addressing this challenge.

Evaluation surveys show many teachers, Black and White, have reflected on their experience in BD and labeled it as transformational and instrumental in raising their racial consciousness. Some of the feedback statements received from teachers following BD include:

"I thought I had established my identity until I went home last night and had a different perspective of what race was."

"I was surprised to see where I showed up on the color line. This experience definitely opened my eyes to some of the ways racism shows up every day for people of color and how much of an impact race has on our lives."

"I realized over the course of the last two days that race matters, and that I have the ability to interrupt racist behaviors and practices when I see them. The Courageous Conversations Protocol is a great tool, but I need to learn it and make it my own."

"It was so powerful to go through this training with my colleagues. We now have
a shared experience to build off of as we work to eliminate racial disparities in
our school."

The participation in BD by all King teachers offered a shared learning experience that acted as a foundation for new learning. The intense emotional experience also initiated a sense of trust, vulnerability, and openness among the staff members as it forced participants to share personal thoughts and feelings about race with their colleagues. Over the years, the training has been strategically offered to parents and community members who play instrumental roles in the school culture.

The vocabulary, understanding, agreements, and conditions that were learned in BD, also referred to as protocol, became a tool incorporated into the school culture to support engagement in courageous conversations regarding race. The theories, pedagogies, and orientations adopted from BD became embedded in the school-wide equity professional development sessions, parent and community meetings, and even in classrooms. A book study on *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* by Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton was used to strengthen the use of the tools staff members learned in BD.

During the 2012 - 2013 school year, PPS contracted a team of researchers from George Mason University and the University of Pittsburgh, Helga Stokes, Rodney Hopson, Joshua Childs, and Renata de Almeida Ramos, to conduct an evaluation of the professional development impact of BD. The findings of the evaluation, which will be discussed in greater detail in Part III-Generative Impacts, recognized the school's systemic approach to equity transformation and noted shifts in mindsets about teaching

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students of color. It reinforced the notion that this training served as an instrumental factor in the school's improvement efforts. This design helped to make teachers aware of inequitable power structures playing out in the school context and sparked a desire to create improvement. A premise driving this design is that educators must first be aware of racial inequities to engage in deliberate actions to address them. Beyond Diversity created that awareness that was necessary to work for change.

Journey Partner

During the conclusion of Beyond Diversity Training, participants were asked to connect with journey partners of a race different than their own if possible. A journey partner is a post Beyond Diversity partnership between two colleagues committed to helping each other reflect, learn, grow, and continue to have conversations about race. Journey partners support one another in the development of racial consciousness, the reflection and learning needed to challenge assumptions, and the building of personal capacity to recognize and interrupt racism. The inter-racial partnering of colleagues is a strategy to offer each partner a different racial perspective on topics pertaining to race. The belief about improvement undergirding this design is that racially conscious and culturally competent teachers and school leaders are better equipped to effectively educate Black males.

Each staff member at King chose a colleague to partner with as they worked on the personal and professional aspects of becoming more racially conscious and culturally proficient educators. This particular design for action recognized the human side of change and offered staff members a support as they processed through the emotions and ambiguities of learning to think and work in new ways. They were charged to utilize their

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journey partners as a resource, an ear, and/or a thought partner as they worked toward improvement together. Staff members described their journey partners in various ways including but not limited to: (a) someone they could trust to listen and not judge, (b) a person they could ask questions regarding race without the fear of saying the wrong thing, and (c) a colleague they could ask to join them in the challenging of a specific racist act or practice when they weren't comfortable doing it alone.

Having been through BD several times as the school leader I acquired several journey partners over the years. Some of my thoughts on having journey partners and what I learned from one of my journey partners are noted in the following reflection:

My relationships with my journey partners were unique and I have an appreciation for the understanding, strength, and support I have gleaned from each one. As a Black female leader in a predominately White staffed district, I felt that I needed White allies in this work. I recognized that the type of systemic change needed to improve conditions for Black students needed a unified effort and one much broader than what I could offer as one voice. I also felt that my voice as a Black administrator often went unheard and my White journey partners were at times able to communicate some of my same concerns with different results. I took serious my role as a journey partner and enjoyed offering a different racial perspective to several of my White colleagues.

One of my journey partners was both a supervisor and a mentor of mine. I found that my relationship with her as a journey partner at times flattened our hierarchical relationship and allowed us to speak freely about issues pertaining to race and work. In our communications with one another we inherently understood that when we addressed each other as journey partner that meant that the other aspects of our relationship were

put on hold. We could speak freely, our conversations were confidential, and we had free

reign to adamantly challenge one another's thoughts, assumptions, beliefs, and decisions.

In addition, there was an open invitation to observe each other's practice and question

where actions and espoused beliefs seemed inconsistent. We called out the presence and

role that Whiteness played in our actions and decision-making and the potential harm it

caused Black students. We discussed times when our silence perpetuated racism and

caused harm. On several occasions our conversations that occurred in the safe space of

the journey partner relationship influenced decisions that were made that had impacts on

the entire district.

This specific journey partner relationship acted as a model of how I wanted my

supervisors to engage with me at all times to support my practice as I worked to lead for

racial equity. Honest communication, professional freedom, genuine benevolence, mutual

accountability, and a critical lens on race characterized our relationship. Unfortunately,

at first this only occurred during journey partner conversations and as those

conversations ended we both code switched back to what Singleton (2006) calls 'White

Talk', a communication style more hierarchical in nature and steeped in White culture.

As I became more aware of the dual-nature of our relationship and we discussed it,

things improved to some degree. I put forth efforts to be more consistent in my

communication and to shift our conversations and interactions to become more heavily

influenced by our journey partner relationship. I feel she did some of the same.

Through reflecting on what worked in my journey partner relationship I learned

and then shared with my other supervisors the type of coaching and supervision that I

found to be most supportive. At the same time, through working at King I learned more

about the impacts of systemic racism and I started to question more, challenge decisions, and advocate for my Black students. This wasn't fully embraced by my supervisors and in time I grew more and more comfortable with their discomfort and didn't allow it to silence me.

Over time, I came to learn that I might not have been able to dictate the nature of how I was supervised, but as a principal, I could dictate how the 70 staff members I was responsible for were supervised. I became more purposeful about creating relationships between my staff members and myself that were more characteristic of journey partner relationships. I wanted my staff to challenge and sharpen my lens for racial equity. I wanted and needed their assistance in challenging the practices and procedures we had embraced as a school that were steeped in White culture and not working for our Black male students. I asked them to call me on things that seemed to not support our Black males and to question decisions that failed to support our improvement efforts. I extended this professional freedom to them, with two requirements. First, they had to do the same for themselves and their colleagues. Second, they had to be open when the same critical lens was placed on their practice. Together, we decided that the journey partner dynamic was the type of relationship that we wanted to work to foster among all of our staff members.

Equity Team Development

At Pittsburgh King, an Equity Team (E-Team) was created to develop and support the implementation of a school-wide plan for equity transformation to better serve the student population. Led by the principal, this team, consisting of 8 teachers, 1 counselor, and 1 literacy interventionist engaged in on-going professional learning focused on race

and equity. Together, and with the support of PEG, they owned the charge of accelerating their own learning and supporting the learning of others. They designed and delivered professional learning opportunities for the entire school staff. In addition, they carried out the following key responsibilities put forth by the Pacific Education Group in the paper *Introduction to Site Equity Leadership Team Development (2011)*:

1. Engage in a thorough internal analysis of the school to build on current strengths as well as examine, identify, and mitigate any existing challenges that limit the school's ability to achieve its goal of equity and excellence,

2. Examine school culture and climate through the lens of race and equity, and identify essential elements that must be addressed through strategies and action plans,

3. Organize, analyze, and maintain a current and historical collection of compelling school data (achievement/ performance/attitudinal) that drives all decision-making and guides school-wide equity transformation efforts,

4. Define performance metrics against which the school will assess progress toward equity goals,

5. Develop an optimal school structure that establishes effective management strategies for successfully implementing the school's Systemic Equity Transformation Plan,

6. Develop or enhance a school-wide professional learning community that focuses on achieving equity and excellence for ALL learners, including staff meeting/professional learning facilitation,

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7. Facilitate faculty/staff equity study groups (book groups, literature circles, discussions of current and critical research), and

8. Participate in equity walk-throughs.

Building upon the PEG E-Team model, E-Team members were selected by the principal based on a combination of a set of selection criteria recommended by Pacific Education Group, previous teacher effectiveness evaluation data, and teacher learning style. The PEG selection criteria provided eight factors that all staff members were rated on according to a point scale. The factors included the following: effectiveness with black and brown students (5 points), diverse racial perspectives (5 points), commitment to racial equity (4 points), ability to influence colleagues (3 points), works well with others (3 points), seniority (1 point), grade-level/subject balance (1 point), and time/willingness to learn and lead (1 point). It was recommended by PEG that the staff with the highest scores become E-Team members. The principal chose to cross-reference the list of staff with the highest scores with the school's teacher effectiveness data. This was used to remove any teachers who may have scored higher on the selection criteria but failed to display teaching practice that the principal deemed as highly effective. This decision was made to ensure the E-Team members demonstrated a level of practice the school leader wanted positioned as a model for others to learn from. In addition, it allowed the principal to add additional staff members who demonstrated quality practice but were limited in their score based on factors out of their control such as being new to teaching or new to the King staff. Last, the principal reviewed the list of potential E-Team members with a lens on learning styles. The principal used personal knowledge and teacher reflections about their learning preferences to ensure the group reflected staff

members with various learning styles. This was done to equip the team to better target the various learning styles that would be represented across the entire staff.

PEG supported E-Team member development through BD training and a series of six one-day seminars. The topics and sequence of learning for each seminar were as follows: (a) Critical Race Theory and Schooling, (b) Advancing Equity Via Technology, (c) Equity/Anti-Racist Leadership, Systems Thinking, Professional Learning, and School Culture, (d) Culturally Relevant Schools and Classrooms, (e) Empowering Families and Engaging Communities of Color, (f) Moving From Theory to Action: Designing and Implementing a Plan for Creating and Sustaining School-Wide Equity Transformation. These seminars were aimed at building the knowledge and capacity of E-Team members to lead the transformation within their school.

While the seminars were instrumental in supporting the team's development, more important was the work the team did to deepen and extend their learning and apply it to their practice between seminars. The principal met with the team bi-weekly to reflect on new learning and experiences, make connections to the school and district context, engage in supplemental and additional learning, nurture relationships and trust among team members, and practice the use of new inquiry, reflection, and facilitation skills. During these meeting times, referred to as cohort learning, the personal and professional transformation of staff members was nurtured as the E-Team members supported and challenged one another. Learning occurred among the group that influenced teaching practice and led to the development of new practices among the group. In addition, the team informally interacted with one another around their learning and experiences in the

course of their day-to-day work. Both formally and informally, learning about race and equity were incorporated into the E-Team's practice.

The principal's continued learning and reflection as the E-Team leader was key and was often shared with the team in various ways. Provided is an example of a reflection written by the school leader that was discussed with the E-Team:

At a recent conference about race, a colleague encouraged me to attend a session on post-traumatic slave syndrome (PTSS). His words to me were, "As much PTSS as you have going on in your school, you better be in that session." Having only a surface understanding of the term and a somewhat defensive stance in regards to how the suggestion was made, I entered the session curious to understand what PTSS was and how it was present in my learning environment. In the session presented by Dr. Joy DeGruy, she encouraged participants to view their attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors through the lens of history to gain an understanding of the impact centuries of slavery and oppression has had on African Americans. She stretched my thinking to examine our school-based practices in new ways. One of the biggest connections I made was in reference to the role cognitive dissonance played in the time of slavery and how it plays a similar role in our school today. Reading her book, Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing (2005), helped me to understand the connection to an even greater degree.

According to Dr. DeGruy (2005),

When we commit a negative act or think about doing so most of us get uncomfortable. This discomfort is caused by the difference between our action and what we believe about ourselves…This discomfort is called "Cognitive

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Dissonance"...The greater the difference between our actions and what we think

about ourselves, the greater the cognitive dissonance and so, our discomfort.

… Humans do not particularly like this discomfort so whenever it occurs we

almost immediately try to resolve it. And we can resolve it one of two ways.

One way is to own up to the negative act and address the harm caused by it.

The other way is to justify the negative act rather than admit any wrongdoing.

(p. 52)

In reference to slavery, Dr. DeGruy explained how the beliefs of some Whites about being good and God-fearing people were put in sharp contrast with their ill treatment of slaves, whereby producing cognitive dissonance. Instead of owning up to negative actions and addressing the harm the actions caused, people instead chose to rectify the dissonance by justifying their actions through the dehumanization and labeling of slaves. History is wrought with examples of how slaves were labeled including but not limited to the following labels:

James Madison (President): ...inhabitants, but as debased by servitude below the equal level of free inhabitants; which regards the slave as divested of two-fifths of the man,

Carl Von Linnaaeus (Biological scientist): Homo Afer as black, phlegmatic, cunning, lazy, lustful, careless, and governed by caprice,

Thomas Jefferson (President): Smelled bad and were physically unattractive, required less sleep, were dumb, cowardly and incapable of feeling grief.

Dr. DeGruy provides examples of labeling that occurred through taxonomy, government policies, phrenology and IQ testing that all attempted to support the superiority of Whites

and the inferiority of Blacks to justify the actions of slavery, whereby reducing the

cognitive dissonance.

With this historical lens, I made the following connections to the present-day

schooling of Black males in America and specifically in our school. Educators tend to

have positive thoughts about themselves and the impact they can make on student

learning. In my experience, most teachers I've worked with have rated themselves as

proficient or distinguished in their practice indicating they have the ability to teach in

ways that foster learning in students. This speaks to what they believe about themselves,

their self-efficacy, and the relationship between teaching and learning. In the classroom

and in actual practice however, data suggests many are unable to find success in their

ability to teach Black male students. The lack of success manifests itself as a culture of

low expectations. This creates cognitive dissonance in that someone seeing him/herself as

a good teacher doesn't match with the mistreatment or failure to effectively educate

Black males. As Dr. DeGruy pointed out, there are two ways to resolve the cognitive

dissonance. One way would be to own the negative actions, the mistreatment of Black

male students or poor teaching practice and begin to address the harm caused by

learning new ways of thinking and new professional practices. This is what I hope we can

do as a staff and we must give a safe space and the necessary tools and support for it to

occur. The second way to resolve the cognitive dissonance experienced is the way more

commonly chosen, which is to label Black males in ways that seem to some to justify their

mistreatment. This is what I see consistently occurring with the labeling of Black males

as in need of special education services, as emotionally disturbed, and as having

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). For example, if an educator fails to

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consistently engage a Black male student, the student can be labeled as having ADHD.

Our school system is set up to allow for these diagnoses to occur by examining the

students' behavior without regard to the teachers' behaviors or levels of instruction. If a

student doesn't feel connected to a teacher or valued in a classroom and acts out because

of it, he may be labeled as having a behavior disorder or being emotionally disturbed.

The use of more harsh forms of punishment such as alternative placements are used more

commonly with Black male students who are often labeled as having conduct disorders.

Similarly to what occurred with slavery, it is the process of relabeling a group of people

to fit the behavior expressed toward them, whereby reducing the cognitive dissonance

experienced. This is how I racialize and interpret the data that suggests Black males are

overrepresented in special education and with specific diagnoses.

The principal made clear in sharing this reflection and others that her perspective was one way to view things and that different perspectives were needed to best understand the challenges that played out in the school. E-Team members shared other perspectives and the special education instructional team leader for the school was brought into the conversations. The team's continued dialogue and data analysis around the PSE referral process at King led to the development of a school-wide goal to decrease the number of students referred to emotional support regional classrooms. This goal led to the development of a more comprehensive referral process with multiple perspectives being required, more robust intervention options to assist students that had to be put into place prior to a referral, and a greater level of awareness among staff members of the supports available to them and their students. During the 2013-2014 school year, the goal was attained and fewer students were referred for emotional support placements at King.

Collaborative Action Research for Equity (CARE): Focal Student Process

A cohort of six teacher leaders and the school principal engaged in the CARE process, which allowed them to deeply examine themselves as racial beings and their teaching as it relates to Black male students. "CARE provides a basic framework for professionalizing collaborative action research on equity issues through guided learning that acquaints teachers with core racial equity principles and practices, essential components of culturally relevant teaching, and a rudimentary understanding of intrinsic motivation" (Singleton, 2013, p. 242). Through this process the cohort was positioned to learn from King's Black male students and from each other about how we could better serve this population. This action research process was designed to increase cultural proficiency and instructional mastery based on culturally relevant practices that effectively engage Black males in instruction.

Singleton describes the process as follows:

CARE teachers…are asked to select a focal group of from five to seven students who represent the particular racial demographic the teachers are struggling to educate effectively. They are charged to monitor closely these students' academic performance, affect, and engagement as they employ culturally relevant, innovative instructional modifications and approaches intentionally designed to improve the school achievement of the targeted, harder-to-reach students but implemented for all children in their classrooms. The teachers must consult with the students in the focal groups before, during, and after implementing the approaches to gauge their overall effectiveness in reaching the students. (p. 243)

At King, Black males have been observed disconnecting from learning in various ways and for a multitude of reasons. Some examples noted at King include (a) a student becoming bored with the low level of rigor in a lesson and putting his head down, (b) a lesson lacking cultural relevance failing to engage a student who then begins to act out, (c) a gifted child is over looked for gifted placement and is instead placed in a lower level class in which he chooses not to participate, and (d) a student not feeling connected to the teacher and choosing to disconnect from learning as a sign of rejection. The teachers were asked to observe for disengagement in their classrooms to help to identify their 3-5 focal students which all included Black males.

Once focal students were identified, the teachers began to gather above the line information, that which is publicly known, and below the line information, that which is not known about students on the surface. The types of information teachers collected included academic data, behavioral data, strengths and areas of growth, personal interests, home life information, aspirations, self and peer perceptions, and barriers to success. They conducted home visits, interviewed students, met with parents, spoke with colleagues, and engaged in other activities that assisted them in the study of their focal students.

The CARE teachers then began to plan lessons specifically targeting the engagement and success of their focal students. They studied various methodologies for culturally relevant pedagogy offered by Pacific Education Group and selected strategies based on the knowledge they had about their students. In addition, the full staff conducted book studies on *Dream Keepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* by Gloria Ladson-Billings and *Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques that Put Students on*

the Path to College by Doug Lemov to support their efforts. The CARE team put forth effort to learn more about the teaching and learning of Black students and then partnered that with what they knew about their focal students to inform the content and process of their instruction. The goal was to connect those students who are traditionally the most disconnected from teaching and learning.

The teachers observed one another with a focus on how the focal students engaged in lessons. Under the guidance of the school leader, they utilized a three-part observation protocol that included a pre-conference, observation, and debrief. Changes were made to the protocol, as the team deemed necessary. During one CARE meeting, the team utilized the observation protocol to help a White male science teacher recognize that the Black females in his class were dominating classroom discourse in ways that marginalized the Black male students. Through reflection, this teacher shared that being aware of the historical challenges women have faced in science he consistently focused on ensuring his female students were engaged and participating during classes. His bias combined with the dominant personalities of some of the particular female students in his room had created a space in which the male student's voices weren't really heard during class. During a classroom observation, the team noticed that the table groups were led by female students, the presenters selected by each group were female, and the students who were called on most frequently for answers were female. This condition had unintentionally been created in this classroom and the CARE team was able to help identify it and work with the teacher to shift classroom practices to ensure there was a space for Black male voices in the classroom. Work was also done with the students to

train them in strategies to ensure they helped to create conditions in which all voices in their classroom were heard and valued.

Following lessons the CARE team teachers engaged in conversations with the focal students about their learning asking questions such as, "What can I do differently to help you learn this?" and "Do you feel that I pushed you to do your best?" The teachers continued to try various strategies with their focal students and monitored the success of the strategies over time. The team gathered data on the achievement, engagement, behavior, attendance, and self-perception of their focal students. The teachers shared their findings with one another and offered feedback to one another on an on-going basis. They provided explicit coaching around the teaching and learning of their focal students. Open dialogue focused on race and continuous feedback were central factors in this design. The trusting relationship that was established among the CARE teachers was essential.

The strategies identified as positively impacting focal students were then shared with other staff members throughout the school. The process was utilized to identify key aspects of culturally relevant teaching that support the success of Black male students in King's school context. The CARE team teachers were evaluated on their ability to demonstrate their work had an impact on their learning, the learning of their students, and the learning of the broader school community.

Equity Focused Tools for Evaluation

In 2009, the Research-based Inclusive System of Evaluation (RISE), a differentiated system of teacher evaluation, was created by PPS as one lens to understand teacher effectiveness. RISE used a comprehensive rubric to define effective teaching

across four domains and 24 components of practice. The RISE rubric was based upon Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*. However, it extended Danielson's Framework to include one component, 3g Implementing Lessons Equitably, specifically focused on a teacher's ability to provide culturally responsive instruction to all students. Evaluation was one way the district increased accountability placed on teachers to address racial achievement disparities.

The original version of component 3g symbolically acknowledged racial disparities and called for a focus on implementing lessons equitably across all student subgroups. It referenced six tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy that teachers were encouraged to incorporate into their practice. However, the component language lacked specificity, which made it difficult for teachers and observers to utilize in practice. This resulted in the inflation of ratings for many teachers across the district. To address the challenges presented in the rubric, at King, the principal and E-team members utilized their learning from the E-Team and CARE work to build upon the original 3g language to develop observation tools and equity walk protocols to support teacher practice.

During the 2012-13 school year the entire RISE rubric was revised to streamline the language in the rubric. In addition, it was expanded to include indicators, critical attributes, and examples for most components. Component 3g was noted with a statement that indicated it would be revised throughout the course of the year. This provided central office leaders time to work with the E-Team at King to leverage the learning and experience of the team to inform the rewriting of 3g. Through collaboration between central office and King's E-Team a new version of component 3g was written and published during the 2013-14 school year. The process of collaboration included multiple

iterations, piloting the rubric in classrooms across the district, observing and learning to name practices and student behaviors, studying other rubrics, researching models for culturally relevant practices, and focus group sessions with E-Team members.

After the publishing of the revised version of 3g, the principal and a teacher from King worked with the director of professional development to develop a learning module to support teacher and administrator understanding of 3g. This module addressed the purpose of the component, defined terms utilized within the component, and allowed participants to practice observing and discussing the component. This module was delivered for the entire King staff and for central office leaders, principals, and teachers across the district. On-going coaching was offered to principals across the district to assist with developing understanding and calibration around 3g.

Surveying

Based on the learning that occurred and the powerful narratives that the team gathered through interviewing and the CARE work, surveying is noted as a potential future design worthwhile of consideration. According to Ron Ferguson (2012), creator of Tripod Student Surveys, "no observer, no matter how well trained, has more first-hand experience in any particular classroom than the students" (para. 1). Surveying students would provide specific and direct feedback from those who are most knowledgeable about the effectiveness of a teachers' instruction, the students. This method of inquiry would allow educators to hear from Black male students around a wider variety of aspects of their educational experiences in the specific context of Pittsburgh King. Surveying students could also help to give an ear to the voice of Black males around specific items they feel need improved upon in the teaching and learning environment.

If this type of design were created, student, staff, parent, and community representatives would work together to create the survey questions. There would be a sharing of power in collaboratively identifying the questions that were posed and in the decisions that were made around what information should or should not be solicited. Therefore, the survey tool would serve as a reflection of what the school community values and wants to learn more about. The co-creation of the survey would ensure it was informed by, understood by, and supported by those who hold stake in the design. A protocol to support the collaboration among stakeholders in the creation of the survey would serve as a necessary tool of the design. A sample survey is provided below to offer suggestions for the type of questions that may provide insight into the culture that exists in schools for Black male students.

1. My teachers have high expectations for me.
   Agree   Disagree   No Opinion

2. My teachers believe in me.
   Agree   Disagree   No Opinion

3. I have positive relationships/rapport with my teachers.
   Agree   Disagree   No Opinion

4. My teachers give all students equal attention regardless of student race.
   Agree   Disagree   No Opinion

5. My teachers hold all students accountable for putting forth effort regardless of student race.
   Agree   Disagree   No Opinion

6. My teachers hold all students accountable for their behavior regardless of student race.
   Agree   Disagree   No Opinion

7. My teachers stereotype students based on their race.
   Agree   Disagree   No Opinion

8. The majority of the teachers in my school are of the same race as me.

Agree   Disagree   No Opinion

9. I am comfortable discussing issues pertaining to race with my teachers.
   Agree   Disagree   No Opinion

10. Black males students are treated fairly in my school.
    Agree   Disagree   No Opinion

Surveys yield data that can be rendered as evidence. Findings from surveys are useable in professional practice as they can be used to enter into difficult race-based conversations, to plan next steps for professional development, and to spark individual educator reflection. Similar to the interviews that were conducted while inquiring, a survey could help render a narrative often unheard. Taking this into consideration, a potential future design would logically include a student survey.

Data Analysis

Research is rich with data that helps educators learn about racial achievement disparities. According to author Glenn E. Singleton (2013), this breadth and depth of data is a necessity. Singleton states, "Without a clear way of describing, through data, how race affects schooling, it will be impossible to address how broadly and deeply systemic racism influences, if not determines, achievement" (p. 75). However, caution is needed in how this data is gathered, shared, and interpreted. Singleton explains that educators who possess damaging racial beliefs bring such biases to their interpretation of racialized achievement data. For this reason, the designs for action in this study were informed by data but they didn't stop at helping people learn through achievement data analysis. A design that would only require traditional data analysis would run the risk of merely allowing educators an opportunity to reinforce their racial biases by using the data as supporting evidence for their beliefs. To foster true improvement, these designs for action

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reached beyond traditional school-based data analysis to challenge the beliefs educators carry to their interpretation of the data. Singleton explains,

> …analysis of the data alone cannot equip educators with the requisite will, skill, knowledge and capacity to take an honest look at how race influences their personal, professional, and organization beliefs and perspective with regard to student ability and learning. Nor can data reveal how educators' problematic and unchecked racial beliefs, perspective, and attitudes, particularly those about under-served student-of-color populations, determine the behaviors of those educators inside and outside the classroom. (p.75)

The following illustration is provided as an example of the type of beliefs and actions educators were challenged to examine through these designs, specifically as they relate to the education of Black males in the context of King:

Data for PPS suggests that Black males are over represented in special education and disproportionately diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and/or Emotional Disturbance. King's school data reflects the same trend. In addition, it shows Black male students are disproportionately referred out of the classroom for disciplinary reasons. During a discipline committee meeting this data was shared with staff members and each individual teacher was provided with the data regarding the referrals he/she wrote for the school year. For the teachers that disproportionately referred Black males to the office, this was highlighted. When asked to share what they noticed about the data, one White teacher with alarming data responded, "No wonder I can't control them, half are already labeled with issues and the other half probably need labeled." When pushed by a White E-Team member to share more about her perspective

during the course of the meeting, the teacher continued by explaining that many of her male students (all of which are Black), have never been taught how to act and so they just don't know what to do in school. When two of her White colleagues pushed back explaining that in their classrooms some of the same males were finding success and displayed appropriate behavior, the teacher shared that her challenges were compounded by the lack of appreciation her male students had for the subject she taught. This served as an example of how when people hold negative racial beliefs about Black males, they bring those views to the interpretation of the data and allow it to confirm their beliefs rather than support the development of new ones. This also serves as an example of where students could benefit from the teacher being pushed to more deeply examine her own personal and professional beliefs about the Black males she serves. Following the meeting, this teacher's journey partner engaged in several conversations with her regarding interactions with her students and the beliefs that drove her practices. Her journey partner invited the teacher into her classroom to observe some of the same students in another setting in which they experienced success. The designs for action worked together in this scenario to foster improvement by creating a space where the dialogue noted above could occur. The designs for actions also provided the tools for the examination and in some cases interruption of these types of beliefs. Further, the designs for action helped to ensure it wasn't only the role of the school leader to challenge beliefs and low expectations, but other staff members shared in the responsibility as their capacity to provide support had been raised.

In an effort to increase expectations and improve education for Black male students, these designs for action provided an opportunity for people to learn about how

systemic racism creates and perpetuates a culture of low expectations for Black males through the personal and professional examination of racial beliefs. Further these designs produced opportunities for people to challenge beliefs and learn new practices that support improvement. These designs were informed by data and at the same time produced different types of data. The data produced and potential ways to measure it are discussed in the next section of this work.

Part III- Generative Impacts

In the previous sections of this work, systemic racism creating and perpetuating a culture of low expectations for Black males in public schools was discussed. This problem was framed as a matter of social justice and examined from various perspectives. Designs for action were created to work toward improving teacher practice to ultimately improve the quality of education afforded to Black males in public schools. The designs were discussed as they were implemented in one specific school context. They were created to produce impacts that were generative in nature. This section, Part III of this work, Generative Impacts, is aimed at sharing the results that have occurred thus far and to describe those that are anticipated to occur in the future based on the continuation of the designs for action.

Unlike a traditional research study, this last section doesn't aim to draw final conclusions to the research questions previously presented or pose recommendations to resolve the problem it addresses. Instead, this section serves to document the results of the work for improvement that have occurred thus far in regards to the implementation of the designs for action. It offers what has been learned from what has been done. Perhaps more importantly, it serves as the agenda for the work that has yet to be done. It discusses

how the work should continue so that additional learning that leads to improvement can be made. It also shares my next steps as a researcher and practitioner as I map out my working agenda. Within this final section, arguments are offered regarding the importance of the anticipated generative impacts. The anticipated generative impacts are described and discussed as they support the aims of educational improvement.

Findings

Through improvement science, we are reminded of the central law of improvement; every system is perfectly designed to deliver the results it gets. Improvement science also teaches us that we need to see and understand the system that produces the current outcomes. Through a deep examination of the system operating in PPS and specifically Pittsburgh King, I was able to better understand how the system steeped in systemic racism is designed to fail Black males and ultimately rob them of their academic potential. After gaining an understanding of the system, I created designs for action to introduce changes into the system. The designs created were aimed at providing teachers opportunities to learn and improve their practice to ultimately improve the quality of education for Black males. I understand that teacher practice is but one factor in the system that oppresses Black males in school. I also recognize that the designs created represent small changes introduced to a large system. However, I also believe that this feasible approach is how improvement in a school must begin.

Teachers. Designs for action were created and implemented in the context of Pittsburgh King to create opportunities for teachers to learn, reflect, and improve practice. Through the implementation of these designs and/or the testing of changes that were introduced to the system of teaching and learning, improvements were made in

adult practices at King. As described in Part II, changes occurred in increasing awareness, challenging beliefs and assumptions, fostering reflection, and improving instruction to meet student needs. In this section, a few pieces of evidence are shared to further illustrate the improvements that were made among staff before the focus shifts to highlight the results that occurred directly for Black male students.

First, an excerpt from a letter written to the principal by a King teacher is shared. This letter was written by a White male teacher who in the beginning of the year questioned why a conversation about race was needed in school. Throughout the school year he became an active participant in professional development sessions focused on equity and began to use the tools he learned both personally and professionally. He wrote:

> *...our work has made me more cognizant of some of the difficulties of the African American student. You have made me think and rethink many aspects of my instruction. I often find myself watching or reading about topics that involve race, then asking myself questions that I would have never asked before. I never once felt threatened or have been made to feel uncomfortable in any of our equity in-services, due to opinions that I have. As a White person I'm well aware of the uncomfortable situation that occurs when race is discussed. I can't express how thankful I am to have been involved in discussions that have made me examine many of my own thoughts. I know that for any real change to occur we first must experience discomfort, but there is a tremendous difference between discomfort and fear. Fear will paralyze a person whereas discomfort is sometimes necessary for us not to become complacent. You*

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have always been transparent with the importance of having an environment that

produces the highest level of achievement for all of our students.

By the end of the year, this same teacher used the tools he had been equipped with to publicly challenge central office leadership on decisions that were made that he felt perpetuated systemic racism and caused harm to the students at King. This is shared as but one example of many illustrating how the designs for action helped to impact teachers' awareness, beliefs, reflections, and practice.

A second piece of evidence that is offered to support the claim that teacher effectiveness improved at King was the positive change in teacher performance levels from 2013 to 2014. It is important to note that teacher effectiveness in PPS is measured by a combination of observational data, student perception data, value-added measures based on academic assessment data, and school-level value added measures. In PPS, teachers are assessed by these combined measures and then rated at four levels including distinguished, proficient, needs improvement, or failing. During the 2013 school year, the percent of teachers rated in each performance level was as follows: distinguished 16%, proficient 63%, needs improvement 9%, and failing 13%. During the 2014 school year, ratings increased to reflect the following distribution in teacher performance ratings: distinguished 26%, proficient 63%, needs improvement 8%, and failing 3%. These changes represent a 50% decrease in the percent of teachers performing in the lowest two categories of the evaluation system and a 10-point increase in the percent of teachers performing at the highest category of the evaluation system. These improvements in performance data reflect changes that were noted during informal and formal observations throughout the last school year as teachers began to incorporate what they

learned about culturally relevant pedagogy into their classrooms. Specific efforts were targeted at engaging Black males in quality instruction in many teachers' classrooms and that is noted as improvement.

Another piece of data offered to demonstrate improvement in adult practice is feedback from an observation conducted by one teacher, an E-Team and CARE team member, in another teacher's classroom. This represents improvement on many levels as it reflects the culture of collaboration that was established in which teachers felt comfortable going into one another's classrooms to provide feedback and support. The content of the feedback provided also reflects the isolation of race and a specific lens placed on the expectations and interactions with Black males in the classroom. The feedback stated,

> *Enriching the Curriculum: On two occasions, you asked rapid-fire, scaffolded questions of increasingly lower cognitive skill without giving wait time or allowing students to answer. By the end of your questioning, students were required to give only one word answers and not justify their thinking.*
>
> *When asking questions, allow struggle time before scaffolding and asking another question. In addition, require students to justify their answers and reasoning.*
>
> *With one AA male student, you suggested that he use "basic" transition words, rather than pushing him toward higher levels words. Continuing this practice may subtly convey a lack of confidence in student ability.*
>
> *Push student effort and persistence by a statement such as, "We have already listed some common transition words, but what other transition words can you*

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think of to add to the list?" In addition, increasing positive praise and your

confidence in student ability may also increase effort and persistence.

I noticed a black male enter your room and attempt to ask you a question. Your

response to him was direct and without hesitation to get his belongings without

answering his question. On two other occasions, he had his hand raised but was

not addressed. When he approached the crate for his belongings and Tonya

began to talk to him, again your response for him to stop talking and get his work

was immediate and direct; however Tonya, was not addressed for the same

behaviors. In addition, another black male sat at the front of the room and

thumbed through two books without reading.

Systems need put in place for students to give consistent effort and persist; even

when the work is hard. You must begin to consistently portray confidence in ALL

students' abilities. In addition, with so few students in the room, more effort

needs put into monitoring students working independently so that they are fully

completing assignments and not opting out of learning.

The following link contains information and suggestions for ways to increase

effort and persistence with your students. Please refer to chapters 4 (Resilience)

and 5 (Effort and Motivation) for support and ideas on implementation.

http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/mf_CAREbook0804.pdf

The feedback provided on peer-to-peer observations was not always as targeted or

specific. This particular observation reflects the collective accountability that was

developed over time among staff members to improve practice as it related to Black male

achievement. Efforts to address low expectations did not fall solely on the administrator but were shared among the staff. The observer and the teacher observed in the lesson noted above, continued to work together throughout the year in a supportive relationship that ultimately improved the practice of the observed teacher as documented in the observed teacher's evaluation. This represents one example of a practice that became normed into the King school culture.

Other changes that were noted among the staff included an intense focus on relationship building with the students, lesson plans that were more reflective of students' needs that included how specific student needs would be addressed in lessons, a heightened level of risk taking as teachers strove to enrich the curriculum, identification and challenging of biased assessments, more accurate self-assessments of teaching practice, greater collaboration and demonstrated colleague support among the staff, a more consistent awareness of the presence of racism, the hiring of additional staff members of color, and the regular exposing and often interruption of racist beliefs and actions. As change began to occur in individuals personally, these patterns became more noticeable in their professional work. With continued implementation of the designs for action, these improvements are likely to continue and foster the other generative impacts discussed later in this section.

Students. The changes that were introduced to the system through the designs for action were created to impact teacher practice and ultimately Black male student achievement. At this time, it is too early to say that consistent and significant improvement for Black males has been achieved. To realize the full impact of the designs for action on the Black male students at King, the implementation period must continue

for a longer period of time. However, there are some data points available that point to the growing improvements in academic achievement and the learning environment for Black males. These promising data points act as evidence of the need for continued implementation. For example, in regards to a measure of academic improvement, the 2014 preliminary Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessment (PSSA) for Pittsburgh King show significant growth in the percent of students demonstrating proficiency on the reading and math exams from the previous year. In math, the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced grew by 18.6 points, and in reading it grew by 12.7 points. While it is still too soon to identify what percent of that growth is attributed to Black males, it is safe to say that academic growth or improvement has been achieved. As central office data files are cleaned and disaggregated an important next step will be to analyze the data to identify the specific growth made by Black males.

Another data point that highlights improvement made in the education offered to the Black male students at King is the decrease in the overall number of school suspensions as well as a decrease in the proportion of those total suspensions that are attributed to Black males. The total number of suspensions for Black males at King has decreased from 445 in 2012, to 252 in 2013, to 114 in 2014. This represents a 74% decrease in the number of suspensions for Black males. In addition, the proportion of the overall suspensions that were attributed to Black males was 77% in 2012. This proportion decreased to 64% in 2013 and 55% in 2014. While this data reflects a clear need for continued efforts, it is notable that progress has been made. Black male students aren't being denied learning opportunities at the rates they once were and they aren't being overly consequenced to the degree that they were in the past.

In regards to suspensions, another way to examine the data that demonstrates the improvement that occurred is examining the risk index, defined as the likelihood that a child of a specific race will be suspended. Below, Table 3 shows that the risk index for Black students decreased from 25% to 16% in the 2014 school year. In addition, the disparity between the risk index for Black students and the risk index for White students has narrowed 4 points from 17% to 13%.

Table 3

Suspension Risk Index for Black and White Students

Year	Black Enrolled	Black Suspended	B lack Risk Index	White Enrolled	White Suspended	White Risk Index	Disparity
2013	623	153	25%	50	4	8%	17%
2014	603	97	16%	29	1	3%	13%

While the risk index for Black males isn't currently identifiable, it can be noted that in 2013 there were 99 Black males suspended and in 2014 that number was reduced to 60. Next steps for data analysis should also include analyzing risk index by race and gender. This will allow the specific improvements attributed to Black males to be noted.

Another data point that reflects improvements made at Pittsburgh King is offered from the student perspective utilizing the Tripod Survey created by Dr. Ronald F. Ferguson of Harvard University. The Tripod Survey is a student perception survey that asks students about their experiences in individual classes to gain insight about learning conditions, student engagement, and teaching practices. The survey is administered to all students two times per school year and the results for each year are averaged to produce a yearly score. Scores are reported as the percent of favorable responses received across 7 areas called the 7 C's which include care, challenge, control, clarify, captivate, confer, and consolidate. The scores for each of the 7 areas are then averaged to compile a total 7

Cs score. The scores are reported by the following grade spans, K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. The

Tripod scores are incorporated into teachers' evaluations and offered to them to provide

feedback about how students experience their practice. It is one thing for the adults to say

that the adults are improving; however, we were interested in what our students thought

of our improvement efforts. Tripod Survey data for Pittsburgh King provided in Tables 4

and 5 below reflect improvement in every category measured from the 2013 to 2014

results.

Table 4

2013 Tripod Results for Pittsburgh King

2013	7C Score	Care	Challenge	Control	Clarify	Captivate	Confer	Consolidate
K-2	80%	87%	86%	59%	85%	78%	81%	84%
3-5	69%	79%	78%	44%	79%	63%	65%	74%
6-8	53%	56%	68%	36%	58%	45%	51%	59%

Table 5

2014 Tripod Results for Pittsburgh King

2014	7C Score	Care	Challenge	Control	Clarify	Captivate	Confer	Consolidate
K-2	85%	92%	91%	65%	89%	86%	87%	87%
3-5	71%	80%	81%	46%	80%	66%	68%	78%
6-8	58%	61%	71%	38%	64%	53%	53%	65%

Of particular interest are the increases in the category noted as challenge across each

grade level as it most closely relates to the expectations teachers have for students.

According to The Tripod Project and Cambridge Education LLC (2014), this indicator

offers teachers feedback on their practice in areas represented by the following prompts:

Challenge

1. The ways that you respond when students express doubts about their own

abilities;

2. How you remind students of past obstacles that they were able to overcome through persistence;

3. How you seem to set challenges that are enough, but not too much, for each student;

4. What you say to your students when you see them beginning to give up;

5. How you explain to them the difference between memorization and understanding;

6. The ways that you model the persistence and rigor that you want to emulate in your classroom;

7. The ways you celebrate success when students succeed beyond their expectations. (p. 2)

Again, PPS currently doesn't provide the ability to disaggregate this data by race and gender and should consider that as a next step. However, even with the data in aggregate form it is easily discernible that improvements have been made. This growth in Tripod scores is reflective of teachers taking feedback from students and inquiring about their classroom experiences throughout the year to better meet the needs of students as well as the efforts to make instruction culturally relevant.

The next data point that reflects improvement for the education of Black males at King includes a decrease in the number of Black males referred to regional placements, specifically emotional support classrooms. During the 2012-13 school year, 15 students, the majority of who were Black males, were referred out of King and moved into more restrictive regional placement classrooms. This meant that for 15 students, the King staff felt that the needs of those students were too high and that the students would be better

served in more restrictive environments. During the 2013-14 school year, 1 Black male student was referred to a regional emotional support classroom. This is a reflection of the increased capacity of King staff to meet students' needs, the work done to revise the special education referral process, and shifts in mindset about our responsibilities to our students and our belief in their potential.

Other anecdotal data highlights changes that with further investigation may also be recognized as improvements. For example, an increase in the number of Black male students participating in extra-curricular activities, an increase in the active participation of Black males during classroom instruction, an increase in the number of Black males performing at the highest level of school-wide behavior system titled Monarch status, and a decrease in the number of Black male students on court sanctioned probation at King. These changes and those noted above are data points that foreshadow significant and consistent improvements to the education of Black males. If the designs for action are continually implemented with integrity, it is anticipated that the quality of education for Black males and consequently their achievement will improve. Black male academic success is the generative impact that will result from continually addressing the systematic racism that lowers expectations and robs Black males of their academic potential.

Research Questions. In addition to learning about the impacts the designs for action had on the adults and the Black male students at King, the investigation and reflection done also helped support learning in the areas identified by the research questions. While this body of work in its entirety shares learning in regard to these questions, this section seeks to succinctly summarize some of the key learning and not to

provide definitive answers to the questions. The discussion that follows addressing the characteristics of the potential generative impacts will also help to respond to the research questions.

With regard to the first question, "in what ways does systemic racism permeate schools causing inequitable access to quality teaching and learning experiences for Black males" the following key points were learned from research and experience:

1. This work highlighted the presence of racism is reflected in the curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, staffing, discipline practices, and educational programming at the school under study impacts Black males,

2. It recognized that all stakeholders, students, teachers, administrators, central office support, and the community play a role in perpetuating systemic racism through beliefs and actions. They can choose to position themselves to challenge it as leaders for racial equity to support the success of Black males,

3. It showed Black males students can experience differential treatment and differential access to learning opportunities while in the same classrooms with students of other races and genders. This occurs through the commission and/or omission of specific actions in the classroom.

In response to the question, "how do Black male students experience systemic racism in school" the following points are noted from data gathered from Black male students through conversations and observations:

1. Some Black male students expressed feeling they don't belong in certain classes and/or are disliked by certain teachers who look for reasons to put them out,

2. Black male students shared scenarios of being treated that they were not as smart or gifted as other students were perceived to be by teachers,

3. Some Black male students shared that they were blamed for doing things wrong that they didn't do and that teachers and administrators over react to the things that they do that are wrong.

The third research question, "what is the role of the school leader in creating designs for improvement to address the problem of systemic racism creating a culture of low expectations for Black male students" required me to reflect greatly to identify the following factors:

1. The school leader must position him/herself as a learner first and then create opportunities for others to learn in a safe and supportive culture that recruits others to the cause of racial equity and allows for multiple perspectives,

2. A principal must model leadership for racial equity and help to raise the racial consciousness of those working with the students in the school as well as those in positions to make decisions about the students in the school,

3. School leaders must have a racial lens that can be applied to every aspect of their role as a principal and they must possess the courage and tools to

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utilize the lens to advocate for Black male students and hold staff members and district leaders accountable for their work,

4. The school leader must formalize the vision, structures, and processes in a school context to support equitable learning opportunities for students and build a team to implement a plan recognizing it can't be done alone,

5. The principal should help to equip school staff with tools to understand and discuss race and racism, challenge beliefs and assumptions, foster reflection, and produce changes in practice.

The last research question, "how do teachers' racialized beliefs concerning student abilities influence teachers' behavior" was addressed through the honest reflections of teachers as they challenged their own racialized beliefs and actions. From this work the following was learned:

1. Some teachers acknowledged that their beliefs about Black male students' behaviors often caused them to limit what Black males were permitted to do in the classroom,

2. A pattern of lowering the rigor of questions posed to Black males and/or shortening the wait time provided to them based on a belief that they didn't know the information needed to address the question was identified,

3. The desire of some teachers to avoid conflict with Black males in the classroom caused them to allow Black males to opt out of learning or engaging in challenging tasks or it caused them to refer students out of the room.

4. Differences were noted in the lack of feedback provided to Black male students, which some teachers attributed to not wanting to push students beyond what they were able to do or not wanting to embarrass students in front of their peers.

Again, these responses reflect some key findings as they relate to the research questions posed. Additional information learned will be shared as the other potential generative impacts are discussed.

Anticipating Generative Impacts

In addition to the impacts noted above, other generative impacts can be anticipated from this work. As the other potential generative impacts are shared the discussion must include how such impacts will be measured to ensure they are in fact creating changes that can be classified as improvements. In measuring or evaluating generative impacts, the beliefs that guide these practices must be consistent with the beliefs that guided the designs for action. In addition, measurement methods chosen must honor professional standards for evaluation. In the context of this work, the spirit of the designs for action produced an inclusive, collaborative, empowering effort to create improvement. It aimed at sharing multiple perspectives, fostered community decision-making, recognized the variability in stakeholders' beliefs, and honored the uniqueness of the community context. It is paramount that the process of measuring generative impacts as this work continues maintains this same spirit and is consistent in its aims.

One way to ensure the designs of this work are aligned to their measures is to pay particular attention to the utility standards for evaluation (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). In focusing on the utility standards one can ensure that attention is paid

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to all stakeholders, the purposes are negotiated collaboratively, stakeholder values are respected and honored, and the process of measurement is meaningful and serves the needs of stakeholders. The aims of the utility standards are consistent with the spirit of the designs for action in this work.

Another way to ensure that the spirit of the designs for action in this work is reflected in the means of measurement is to use the transformative paradigm to guide methodological choices. The transformative paradigm is founded on four basic beliefs as noted in Smith and Brandon (2008):

1. Multiple realities are shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, gender, and disability values,

2. Interactive link exists between evaluator and stakeholders; knowledge is socially and historically situated; power and privilege are explicitly addressed; development of a trusting relationship is critical,

3. Inclusion of qualitative (dialogic) is critical; quantitative and mixed methods can be used; acknowledged, especially as they relate to oppression,

4. Ethical considerations include respect for cultural norms of interaction; beneficence is defined in terms of promotion of human rights and an increase in social justice. (p. 43)

Utilizing this paradigm as a guide will ensure that the marginalized population this work seeks to serve is included in the measurement of the generative impacts intended. With utility standards and the transformative paradigm as a guide, the generative impacts hoped for in this work can be measured.

Communication for Social Change

The overall goal of this work is to improve the quality of education for Black males and to do so as a matter of social justice. In service of this goal, one of the generative impacts hoped for is the creation of communication for social change (CFSC). Gray-Felder & Dean (1999) defined CFSC as "a process of public and private dialogue through which people define who they are, what they want, and how they can get it" (p. 15). Communication for social change is shaped around five guiding principles that also serve as the guiding principles of the design of action in this work. The five guiding principles of CFSC as stated in Rockefeller Foundation (2002) include,

1. Sustainability of social change is more likely if the individuals and communities most affected own the process and content of communication,

2. Communication for social change should be empowering, horizontal versus top-down, give a voice to the previously unheard members of the community, and be biased towards local content and ownership,

3. Communities should be the agents of their own change,

4. Emphasis should shift from persuasion and the transmission of information from outside technical experts to dialogue, debate and negotiation on issues that resonate with members of the community,

5. Emphasis on outcomes should go beyond individual behavior to social norms, policies, culture, and the supporting environment.

 The CFSC hoped for in this work will embody the guiding principles and also be characterized by an increased and sustained inter-racial discourse, elevation of the counter-narrative, and a democratic and non-hierarchical space in which conversations occur. It will result in a process in which community dialogue leads to learning and

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problem solving and collective action produces improvement to the quality of education for Black males (Rockefeller Foundation and Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication Programs, 2002).

According to the Rockefeller Foundation (2002), "Traditionally, when measuring communication effectiveness, professionals focus on end-products or outcomes… Yet communication for social change is valued as a process in and of itself. The act of community problem identification, group decision making, action planning, collective action and implementation are critical to how a community grapples with a serious issue" (Forward). Consistent with the transformative paradigm, it is recommended that this type of communication cannot be measured or evaluated solely by traditional quantitative measures, but instead must be measured in a qualitative method that captures the richness in the process and the outcomes.

The Rockefeller Foundation (2002) developed an integrated model for measuring the process outcomes of CFSC. Their model outlines a process that starts with a catalyst that leads to dialogue, then to collective action, and then to the resolution of a problem. For this work, research on improvement science will inform the change of 'resolution of a problem' to the 'improvement of a problem' (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2010). This change will not interfere with the integrity of the model, as the model also describes a learning process, which increases the community's overall capacity for and orientation toward continual improvement (Rockefeller Foundation and Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication Programs, 2002). The model allows those measuring the CFSC to document what happens along the steps of the model and to gather information through four types of measurement; dichotomous measures, word scales, numerical

scales, and qualitative assessments. The model gives flexibility on who can conduct the evaluations as it can be used by members of the community for self-assessment or by external agents and social scientists. The tools provided by the Rockefeller foundation measure the capacity for cooperative action by examining seven outcome indicators including, leadership, degree and equity of participation, information equity, collective self-efficacy, sense of ownership, social cohesion, and social norms. The model can be utilized as a tool to measure the generative impact of communication for social change among networked improvement communities as they work together to improve the quality of education for Black male students. To better fit the specific contexts in which they exist, communities can also adapt this model and related tools.

Theory of Action

A second generative impact this work aims at producing is a coherent theory of action which can drive the system level improvements that must occur in PPS and in other urban districts. Based on what was designed, implemented, and learned, the following theory of action was developed:

> If practitioners (a) engage in opportunities that help to identify and challenge their race-based assumptions and stereotypes, (b) develop their racial consciousness, cultural competencies, and professional practices, and (c) recognize, interrupt, and address systemic racism, then, a school system will be supported to develop networked improvement communities, improve the capacity of the system to address the problem of systemic racism creating a culture of low expectations for Black males, and increase the systemic capacity to address other problems of practice.

The initial designs for action created in this work provided opportunities to try out the theory of action as it was being developed and the other generative impacts will only strengthen it. The participation in communication for social change will help to increase awareness for members of the community through information building and sharing. Once opportunities have been provided for participants to learn new information, it will be filtered according to whether or not it is consistent with their previously held beliefs. The sharing of multiple perspectives from various stakeholders is the ideal space for the challenging of beliefs, both those personally held and those held by others. This process then calls for in-depth reflection that can produce significant learning. It is the significant learning that will then produce changes in teaching practices. The process of learning and making changes to the schooling of Black males as a result of new learning, a generative impact, can be measured through a method called argument tracking, a way of documenting and extracting data from the process of design by argument (McCown, Moss, Generett, & Miller, 2010).

In the development of an educational leadership program, McCown, Moss, Generett, & Miller (2010), utilized design research and argument to engage in the process of design by argument. This process allowed for empirical research to blend with theory-driven design and scholarly argument to develop and test various designs for doctoral programs. Through this design, the collective efforts of various committees, their deliberations and design decisions, led to contributions to the development of the educational leadership professional doctorate program at Duquesne University.

Throughout their design work, McCown, Moss, Generett, & Miller (2010), tracked their arguments in ways that were responsive to the design process. They began

with a template, shifted toward argument summaries, and then worked to identify first order and second-order claims, finally leading to the construction of prototypes and subsequent testing of prototypes. Documenting these arguments helped committee members and others learn about their work while producing a process and materials that could be utilized by others.

Similarly, argument tracking would offer an appropriate model to be used to document the generative impact of the process of awareness, challenge, reflection, and change that will result from the designs for action in this work. During school-based professional learning communities or in the convening of school, academy, and community partners, argument tracking can be employed to document the learning and the progress that occurs as stakeholders work to implement the theory of action and transform schooling for Black males. Argument tracking represents a methodology aligned to the spirit of this work as it respects the multiple perspectives brought to the table in the design space without privileging one over another. For example, this method of documentation will allow for various perspectives to be shared in the form of claims. However, it will also allow stakeholders to learn about the perspectives of others in the sharing of reasons, evidence, warrants, and criticisms of arguments that will support or challenge the claims offered. Further, the interrogation of claims publicly supports the challenging of beliefs and assumptions that must occur to lead to significant learning that can result in change in practice. Last, argument tracking is a strong model to utilize because of its responsiveness to the design. As the various parts of the change process occur, the argument tracking methods can change to capture the various stages, the productivity of the groups, and the designs tested.

Effective Teaching and Learning

A third generative impact, that is also measurable, is continued improvement to culturally relevant teaching and high-level learning for Black male students. A tool that would support the measurement of change in teaching practice and documents evidence of student learning would be the 3g observation tool. The 3g tool is an informal observation tool developed to assess classroom practice as it relates to a teachers' ability to implement lessons equitably. According to Pittsburgh Public Schools' Research-based Inclusive System of Evaluation (RISE), a teacher demonstrates proficiency in implementing lessons equitably by meeting the following criteria: "Uses culturally responsive instructional strategies designed to address racial and cultural achievement disparities among most groups of students. Some students monitor the classroom to ensure there is a culturally-responsive learning community. The teacher actively addresses stereotypes about various races, cultures, and gender" (PPS, 2012). Using this definition as a guide, and the following six elements of culturally relevant teaching: (a) Communicates high expectations, (b) Builds relationships and Caring Communities, (c) Communicating a positive perspective of parents and families, (d) Creating learner-centered instruction with the teacher as facilitator, (e) Structures learning within the context of school culture, and (f) Enriches the curriculum, the 3g tool was developed by the Pittsburgh King School Community to assess classroom practice. The tool allows teachers to earn points across various dimensions based on the physical environment and human relations in their classrooms, as well as the content and processes embedded in their lessons. The evidence captured on the tool by observers will help to measure change in practice. The point value assigned to the evidence will help to determine whether or

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not the change in practice is truly improvement. School communities are able to adapt this tool to fit their specific contexts. In addition, any member of the school community can utilize this tool to assess teaching and learning.

Other non-traditional methods of measuring and/or documenting the generative impacts of this work may include videotaped conversations among stakeholders, transcriptions of meetings of networked improvement communities, surveys of the stakeholders to determine their comfort level in engaging in inter-racial conversations with one another, and videotaped classroom observations. Thinking outside of the box will be necessary to capture the rich process and outcomes that will be generated as a result of the designs for action and consequential generative impacts. It is important that in measuring the change produced, the stakeholders collaboratively evaluate that the change created is in fact improvement.

Characteristics of the Generative Impacts

Implications for Educational Leadership. These potential generative impacts can be leveraged to change practice in the field of educational leadership. They challenge educational leaders to isolate race in the school context and to engage others in the process. This is quite different than what many are taught when being trained as educational leaders, specifically those who have been taught formally and/or experientially to promote a false sense of color-blindness (Gooden & Dantley, 2012). This is an aspect of educational leadership that must be changed if we are to make improvements for students of color. The generative impacts created by this design support this change and challenge normative practices.

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), "…Color blindness will allow us to redress only extremely egregious racial harms, ones that everyone would notice and condemn. But if racism is embedded in our thought processes and social structures as deeply as many crits believe, the "ordinary business" of society- the routines, practices, and institutions that we rely on to effect the world's work- will keep minorities in subordinate positions" (p. 22). Restated for a school context, while color-blindness can help address extreme cases of personally mediated racism in a school setting, it only helps to protect and perpetuate institutionalized racism, which can be argued is one of the largest contributing factors to the lack of success Black males have in school. Delgado and Stefancic continue stating, "Only aggressive, color conscious efforts to change the way things are will do much to ameliorate misery" (p. 22). The designs for action and the generative impacts they will produce seek to raise color-consciousness in schools and places the educational leader as central in creating a school culture in which this can occur.

Gooden and Dantley (2012), also supports the notion that change in educational leadership can be leveraged from teaching educational leaders to embrace and struggle with the issue of race in education. They propose a five-part methodology, including reflection, a grounding in a critical theoretical construction, a prophetic voice, a pragmatic edge that supports praxis, and the aggressive use of race language to train educational leaders. They assert that school leaders must be equipped with knowledge of how to address race and its impact on schools if they are to effectively address the inequities that exist for students of color (Gooden & Dantley, 2012).

A second way the generative impacts can be leveraged to improve educational leadership is by requiring educators to isolate race in the process of classroom observations. Currently many observational frameworks such as that created by Charlotte Danielson, do not isolate race in the context of instruction. Instead, they reference students with statements such as all students, most students, and some students as the performance level indicators vary across rubrics in race neutral language. In some classrooms, this allows for racial biases to manifest without being recognized or addressed. For example, if in a class of 20 students, 15 are White and 5 are Black, a teacher could engage only the 15 White students in a lesson, never address a Black student and be rated as engaging most students. However, when an observation tool is designed that isolates race a trained observer would be able to recognize the biases and articulate that while most of the White students were engaged, the Black students were not. This more specific evidence would be helpful in conferring with a teacher on how to ensure lessons are meeting the needs of students of all races. This is a change in the instructional leadership role of educational leaders that must occur to address the current quality of instruction provided to Black males in public schools.

Networked Improvement Communities. The generative impacts created from the designs for action support the establishment of networked improvement communities. Any one group in isolation can't make significant improvement to the quality of education for Black male students. Therefore, the designs for action created must be implemented with the collective efforts of the school, the academy, and the community (SAC). The success of the designs and the consequential generative impacts are dependent on networked improvement communities as is any plan that scales up the

designs to a systemic level. According to Bryk, Gomez, and Grunow (2010), "Networks enable individuals from many different contexts to participate according to their interests and expertise while sustaining collective attention on progress toward common goals" (p. 5). Based on the common goal of improving the educational outcomes for Black males, members of the SAC partnership would contribute based on their area of expertise. Also worth noting is that the designs for action and the generative impacts seek to engage multiple stakeholders in the conversation prior to creating solutions for improvement. Consistent with networked improvement communities, this design and the potential generative impacts allow for full participation by all stakeholders in problem identification, problem-solving, and solution implementation. As called for in networked improvement communities, the generative impact of communication for social change also calls for the sharing of knowledge, identification of targets by the members of the community, and a disciplined approach to inquiry. It is clear that the successful development of the design for action and the subsequent generative impacts support the development of networked improvement communities.

Advocacy. The generative impacts I hope to create would allow for schools, academy, and the community to come together and co-create a moral, ethical, and political vision for a socially just school and a plan that aims at achieving the vision. This work starts with the premise that our schools are currently morally, ethically, and politically unjust institutions in which inequities are perpetuated. This claim is supported by evidence of the racial achievement gap. This work, and its generative impacts, advocates for changes that would help improve the quality of education offered to Black male students as a matter of social justice.

The generative impacts of this work address a moral, ethical, and political vision for a socially just school by the intentional decentering of the White ideology that marginalizes Black males in schools. Choi (2008), shares how White ideology defines what is viewed as professionalism in school contexts in the quote,

Under normative discourse, 'treating all students equally' is deemed professional and fair, and advocating for any particular group is construed as unprofessional or practicing favoritism. However, Critical Race pedagogues, like Ladson-Billings, question this norm, arguing that treating all students in the same way and neglecting racial disparities ends up marginalizing racial minorities who have only limited access to resources. (p. 58)

This work seeks to disrupt the normative discourse and challenges the norm with deliberate and strategic goals of focusing on the education of Black males. The generative impacts offer a 180-degree turn in the concept and discussion of what is viewed as professional and fair. As the mindsets and the conversations around the isolation of race begin to change, actions will follow.

The generative impacts of this work also address a moral, ethical, and political vision for socially just schools by challenging the deficit model of thinking as it is commonly applied to Black male students. According to Choi (2008), discussions with White pre-service teachers pertaining to the achievement gap have often been characterized by comments about Black students suffering from poor parenting, coming from low-income backgrounds, not valuing education, and being more easily influenced by peers. She explains that rarely are the conversations with White pre-service teachers focused on how low achievement can be connected to racist structures that are embedded

in school knowledge, hidden curriculum, and policy (p. 60). The generative impacts of this work address the latter conversation with members of the SAC as it explores through systematic and intentional inquiry the claim that institutionalized racism creates and perpetuates a culture of low expectations for Black males. The generative impacts of this work allow the SAC partners to learn more about how racism in schools creates racial disparities.

The generative impacts of this work also address a moral, ethical, and political vision for socially just schools by providing a democratic, non-hierarchical space for conversations to occur. If those in privileged positions dominate conversations about what is right for schools or how to address the high leverage problems that exist in our schools, there is little hope that outcomes will ever change for marginalized populations. Therefore, if improvement is to be made we must begin to consider, who is at the table for discussions and decision-making and how are all perspectives shared and respected. This work seeks to create a space for all voices to be heard in the identification and analysis of problems as well as the steps toward improvement. This work recognizes the failure of public schools to effectively educate Black males as more than a school-based issue and calls for all stakeholders to take ownership and action.

Resourcefulness. As previously discussed, the generative impacts from this work include products that serve educational leaders and marginalized communities and advance significantly the conception of leadership practice that improves schools for marginalized communities. The generative impacts of this work produce a toolbox of resources that can be put into the hands of educational leaders and/or marginalized communities. More specifically, the products that are produced and/or referenced in this

work include, but are not limited to, interview questions for Black male students, an observational tool to gather information about teacher practices, a group of CARE resources for teachers engaging in CARE work, and recommendations for building an E-Team. In addition to these tools, this work offers a model for measuring communication for social change and argument tracking among SAC partners that can be used to further discussions on the improvement of the education of Black males.

In addition, the generative impacts of this work advance significantly the conception of leadership practice in the field of education. As stated previously, this work places the educational leader at the center of conversations about race asking the educational leader to challenge the dominant narrative that aids in the marginalization of groups of students. The educational leader is viewed as one who provides opportunities for others to learn about the problem, engage in problem solving/inquiry based learning communities, and to make steps toward improvement with others. The educational leader in this work doesn't solely own the problem identification or solution; however, they own their position of an advocate in both parts of the process. This offers a shift from status quo.

Lead to Improvement. The generative impacts of this work account for the aims of educational improvement. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching identifies the aims of educational improvement according to three categories; 1) Engaging education for all students, 2) Effective in advancing learning, and 3) Efficient in its use of resources (ProDEL, 2012). The same categories can be utilized to examine the generative impacts (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004) produced by this work and to address how they account for the aims of education improvement.

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The goal of this work is to improve the quality of education for Black male students. As the generative impacts are considered they address the first aim of engaging in two ways. First, the impacts focus on increasing the engagement of Black male students in education. For example, the transformation of teacher practice seeks to better engage Black male students in quality instruction. The work seeks to engage Black males to learn about their perspectives regarding the barriers they face in engaging in learning in public schools entrenched in systemic racism. The generative impacts also offer practical tools to measure and analyze the engagement of Black males in classrooms.

Second, the generative impacts seek to engage others in the efforts of improving the quality of education for Black males. The shaping of race-centered educational leaders helps to establish and focus SAC partnerships on working to remove the barriers that interfere with Black males successfully engaging in quality instruction. The generative impact of CFSC seeks to engage others by empowering them to participate in communal conversations and collective actions to produce social change. The nature of the work being generative, it seeks to generate opportunities to recruit additional followers who want to engage in the work of improving schooling for Black males. Therefore, this work and its generative impacts address the aim of engagement.

Next, this work and its generative impacts also address the educational aim of being effective at advancing learning. This is done as this work seeks to assist educators, in becoming more effective in delivering classroom instruction that produces quality learning experiences for Black male students. It offers guidance through action research, culturally relevant teachings, and evaluation methods to help teachers make changes in practice. At the same time, this work seeks to help people learn more about the problem

of practice. It offers guidance to educational leaders as they seek to gather information from multiple sources to collectively come to a critical understanding of the problem and orient toward a design for improvement.

Last, this work and its generative impacts address the educational aim of efficiency as it seeks to make wise use of resources in addressing the quality of education for Black males. An example of a resource this work seeks to make appropriate use of is the expertise brought to the table by multiple stakeholders. Throughout this work, the consistent aim has been to recognize the expertise, both formally and experientially obtained, by all stakeholders and put it to use in building the knowledge and information sharing among the SAC partners and the potential followers they wish to recruit. Another resource this work seeks to make use of is the time allotted in schools for professional development and collaboration. This work builds upon the work that already occurs in professional learning communities in the school context. Last, the generative impacts of this work seek to position the marginalized population of Black male students as one of the greatest sources of information to learn from as it elevates their voice in the sharing of their narratives discussing their lived experiences.

Conclusion

On May 28, 2014, the My Brother's Task Force submitted a report to President Obama sharing the progress that has been made on the initiative within the first 90 days of implementation (Johnson & Shelton, 2014). In the report the Task Force shares key milestones in which they feel interventions can have the greatest impact. They identified the following areas:

1. Getting a healthy start and entering school ready to learn;

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2. Reading at grade level by third grade;

3. Graduating from high school ready for college and career;

4. Completing post-secondary education or training;

5. Successfully entering the workforce; and

6. Keeping kids on track and giving them second chances. (p. 7)

I fully agree with these areas as being critical milestones that predict future success. I also agree with and support the plan of identifying what is being done already that is working and building upon it. I am pleased to learn that the initiative has gained a wide base of support thus far across various sectors as mass collaboration will be key in supporting our Black male students. However, one thing that disappointed me in the report was the failure to explicitly name and discuss systemic racism as the main barrier that hinders Black males from reaching these significant milestones.

Through this research study much information has been learned about the negative impacts of systemic racism on the education of Black males. Through the designs for action created and implemented at King, changes have been introduced to the system that are showing signs of improvement for Black males. If these designs continue and are strategically expanded, the hope is that the equity work in Pittsburgh would transform the field of education for Black males and the My Brother's Keeper Task Force could identify our teaching and leading for racial equity as efforts that are working well to serve Black males.

Based on the work that has been done, the following recommendations are made for continued learning and work toward improvement to the quality of education provided to Black males:

1. PPS must increase their organizational capacity to build awareness of systemic racism and challenge it in systematic ways. As an outgrowth of this work a proposal for the development of a full equity department in the PPS has been created and submitted to the superintendent for review. This document is included in Appendix A and serves as the formal articulation of my future work as an educational leader for racial equity.

2. In reference to the work that currently exists at King, the recommendation is that based on the promising results, it must continue and expand to elevate the voice of parents and the community so that significant and consistent improvement can be made to the quality of education offered to Black males.

3. A technical recommendation includes the need for PPS to increase data management to allow for all student data to be disaggregated by both race and gender.

Dr. Asa Hilliard shares that we already possesses the knowledge and skill to teach all children, the question is whether or not we have the will to do so. If we already possesses what is needed to interrupt systemic racism and create improvement to the education of Black males, what are we waiting for? I wait no longer and ask that you join me in this journey for improvement. Are you my Brother's Keeper?

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Appendix A

Building Capacity to Address Equity in Learning: A Proposal for the Expansion of the Equity Department

Executive Summary

There has been a long-standing history of racial disparities in Pittsburgh Public Schools. While African American students are the largest student group in our district, representing 55% of our student population, they are also the student group experiencing the least academic success in our classrooms. In 2013, district data indicates that of our senior class, only 35% of Black females and 23% of Black males were Promise-Ready, compared to 77% of White females and 67% of White males. Our district goal is for at least 85% of our students to graduate from high school. Furthermore, we desire for at least 80% of our graduates to pursue and complete a four-year degree or workforce certification. To reach these goals, we must learn to successfully educate all students, specifically our students of color, and remove the institutional barriers they face.

The current Equity Plan, Equity: Getting to All, clearly and succinctly articulates our successes and challenges in striving to increase student achievement and eliminate racial disparities in the district. It also captures descriptions of the work that has led to many of our improvements in our outcomes for students of color. To ensure our continued growth, we must establish the capacity to improve upon the great work that has been started while impacting the system at every level. The equity plan symbolically communicates the importance of equity in the district. However, additional training, coaching, and support are needed to help stakeholders at every level of our system understand and actualize the commitment to equity in their work in coherent ways.

Ownership to a commitment to equity is critical in order to change current practices at every level such as: hiring, placement, leadership, professional development, teacher quality, resource allocation, curriculum and pedagogy.

The expansion of the Equity office is proposed to meet our district's needs and help to actualize the vision illustrated in our Equity plan by impacting practice at every level of our system. The intention of the equity office will be to assist the district in moving from random acts of equity to district-wide equity transformation in a systemic way. The goal is not to isolate the work of equity to one office, but to build strategy and capacity to ensure equity becomes the lens through which all of our work in the district is viewed for continuous improvement. The equity office will play a central role in assisting the district to embrace the goals of accelerating student achievement and eliminating racial achievement disparities.

Statement of Need

The current achievement level for students of color is a high leverage problem warranting our investment. The dismal results we are obtaining for our Black students and wide racial achievement gaps inform us that our current efforts continue to be unsuccessful. Research suggests, and our district data confirms, while in schools, Black students continue to be subjected to mistreatment and are held to lower standards as they are more frequently suspended, retained, referred for special education, labeled as emotionally disturbed, and kept out of enrichment programs and academically challenging classes. With our current systems and practices, our research has shown that it would take over 24 years to eliminate racial achievement disparities in our district. Our students can't afford to wait 24 years to receive an equitable education. They need us to

make systemic changes to shape our district to effectively educate students of color starting now.

The systemic nature of institutionalized racism denies students of color of opportunities to reach their fullest potentials. The racism in our school system is not a problem that is mediated between a few individuals and a group of students. Instead it is a problem embedded in our schools' structures, policies, operations, employees and values. It is enacted consciously and unconsciously to withhold quality learning and resultantly wealth and power from a particular group of people. It is the same systemic racism negatively impacting other institutions, however, it is in our schools where it is first being taught and learned by our next generation. At every level of our system, individuals have reached out to the equity office, Beacon schools, and Affiliates asking for training, coaching, and support. A systemic problem requires a systemic approach to transformation to actualize change.

Proposed Solution

We are quite aware that our current efforts, both in policy and practice, are not resulting in our desired outcomes. The status quo will continue to perpetuate inequities in education and widen racial disparities. We must resist the normalized belief that students of color must change to fit schooling as we know it and explore ways that our policies and practices, our schools, must change to better serve our students. The goal of the equity office is to lead this change. At the heart of our work, the equity office staff members will strive to understand and help others understand the impact of systemic racism on student achievement and focus on eliminating racial disparities through the fostering of cultural competency and racial consciousness.

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The strategic expansion of the equity office will support the district in building the capacity for systemic equity transformation. There is a clear data-based need, an overwhelming request for support, and an unique opportunity to accelerate improvement in achievement and the elimination of disparities. The equity office will leverage the knowledge, skills, and experiences of PPS Affiliates to provide purposeful training, coaching, and support to lead the transformation at central office, school sites, and community levels. The work of the equity office will be organized around three strands: Leadership for racial equity, Equity in Teaching and Learning, and Student, Family, and Community Empowerment. Through five phases, the staff in the office will support the development of the following teams to enact change across the district: District Equity Leadership Team (DELT), School and Site Equity Teams (E-Teams), Collaborative Action Research for Equity (CARE Teams), Partnerships for Academically Successful Students Teams (PASS), and Students Organized Against Racism Teams (SOAR). The equity office will have the ability to engage, sustain, and deepen the conversations and actions that will support equity transformation at every level of our system.

With greater capacity, the equity office will have the ability to help our district yield great educational improvements. According to Dr. John H. Jackson, President and CEO of the Schott Foundation, "Research shows that, from one generation to the next, equitable access to high performing public educational systems can break down the barriers to success and change the future trajectory of historically disadvantaged students" (Schott, 2010). This can be done, as evidenced by a number of schools that have successfully educated Black students at high levels such as Urban Prep Academy for Young Men in Chicago (hhtp://www.urbanprep.org). A stronger focus for our Equity

work can help to address institutionalized racism in our schools and provide more equitable access to quality learning opportunities for our students of color. Through transforming our educational system to better serve students of color we will ensure more equitable schools contributing to a more equitable society.

The improvement of schooling for students of color and an increase in the number of Black students obtaining higher education would have benefits that reach across all races in our population. According to the RAND Corporation (2009), who we fund for much of our research, all tax payers benefit in the following ways when students attain higher education: a) more highly educated people contribute more in taxes, b) those with more education draw less from social support programs, c) more highly educated people are less likely to incur incarceration costs, and d) raising students' level of education yields net benefits to the public budget. We must dispel the myth that equity work only benefits students of color and begin to realize the benefits that are available for all students when our lowest performing students begin to succeed. We must build the capacity of our system to achieve these benefits, hence our need for an expansion to the office of equity.

Leadership for Racial Equity

We will develop the requisite knowledge, will, skill, and capacity to eliminate racial achievement disparities and engage in examining the policies, practices, and structures in our school system that may perpetuate inequities based on race, and where found, eliminate them.

- Development and support of DELT and principal Team
- Development and support for PPS Affiliates

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- Training and coaching for school and district leadership

- Facilitation of equity walks

- Analysis of district data and systems

Equity in Teaching and Learning

We will identify, develop, and systematically apply racially conscious/culturally relevant instructional practices that eliminate racial disparities in achievement while making a significant difference in the education of all children.

- Development and support of E-Teams and CARE Teams

- Development and support of Career Ladder Teachers

- On-boarding training for all new staff

- Training and coaching for teachers and support staff

- Support for the development of culturally relevant curriculum

Student, Family, & Community Empowerment

We will help to empower students, families, and communities as essential partners in transforming our school district into one of educational equity and excellence that is responsive to those it serves.

- Development of PASS and SOAR Teams

- Development and Support for FACE Coordinators/ EFA parent groups

- Training and coaching for students, parents, and community

- Establishment of partnerships to mentor students of color.

- Development of partnerships to apprentice students of color

Goals and Objectives: Systemic Equity Transformation Framework (PEG, 2011)

Phase 1: District-wide Equity Leadership Development

The District Executive Equity Leadership Team is the guiding coalition charged with leading and managing the dynamic process of system-wide transformational change. DELT learning focuses on building the infrastructure to design, implement, accelerate, and sustain a strategic plan for system-wide racial equity transformation.

Phase 2: School and Site Equity Leadership Development

E-Teams are the guiding coalition for equity at the school level. E-Team learning prepares school staff to lead, oversee, and manage the dynamic processes of school-based transformational change.

Phase 3: Collaborative Action Research for Equity (CARE) Team Development

CARE Teams conduct classroom action research to discover, develop, document, deliver, and disseminate culturally relevant learning and teaching practices. CARE learning focuses on building racial/cultural proficiency, using action research to document culturally relevant pedagogy, and developing and sharing culturally relevant pedagogy.

Phase 4: Partnerships for Academically Successful Students (PASS) Team Development

Through shared learning and collaborative development, the PASS Team engages and empowers families- and communities-of-color in creating equitable schools where all children – especially underserved black and brown children – will reach their fullest potential. PASS learning focuses on building authentic relationships; facilitating equitable environments; empowering, honoring, and acting on the "voice" of parents; supporting efforts of all of the adults involved in the lives of students; and building knowledge…of self, systems, social capital, and community concerns.

Phase 5: Student Leadership Development through Students Organized Against Racism

Student leadership for racial equity is an essential component of PEG's systemic

equity transformation framework.

Budget

Item	Year One	Year Two	Potential Funding
Executive Director of Equity	Salaries Removed	Salaries Removed	Superintendent's Budget
Principal On Special Assignment			Gates Professional Development
Project Manager			Gates/ Heinz
Project Manager			Heinz
Equity Coach			TBD
Equity Coach			TBD
Administrative Assistant			TBD
Operating Budget			TBD

Action Plan

Goal	Action(s)
Develop/Support Leadership for Racial Equity at Central Office	Faciliation of Beyond Diversity for central office staff
	Development of Equity Teams in various departments
	Development/Implementation of Equitable Guidelines for decision making
	Equity department representation in all school support visits
	Development/Training of equity coaches
Develop/ Support Leadership for Racial Equity in School Leaders	Facilitation of Beyond Diversity for school leaders
	Development of Equity Teams in all schools
	On-site coaching and support for observing for equity in learning
	Facilitation of school-based equity walks
	Identification of effective practices in equity in schools and facilitation of sharing
Develop/ Support Leadership for Racial Equity in Teachers/Staff	Facilitation of Beyond Diversity for teachers, counselors, paras
	On-site coaching and support for understanding 3g
	Facilitation of school-based equity walks
	Identification of effective practices in equity in classrooms and facilitation of sharing
	Identification of potential CARE teachers
	Development of awards to recognize teachers closing achievement gaps
	Development of culturally relevant teaching PD course offering
Develop/ Support Leadership for Racial Equity in Community	Facilitation of Beyond Diversity for FACE coordinators, parent groups, community partners
	Development/ Leveraging of partnerships to support district equity goals

Note: Upon approval, a comprehensive 2-year action plan will be provided with

embedded measures of effectiveness.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the work of the equity office will be conducted in various ways, including but not limited to the following: Reduction in racial disparities in various data points measuring student success, feedback from participants in training and coaching sessions, obtainment of stated objectives by timelines, the development of networked improvement communities, an increase in the number of teachers recognized and awarded for eliminating racial achievement disparities, and student and community feedback. We will also measure the percent of individuals and school sites that will have attended Beyond Diversity and have established functional Equity and CARE Teams. Specific metrics for success will be determined upon approval of various positions.

Equity Department Staff and Structure

The recommended staff structure for the department includes the following positions:

- Executive Director of Equity,

- Principal of Special Assignment: Focus on Equity in Leading and Learning,

- Director of Professional Development,

- Teachers on Special Assignment: Focus on Equity Coaching, and

- Project Managers.

Immediate Levers to Enhance Equity Work Development

Structure/Practice	Enhancement
Instructional Leadership Specialist Role	Leverage ILS position to provide on-site training and coaching around leadership for racial equity, observing for 3g, and engaging in difficult conversations with staff members.
IQAC Process	Ensure levels of certification process include steps to prepare administrators to provide effective feedback and support to teachers to build their capacity to deliver culturally relevant instruction.
Horizontal/ Vertical Team Visits	Examining of how protocol and the use of an equity lens can be established during the planning and implementation of team visits.
Student Assessments	Utilize data mined from current assessments to identify teachers making the most notable gains with students of color and recognize and celebrate their efforts. Observe in their classrooms to identify and document effective practices with students of color.
Educator Effectiveness Reports	Utilize the EER data to identify highly effective teachers, observe and interview them to identify effective practices with students of color and create opportunities to leverage their knowledge/practice.
Common Core Trainings	Ensure all presenters for Common Core Trainings understand and communicate their work through a lens of equity, helping participants understand their role in helping all students achieve high standards.
Curriculum Writing	Ensure all curriculum writers have a foundational understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy, racial identity development, and their role in writing curriculum with multiple entry points and scaffolds to ensure access and support for all students to reach high standards.
School Support Visits	Remove equity department support as an optional part of school visits and establish the presence of consistent equity support on all support visits
Professional Development Course Offerings	Offer a course on culturally relevant instruction on the PD calendar. Facilitated by affiliates, CARE Team members of Beacon Schools, and selected teachers.
Priority School Improvement Plan Writing	As school plans prepare to be written, work can be done to ensure practices and mindsets are addressed in improvement planning. Professional development for teachers must incorporate both or negative beliefs about children of color will render practices ineffective.
New Teacher Orientation	Introduction to protocol, agreements, conditions, and the compass should be incorporated into new staff orientation for all new employees to PPS. They could be required to participate in Beyond Diversity within the first year of employment (offered several times throughout the school year).
Budgeting	Prior to board approval, revisions should be made to align funds to district priorities, including the creation of an operating budget for the equity department.

Job Descriptions

Principal on Special Assignment: Leadership and Learning for Equity

Reports to: Executive Director, Equity

Residency: City of Pittsburgh Residency is not required

Job Summary:

The primary objective of this position is to provide administration of racial equity programming for school site leadership and district departments. Serves to improve and support leadership and learning at the district, cluster and school levels.

Qualifications:

- A Master's degree, PA Administrator's certification, and at least 5 years of related experience in education required.

- Excellent oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills required

- Experience working with community organizations and other stakeholders

- Knowledge and understanding of the District's goals

- Ability to manage multiple tasks simultaneously

- Considerable knowledge of and experience in urban environments and the diverse cultures and backgrounds represented by the urban population.

- Demonstrated leadership experience, which includes demonstrated skills in developing, leading, implementing, and facilitating new initiatives; mediating conflict; mentoring colleagues; and building effective relationships across diverse organizations.

- Technology skills including utilizing Microsoft Office, PowerPoint, Excel, and other related software to perform work activities.

- Considerable ability to plan, organize and prioritize work.

- Considerable ability to analyze, interpret and use data in decision-making.

- Considerable ability to engage, deepen and sustain conversations about race and to coach others to do the same.

- Commitment to equity and passionate about eliminating the achievement disparities based on race and socioeconomic status.

- Dedicated to reforming education to create a system in which all students are high performing, including the traditionally under-served students, such as students of color and students in poverty.

Essential Job Functions:

The essential functions include but are not limited to, the following fundamental duties:

Leadership

- Provide leadership to school administrators on the racial equity transformational plan, including coaching on leading courageous conversations about race at school sites, implementing culturally responsive pedagogy, and making data-based decisions with an equity lens.

- Provide leadership to school administrators in building and leading their Equity Teams including training, coaching, and supporting building equity programming.

- Provide coaching and support to teachers on special assignment (TOSAs), affiliates, project managers, and district leadership related to the racial equity transformational framework.

Professional Development

- Provide leadership in the development, selection and implementation of specialized curriculum and specially designed instruction for under-served students, raising achievement and the quality of instruction for all students (e.g., CARE work, Culturally Responsive Teaching).

- Develop, lead, and provide professional development opportunities related to racial equity programming.

- Develop, lead, provide and assess the effectiveness of research based professional development for site and district staff.

- Collaborate with the Director of Professional Development to ensure equity and cultural relevance are lenses through which district-wide professional development is planned and offered.

Communication and Collaboration

- Work collaboratively with other district staff around student achievement, staff development, and evaluation related to racial academic disparities in achievement.

- Engage in district-level leadership activities and committees.

- Collaborate with leaders in other departments to provide professional development district-wide, and align initiatives, to improve education for all students, specifically focusing on eliminating racial disparities based on race (including culturally responsive pedagogy).

- Coach teachers and paraprofessionals; provide feedback on performance to school administrators and department leaders as appropriate.

Programming

- Attend racial equity conferences, meetings with outside stakeholders, and internal meetings at the direction of the program executive director.

- Research racial equity best practices and makes recommendations for implementation with PPS departments and school sites.

- Collaborate with department executive director with program planning for coordinating training, assessing district needs and supporting the development/execution of the racial equity transformational plan.

- Maintain and present records for reporting, evaluation, and accountability.

- Perform other related duties as assigned.

Physical Demand:

This position is primarily sedentary in nature. Employee will be required to operate computer system for data entry, and have the ability to complete necessary paperwork. This position requires minimum physical effort and not subjected to Occupational Health and Safety risks.

Work Environment:

- Work in close collaboration with staff at multiple sites and multiple disciplines

- Comfort with ambiguity

- Requires considerable concentration and creativity

- Subject to stress caused by a changing environment, diversity in the organization, resistance, tight deadlines and work load.

ADA: The employer will make reasonable accommodation in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended (ADA).

This job description will be reviewed periodically as duties and responsibilities change with business necessity. Job functions are subject to modification.

Equity Coach

Reports to: Director of Leadership and Learning, Equity

Residency: City of Pittsburgh Residency is not required

Job Summary:

The primary objective of this position is to provide assistance in staff development,
program implementation and coordination of district wide instructional activities focused
on the elimination of racial disparities.

Qualifications:

- Current PA teaching certification, and at least 5 years of related experience in
  education required.

- Excellent oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills required

- Knowledge and understanding of the District's goals

- Considerable knowledge of and experience in urban environments and the diverse
  cultures and backgrounds represented by the urban population.

- Technology skills including utilizing Microsoft Office, PowerPoint, Excel, and
  other related software to perform work activities.

- Considerable ability to plan, organize and prioritize work.

- Considerable ability to engage, deepen and sustain conversations about race and
  to coach others to do the same.

- Commitment to racial equity.

- Passionate about eliminating the achievement disparities based on race and
  socioeconomic status.

- Dedicated to reforming education to create a system in which all students are high

performing, including the traditionally under-served students, such as students of color and students in poverty.

- Demonstrated leadership roles in seminars, workshops, or in-service programs for culturally relevant practice and cultural competency is desirable.

Essential Job Functions:

- Provide school-based training and coaching providing culturally relevant professional development and instruction focused on the elimination of racial disparities.

- Work collaboratively with District Equity Staff on equity related issues.

- Provides support for staff development by means of in-service workshops, conferences, professional day activities, consultation/coaching in the implementation of culturally relevant practices and racial consciousness.

- Participates in making recommendations relative to curriculum and instruction policy, and procedures and materials.

- Initiates and coordinates the use and evaluation of experimental and innovative programs.

- Facilitates communication among school and district personnel.

- Serves on district wide equity committees as requested.

- Establishes and maintains collections of instructional materials in current use.

- Assists E-Teams in assessing the schools' immediate instructional improvement needs related to school equity goals.

- Prepares materials and recommends methods and procedures for use in classroom instruction.

- Provides for interpretation and application of test results for use in diagnostic prescriptive and targeted instructional activities.

- Building resource libraries for schools to utilize for professional development and in classroom instruction.

- Observe teacher practice and provide non-evaluative feedback to teachers around meeting the needs of their most disconnected students.

Physical Demand: This position is primarily sedentary in nature. Employee will be required to operate computer system for data entry, and have the ability to complete necessary paperwork. This position requires minimum physical effort and not subjected to Occupational Health and Safety risks.

Work Environment:

- Work in close collaboration with staff at multiple sites and multiple disciplines

- Comfort with ambiguity

- Requires considerable concentration and creativity

- Subject to stress caused by a changing environment, diversity in the organization, resistance, tight deadlines and work load.

ADA: The employer will make reasonable accommodation in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended (ADA).

This job description will be reviewed periodically as duties and responsibilities change with business necessity. Job functions are subject to modification.

Project Manager: We Promise

Reports to: Executive Director, Equity

Grade: Support Exempt Salary Schedule – Level 5

FLSA Status: Exempt

Residency: City of Pittsburgh Residency is required

Job Summary:

The We Promise is a customized program for Africa American male students that aligns with the District goal of accelerating student achievement. This program will address the academic stamina of African American males by providing them with additional resources to increase their probability of being Promise Ready. The Project Manager will support the work of the District, in regard to the Pittsburgh Promise.   The Project Manager will coordinate and facilitate weekly progress meetings with counselors/social workers and students to maintain goals and expectations of the We Promise Program. This position is crucial to effectively meet the needs of our African American male students who are on the cusp of being Promise Ready.

Qualifications:

- A Bachelor's degree in social work, counseling, psychology, or related field and at least 5 years of related experience

- Experience working in an urban school system

- Excellent oral and written communication skills required

- Experience working with community organizations, other stakeholders

- Strong interpersonal communication skills required

- Knowledge and understanding of the District's goals

- Ability to manage multiple tasks simultaneously

Essential Job Functions:

- Coordinate and facilitate weekly progress meetings with counselors/social workers and students to maintain goals and expectations of the We Promise Program.

- Work with the counselors/social workers to ensure that African American male students have the skills to participate in their academic development which will result in eligibility for the Pittsburgh Promise.

- Work closely with counselors/social workers and Student Support Services to review and analyze GPA data each semester.

- Liaison between the counselors/social workers and mentors to ensure that students are receiving proper interventions, instruction and resources in regards to their academic goals and provide a monthly summary to the Executive Director of the Equity Department.

- Work closely with the Student Support Services Department and the Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development Department to assist with professional learning for counselors/social workers.

- Along with the counselors/social workers, will create and implement a college going culture, by conducting small group sessions with students on college issues: writing essays, getting recommendations, preparing for tests, applying for financial aid, transitioning to college, etc.

- Provide training to counselors/social workers and mentors with strategies on imparting to students how to develop and apply a scholar identity which entails increasing levels of intangible characteristics such as self-efficacy.

- Provide a monthly meeting time for males to discuss progress, issues, hopes, concerns as well as make recommendations about classroom/school environment. This is also an excellent opportunity to have a book study with the students. It is also important to talk about time management, study skills, note taking, and goal setting.

- Provide in-school mentors that make at minimum a weekly check in with their student. Each student should have someone they are comfortable speaking and being with.

- Help students set goals for grades, attendance, and assessment scores. Students should review their progress towards their goals with their mentor weekly.

- Monitor attendance, grades, disciplinary data, and assessment scores including SATs for each student. Grades should be monitored bi-weekly and attendance weekly.

- Monthly parent/family contact in the form of a personal call or meeting to update parents on student's progress.

- Give males a leadership role in the school, i.e.

- Helping a teacher with specific tasks

- Helping in the office with clerical tasks

- Helping in the cafeteria or with a custodian

- Mentoring underclassmen and/or providing tutoring support

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- Coordinate a Recognition Ceremony at the end of each semester that recognizes the progress of these males.

Physical Demand: This position is primarily sedentary in nature. Employee will be required to operate computer system for data entry, and have the ability to complete necessary paperwork. This position requires minimum physical effort and not subjected to Occupational Health and Safety risks.

Work Environment:

- Work in close collaboration with staff at multiple sites and multiple disciplines

- Comfort with ambiguity

- Requires considerable concentration and creativity

- Subject to stress caused by a changing environment, diversity in the organization, tight deadlines and work load.

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