

# **HIGH SCHOOL AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

by

**Virginia Rae Hill**

Bachelor of Science, Geneva College, 1990

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
The School of Education in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctorate of Education

University of Pittsburgh

2014

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

This dissertation was presented

by

Virginia R. Hill

It was defended on

September 15, 2014

and approved by

Maureen McClure, PhD, Professor

William Bickel, PhD, Professor

William Englert Jr., EdD

Michael Gunzenhauser, PhD, Professor

Christine White-Taylor, EdD

Thesis Director/Dissertation Advisor: Maureen McClure, PhD, Faculty

Copyright © by Virginia Rae Hill

2014

## **HIGH SCHOOL AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

Virginia Rae Hill, EdD

University of Pittsburgh, 2014

The cry continues with A Nation at Risk, No Child Left Behind, and now the Common Core State Standards. There are groups of students who are finding success within public education and groups who are not. The groups who are not finding this success continue to be minority students who continue to run into the public education system rather than running with it. African American males seem to experience running into the system at greater number than other racial and gender groups. However, there are African American males that are finding success in public education. This study looks at the schooling and educational perspectives of twenty-four African American male K-12 public education students. Using grades and standardized assessments as a criterion, fifteen of the students were considered academically successful and nine were not. Twenty-two of the males were 18 years of age and two were 12 years old. Nineteen participants were high school seniors, one was a sophomore, and two were in middle school. Looking through the lenses of Critical Race Theory and Resiliency Theory using qualitative inquiry and data derived from interviews, data was collected to determine what contributed to the success of some participants. First both successful and non-successful groups were able to speak about having goals for the future and the importance of working hard in school. Secondly, relationships were also seen as essential to academic success, whether these

relationships were with parents, teachers, or mentors for academic success to occur. Racial stereotypes were seen as something to overcome by the academically success. Race was viewed as a road block difficult to overcome by less successful participants. Having a father and mother or frequent access to more than one caring adult increased an African American male's ability to be academically successful. Even having two parents that may not have been supportive of the African American male appeared to be more beneficial than having supportive friends.

Recommendations to help African American males to be academically successful include starting early with relationship support and mentoring, life skills courses, and increased interaction with successful African American males.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>PREFACE.....</b>   | <b>XVII</b> |
| <b>1.0 INTRODUCTION.....</b>  | <b>1</b>    |
| <b>1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....</b>                                       | <b>2</b>    |
| <b>1.2 SIGNIFICANCE AND NEED FOR THIS STUDY .....</b>                           | <b>5</b>    |
| <b>1.2.1 Purpose of the Study .....</b>   | <b>9</b>    |
| <b>1.2.2 Research Questions .....</b>   | <b>9</b>    |
| <b>1.2.3 Theoretical Frameworks: Critical Race Theory and Resiliency Theory</b> | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>1.2.4 Research Design.....</b>   | <b>13</b>   |
| <b>1.2.5 Summary .....</b>  | <b>17</b>   |
| <b>2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>  | <b>19</b>   |
| <b>2.1 THEORIES.....</b>  | <b>20</b>   |
| <b>2.2 CRITICAL RACE THEORY .....</b>   | <b>20</b>   |
| <b>2.2.1 Critical Race Theory Definition.....</b>                               | <b>21</b>   |
| <b>2.2.2 Critical Race Theory Tenets.....</b>                                   | <b>23</b>   |
| <b>2.2.3 The Counter Narrative and Achievement.....</b>                         | <b>24</b>   |
| <b>2.2.4 The Permanence of Racism .....</b>                                     | <b>25</b>   |
| <b>2.2.5 Whiteness as Property.....</b>   | <b>26</b>   |
| <b>2.2.6 Effort vs. School Structure .....</b>                                  | <b>28</b>   |

|        |   |           |
|--------|---|-----------|
| 2.2.7  | Critique of Liberalism.....                                   | 33        |
| 2.2.8  | Interest Conversion .....                                     | 34        |
| 2.2.9  | Critical Race Theory Summary .....                            | 34        |
| 2.2.10 | Summary .....   | 35        |
| 2.3    | <b>RESILIENCY THEORY .....</b>                                | <b>37</b> |
| 2.3.1  | Positive Relationships.....                                   | 38        |
| 2.3.2  | Problem Solving Skills .....                                  | 39        |
| 2.3.3  | Autonomy .....  | 40        |
| 2.3.4  | Sense of Purpose and Future .....                             | 40        |
| 2.3.5  | Challenging the Deficit Model.....                            | 41        |
| 2.3.6  | Resiliency and Achievement .....                              | 42        |
| 2.3.7  | Summary of Resiliency .....                                   | 43        |
| 2.4    | <b>DEFICIT MODELS.....</b>                                    | <b>45</b> |
| 2.5    | <b>THE IMPACT OF RELATIONSHIPS .....</b>                      | <b>46</b> |
| 2.5.1  | Parents/Families .....  | 47        |
| 2.5.2  | Parent/School Relationships.....                              | 49        |
| 2.5.3  | School Impact .....   | 51        |
| 2.5.4  | Mentors .....   | 58        |
| 2.5.5  | Relationship Impact Summary .....                             | 60        |
| 2.6    | <b>GIFTED AND POST-SECONDARY AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES .....</b> | <b>63</b> |
| 2.7    | <b>SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>                      | <b>65</b> |
| 3.0    | <b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>                                      | <b>71</b> |
| 3.1    | <b>QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY .....</b>                          | <b>72</b> |

|       |   |            |
|-------|---|------------|
| 3.1.1 | As a researcher, what are the hypotheses? .....   | 73         |
| 3.1.2 | As a researcher, what are the ontological and epistemological beliefs?. 73  |            |
| 3.1.3 | From what particular qualitative research paradigm will this study<br>operate from?.....  | 74         |
| 3.1.4 | What is the appropriate qualitative research approach to take based on<br>the ontological and epistemological beliefs and research paradigm?..... | 75         |
| 3.2   | <b>METHOD .....</b>   | <b>77</b>  |
| 3.2.1 | Exploratory Research .....  | 80         |
| 3.2.2 | Participant Selection .....   | 84         |
| 3.2.3 | Data Collection .....   | 87         |
| 3.2.4 | Data Analysis .....   | 91         |
| 3.2.5 | The Role of the Researcher.....   | 93         |
| 3.2.6 | Ethical Considerations .....  | 94         |
| 3.2.7 | Methods Summary .....   | 95         |
| 4.0   | <b>ANALYSIS .....</b>   | <b>96</b>  |
| 4.1   | <b>PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .....</b>   | <b>97</b>  |
| 4.2   | <b>RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....</b>   | <b>97</b>  |
| 4.3   | <b>INTERVIEW PROCESS .....</b>  | <b>98</b>  |
| 4.4   | <b>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>  | <b>99</b>  |
| 4.5   | <b>SCHOOL DISTRICT AND SCHOOL PROFILES .....</b>  | <b>100</b> |
| 4.5.1 | Terminology .....   | 100        |
| 4.5.2 | School A .....  | 103        |
| 4.5.3 | School B .....  | 103        |



|        |  |     |
|--------|--|-----|
| 4.5.4  | School C .....   | 104 |
| 4.5.5  | School D .....   | 105 |
| 4.5.6  | School E .....   | 106 |
| 4.5.7  | School F .....   | 106 |
| 4.5.8  | School G .....   | 107 |
| 4.5.9  | School H .....   | 108 |
| 4.6    | STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS .....   | 110 |
| 4.7    | DATA .....   | 112 |
| 4.7.1  | Interview Questions.....   | 112 |
| 4.7.2  | Success in School by Grade Point Average .....                                 | 114 |
| 4.8    | ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....   | 116 |
| 4.8.1  | Demographics .....   | 118 |
| 4.9    | RESEARCH QUESTION ONE: FACTORS, ATTITUDES, AND<br>BEHAVIORS FOR SUCCESS .....  | 119 |
| 4.9.1  | Systems Knowledge .....  | 119 |
| 4.9.2  | Academically Successful Others.....  | 122 |
| 4.9.3  | Success Difference by Gender .....   | 124 |
| 4.9.4  | Success Difference by Race.....  | 126 |
| 4.9.5  | Behaviors for Success Summary .....  | 129 |
| 4.10   | RESEARCH QUESTION TWO: ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS BY<br>GRADE POINT AVERAGE ..... | 130 |
| 4.10.1 | African American Male Perspectives of Success .....                            | 130 |
| 4.10.2 | Analysis of African American Male Perspectives .....                           | 132 |

|          |   |            |
|----------|---|------------|
| 4.10.2.1 | Describe a Successful Male.....   | 133        |
| 4.10.2.2 | What does he do? .....  | 134        |
| 4.10.2.3 | How does he act? .....  | 134        |
| 4.10.2.4 | What do other students think of him? .....                              | 135        |
| 4.10.2.5 | How does he interact with adults? .....                                 | 136        |
| 4.10.2.6 | Describe his social life. ....  | 137        |
| 4.10.3   | Attitude .....  | 138        |
| 4.10.3.1 | What is your attitude toward success?.....                              | 138        |
| 4.10.3.2 | Attitude Definition .....   | 141        |
| 4.10.3.3 | When did you develop this attitude? .....                               | 143        |
| 4.10.3.4 | How has this attitude helped you?.....                                  | 144        |
| 4.10.3.5 | Who helped you develop this attitude? .....                             | 146        |
| 4.10.4   | Attitude Summary .....  | 148        |
| 4.11     | <b>RESEARCH QUESTION THREE: SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND<br/>STRUCTURES.....</b> | <b>150</b> |
| 4.11.1   | Relationships.....  | 150        |
| 4.11.1.1 | Who should academic success be shared with?.....                        | 150        |
| 4.11.1.2 | What do you get from sharing academic success? .....                    | 153        |
| 4.11.1.3 | Are there any problems with being academically successful? ....         | 155        |
| 4.11.1.4 | Sacrifices for Success .....  | 159        |
| 4.11.1.5 | Who do African American males go to for support?.....                   | 162        |
| 4.11.1.6 | Are you Academically Successful? .....                                  | 164        |
| 4.11.1.7 | What do you contribute your success to? .....                           | 166        |

|          |   |     |
|----------|---|-----|
| 4.11.1.8 | Additional Information.....   | 168 |
| 4.11.1.9 | Relationship Summary .....  | 170 |
| 4.12     | ANALYSIS SUMMARY .....  | 171 |
| 5.0      | HYPOTHESES .....  | 173 |
| 5.1      | HYPOTHESES .....  | 173 |
| 5.1.1    | Strong Family Ties .....  | 174 |
| 5.1.2    | Positive Attitudes .....  | 176 |
| 5.1.3    | Positive Communication .....  | 178 |
| 5.1.4    | Effort Based Attitude .....   | 180 |
| 5.1.5    | Development of a Counter-Narrative .....  | 184 |
| 5.1.6    | Hypotheses Results .....  | 186 |
| 5.2      | SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS INDICATOR.....  | 187 |
| 5.3      | HYPOTHESES SUMMARY .....  | 188 |
| 6.0      | SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND<br>IMPLICATIONS .....                               | 189 |
| 6.1      | DISCUSSION AND MAJOR FINDINGS .....   | 192 |
| 6.1.1    | Resiliency Characteristics and Critical Race Theory Tenets.....                               | 192 |
| 6.1.1.1  | Social Competence and Whiteness as Property .....   | 196 |
| 6.1.1.2  | Problem Solving Skills and the Permanence of Racism .....                                     | 197 |
| 6.1.1.3  | Autonomy and a Counter-Narrative .....  | 199 |
| 6.1.1.4  | Sense of Purpose, Whiteness as Property, Permanence of Racism,<br>and Counter-narrative ..... | 202 |

|              |   |            |
|--------------|---|------------|
| <b>6.2</b>   | <b>SUMMARY OF RESILIENCY CHARACTERISTICS AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY TENETS .....</b>            | <b>207</b> |
| <b>6.2.1</b> | <b>Minimal Success Students.....</b>  | <b>207</b> |
| <b>6.2.2</b> | <b>Low-average Success Students.....</b>  | <b>208</b> |
| <b>6.2.3</b> | <b>Average Success Students.....</b>  | <b>208</b> |
| <b>6.2.4</b> | <b>High Success Students.....</b>   | <b>209</b> |
| <b>6.2.5</b> | <b>Resiliency Characteristics and Critical Race Theory Summary .....</b>                      | <b>209</b> |
| <b>6.3</b>   | <b>RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>   | <b>209</b> |
| <b>6.3.1</b> | <b>Social Competence, Counter-Narrative .....</b>   | <b>211</b> |
| <b>6.3.2</b> | <b>Problem Solving Skills, the Permanence of Racism, and the Critique of Liberalism .....</b> | <b>212</b> |
| <b>6.3.3</b> | <b>Autonomy .....</b>   | <b>213</b> |
| <b>6.3.4</b> | <b>Sense of Purpose and Future.....</b>   | <b>214</b> |
| <b>6.3.5</b> | <b>Whiteness as Property.....</b>   | <b>214</b> |
| <b>6.3.6</b> | <b>Interest Conversion .....</b>  | <b>215</b> |
| <b>6.4</b>   | <b>WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM THIS STUDY?.....</b>  | <b>215</b> |
| <b>6.5</b>   | <b>FUTURE RESEARCH AND COLLABORATION .....</b>  | <b>216</b> |
| <b>6.6</b>   | <b>CONCLUSIONS.....</b>   | <b>216</b> |
|              | <b>APPENDIX A.....</b>  | <b>220</b> |
|              | <b>APPENDIX B.....</b>  | <b>223</b> |
|              | <b>APPENDIX C.....</b>  | <b>227</b> |
|              | <b>APPENDIX D.....</b>  | <b>229</b> |
|              | <b>APPENDIX E.....</b>  | <b>232</b> |

|                           |            |
|---------------------------|------------|
| <b>APPENDIX F .....</b>   | <b>234</b> |
| <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b> | <b>236</b> |

## LIST OF TABLES

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table 1. African American Male High School Success Study .....  | 16  |
| Table 2. Theories and Theoretical Models of Achievement.....  | 22  |
| Table 3. Critical Race Theory Tenets .....  | 36  |
| Table 4. Resiliency- Protective Factors/Characteristics of Resilient Children.....                            | 44  |
| Table 5. Relationship Themes.....   | 62  |
| Table 6. Gifted Themes.....   | 65  |
| Table 7. Process for Participant Selection .....  | 88  |
| Table 8. Summary of Data Collection Strategies for African American Male High School<br>Academic Success..... | 90  |
| Table 9. Steps in Applied Thematic Analysis Data Analysis .....   | 92  |
| Table 10. Demographic Information for the PPS District 2012-2013 School Year .....                            | 109 |
| Table 11. Participant Demographic Information .....   | 111 |
| Table 12. Interview Questions .....   | 113 |
| Table 13. Themes from Interview Questions.....  | 115 |
| Table 14. Successful Students.....  | 124 |
| Table 15. Is Success Different by Gender?.....  | 125 |
| Table 16. Success by Race.....  | 127 |
| Table 17. Successful Males.....   | 131 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table 18. Attitude toward Success.....                                    | 139 |
| Table 19. Attitude Definition.....  | 141 |
| Table 20. When Was This Attitude Developed? .....                         | 143 |
| Table 21. How Has This Attitude Helped?.....                              | 145 |
| Table 22. Who Helped You Develop This Attitude?.....                      | 147 |
| Table 23. Sharing Academic Success .....                                  | 151 |
| Table 24. What do You Get from Sharing? .....                             | 154 |
| Table 25. Problems with Being Academically Successful .....               | 156 |
| Table 26. Successful Students vs. Successful African American Males ..... | 160 |
| Table 27. Who African American Males Go to for Support.....               | 163 |
| Table 28. Are you Academically Successful and Evidence .....              | 165 |
| Table 29. Who do You Attribute Your Success to?.....                      | 167 |
| Table 30. Anything That Was Missed .....                                  | 168 |
| Table 31. Question One and Correlations to Communication.....             | 178 |
| Table 32. Race Difference by Participant/School.....                      | 185 |
| Table 33. Results of the Hypotheses.....                                  | 186 |
| Table 34. Resiliency Theory and Critical Race Theory Connections.....     | 195 |
| Table 35. How Participants Discuss Goals.....                             | 203 |
| Table 36. Grade Average Characteristics .....                             | 204 |
| Table 37. Interview Protocol.....   | 221 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1. Ways That African American Success Are Currently Studied .....       | 8   |
| Figure 2. Factors that help African American Males make Positive Choices ..... | 67  |
| Figure 3. Schooling of Success African American Males .....                    | 70  |
| Figure 4. The Success Case Method Evaluation Model (Binkerhoff, 2003) .....    | 79  |
| Figure 5. Qualitative Research Framework .....                                 | 80  |
| Figure 6. Students: GPA- Nodes by Attribute .....                              | 117 |
| Figure 7. Who Helped You? .....  | 174 |
| Figure 8. Who Students Go to for Support .....                                 | 176 |
| Figure 9. Academic Success Formula.....  | 181 |
| Figure 10. Lunch Status .....  | 187 |
| Figure 11. Approval Letter .....   | 228 |
| Figure 12. School District Internal Review Board Approval .....                | 233 |



## PREFACE

This dissertation was almost a decade in making and was completed with the support of many, kind individuals. I could write a book and give a chapter to each person that has been so helpful and supportive. However, I would like to make space to thank a few here. I would like to first thank Dr. Maureen McClure, my dissertation chair. Her wisdom, comfort, and insight have helped mature and guide me. I am eternally in her debt. I would also like to thank Dr. Gunzenhauser. I think he reads a book a night. I am inspired by his knowledge across many subjects and the humbleness and depth in which he shares it. I will never forget the prodding, encouragement of Dr. William Bickel. He would not let me quit, give up or make an excuse. He was the experienced, kick in the pants that everyone needs to finish the race. I also want to thank Dr. William Englert. “Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the sons of God.” Thank you for not allowing me to give up and for showing me that an administrator can lead with a caring heart for adults and children. These don’t have to be in conflict. You taught me that it is much more important to respect one’s humanity and leave someone with their dignity than it is to wield power. I would be remiss if I did not thank Dr. Christine White-Taylor. I have known you for quite a few years now. You were a tough administrator who demanded the best from your teachers. You showed me how to lead and how to be all things to all people. You live to serve others. This is why you will never, ever be forgotten. Thank you for opening up your home to me and my kids at any hour without notice. You have been everyone’s cheerleader and coach.

May God continue to bless you and your family. I would also like to thank Linda Deafenbaugh. She is the Nvivo queen and a research master. Your work is under-appreciated. Don't be weary in well doing. In due season, you will reap if you faint not. I could never repay you for your kindness but thank you for accepting Panera. Beth (Elizabeth) Baldy you made the process so much easier. Thank you for your willingness to help me get this work done. I would like to thank Ms. Rosie. You are like Prince. Only one name will do. Your keen eye and clear understanding of what I am trying to say helped me to clean things up and make it readable. Thank you so much for coming out of retirement for me. I cannot move ahead without thanking the teachers at Stevens and Lincoln. You have been wonderfully supportive and a true source of encouragement. You kept me writing when I didn't want to. I appreciate my rock star teachers: Amy Mlay, Nicole Banks, Denise Snell, Michael Murphy, Evelyn Davis, Ebony Williams, Eunity Rooths, Randi Hughley, and Jody Berger. If every teacher were like you, every child would be academically successful. Kim Dixon you are in a league of your own. Thank you for the sacrifices you have made for children. Jenn Masdea, Terri McCary, and Monica White you are the best at serving children. You are what social work is all about. Thank you for your support. Amy Filipowski you were help when I needed it so badly. Thank you for pulling data together for me and always being a source of encouragement.

I would like to thank every student that I have had the pleasure of crossing paths with. I don't call myself your teacher here, because you all have taught and given me more than I have ever shared with you. I thank my friends for allowing me these few years to drop off the planet without questioning me and for still loving and supporting me. I thank my father and my two mothers who make me feel their pride and love for me every day. Momma, without your prayers, where would I be? I would like to thank my sister, Joyce Williams. She gave me a love for

learning by reading to me every night and taking care of my every need. She is stronger than she thinks, gives more than she gets, and understands more than she is understood. To my niece Nicole Banks, you are an overcomer. You have done more than I could ever have done. I am so proud of you and all that you have done. You are an amazing educator. Thank you for loving me. To my brother Roland Hughes, thank you for reminding me that every day wasn't bad and that our parents did the best they could with what they had. Your positive energy reminds me of strength of our ancestors. I am proud of you. Thank you for encouraging me.

For my four, beautiful children, Brandy, Brady Jr., Bradley, and Brana, they are my crowning accomplishment. There is nothing, not even this dissertation that I am more proud of than you four. I love you with all my heart and I only want to make you proud. I am preparing the way for you and the generations to come. Walk the path and don't give up, no matter what. Brandy, keep reading and writing. The book is coming. Brady Jr., keep growing your craft, singing and drumming. Bradley, keep singing, talking and connecting. You make people feel special. Brana, keep singing, dancing, and traveling. God gave it to you. To my husband Brady, my promoter, encourager, friend, boyfriend, high school sweetheart, and lover, thank you. We have been through so much together. This is our doctorate and no one can take this learning away from us. Thank you for allowing me to get us into debt and for allowing me to study. I am so blessed to have a man like you. You have made me the woman that I am. Thank you for being proud of me, but I am more proud of you and all that you have accomplished. You never gave up on yourself, your family or us. You are our rock.

Lastly, praise God through whom all blessings flow! His love for me is so amazing and wonderful. God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they

are wise. And He chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. Thank you Lord for choosing me to do this great work and for helping me to accomplish it.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

“Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome”, **Booker T. Washington (1901)**.

“Being a young black male is a blessing that people have tried to make a curse.”

**Demetrius Doctor- 11<sup>th</sup> grade** (Toldson, 2011).

In this dissertation, the academic success of African American males will be examined from the perspective of the student. The voices of successful African American males will be used as a starting point to examine academic achievement for this group of students at the K-12 level. From conversation with a small population of African American males it is hoped that knowledge will be gained that can provide academic support to African American male students.

In September 2010, Brian Williams ("MSNBC Teacher Town Hall," 2010) of NBC hosted a Teacher Town Hall that began to discuss the many issues in public education. The achievement gap was at the forefront. Many educators believe that public education needs more funding and that teachers need more support. There was evidence of passion for teaching and students at this Town Hall meeting. Teachers and principals spoke out, the business community weighed in, but where were the students? Lessons were video-taped and scenes of students in hallways were shown. Students rarely have a forum to talk about what they will need to be academically successful or what makes them stay engaged in school. This study leans in a

different direction, grabbing the voices of students, and making their thinking clear to the research community.

## **1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

African American students continue to fall behind their white peers academically. Since accountability through standards was introduced by the No Child Left Behind Act, the academic achievement gap between African American students and white students has remained stubbornly large (Booker-Baker, 2005). This “falling behind” has a long term negative impact on the mortality of many African American children, especially African American males. This negative impact often translates into a life of poverty, incarceration, drug addiction, and violence. African American males lead the nation in homicides, both as victims and perpetrators (Noguera, 2003). African Americans continue to be represented in large numbers at the lower end of the income scale (Morrison & Epps, 2002).

Many believe that there is “School to Prison Pipeline” that continues to push down African American students, in particular African American males (Morrison & Epps, 2002). The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU, p. 1, 2011) defines the “School to Prison Pipeline” as “policies and practices that push... our most at-risk children, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems”. African American students are adultified and stereotyped as disorderly criminals (Muhammad, Smith, & Duncan, 2008). An article in the Journal of Social Issues claims that sixty-one percent of African American males score below basic on their math achievement examination; fifty-two percent of the African American males that leave high school prematurely have prison records by their 30’s; African American males are more likely to

be suspended, referred to special education and have fewer support systems (Brown-Wright & Tyler, 2010).

However, these statistics have been debated. Dr. Ivory Toldson believes that research has not always been systematic and procedures have not been objective. He goes on to say that analysis of studies that make claims regarding African American success/non-success often do not use adequate data and that this data has been inadequately compiled and reported (Toldson, 2011). My paraphrase of Dr. Toldson may be a little stronger than he would report, but it is essential to begin to address the stereotypes and biases that exist for African American students, in particular, African American males. If we are to ever increase achievement and success for students of color, we must address the hopelessness and despair that is often presented in the vast reports on the state of education.

Urban African American males are academically worse off than their rural and suburban counterparts (J. E. Davis & Jordan, 1994). Poverty provides African American males with very little academic benefits and the community in which a student lives has a tremendous impact on a student's success (Ensminger, Lamkin, & Jacobson, 1996). Based on Ensminger, Lamkin, & Jacobs study (1996), we find benefits to living in a middle class neighborhood, but this is not the reality for many of the nation's African American students. Regardless, of an African Americans economic status, these students still perform below their Asian, white, and Hispanic peers (Singleton, 2006).

Due to the No Child Left Behind legislation, it is believed that African American children are overrepresented in exclusionary discipline consequences, which have a direct impact on their academic success (Fenning & Rose, 2007). It is further echoed that African American males are disproportionately suspended and/or expelled from school, segregated into special education

courses and pushed along a path of despair and failure (Brown-Wright & Tyler, 2010; Moore III, Henfield, & Owens, 2008; Weatherspoon, 2006). Placement in special education and remedial courses is seen as a new form of segregation.

The American Heritage Dictionary states that “segregation is the policy or practice of separating people of different races, classes, or ethnic groups, as in schools, housing, and public or commercial facilities, especially as a form of discrimination” (2011). The practice of separating people by race in United States history was seen in two forms, de jure and de facto. De jure segregation is separation enforced by law. De facto segregation occurs when widespread individual preferences, sometimes backed up with private pressure, lead to separation. De jure racial segregation was a practice designed to perpetuate racial subordination; de facto segregation of African Americans has similar effects, but sometimes can be defended as academic need or a result simply of private choice, itself an important American value (Encyclopedia of Public Health 2011).

The education system must begin to support African American male students because failure to do so will harm all students. The destructive forces of racism were thoroughly researched in 1939 by Dr. Kenneth Clark and his wife Mamie which gave rise to the famous doll experiment. In short, when African American children were asked to choose between a black baby doll or a white baby doll as being most like them or being good, more often the African American children selected the white doll (K. Davis, 2007). They also prescribe positive attributes to the color white and negative attributes to the color black. In 2005, Kiri Davis repeated the experiment with African American children and found that white dolls were more often selected by the children (Davis, 2007).



Speaking about academic segregation, Psychologist Kenneth B. Clark wrote extensively on the psychological damage that occurred in African-American children as a result of the de facto segregation that occurs due to the increased number of these students referred to special education and harsh discipline procedures. Low self-esteem, feelings of inferiority and a low sense of personal worth were just some of the negative outcomes for minority children. He feared that white children could well be experiencing an artificial sense of superiority that deprived them of their ability to accurately assess their own levels of achievement. He also thought that academic segregation encouraged negative traits in white students, such as hostility and aggression against whole groups of people perceived to be weaker than themselves (Landry, 2009).

Appealing to the convergence of interests (Leigh, 2003), it is important to educate African American students because a failure to do so will harm the very fabric of American society. We will continue to see a group of students/men who are in mass, unproductive, segregated from the intellectual community, incarcerated, and a drain on our economy. We are also draining our academic talent pool that will leave our nation less globally competitive. It is time to pay careful attention to African American males that are successful to determine what makes them successful? Can this success be replicated?

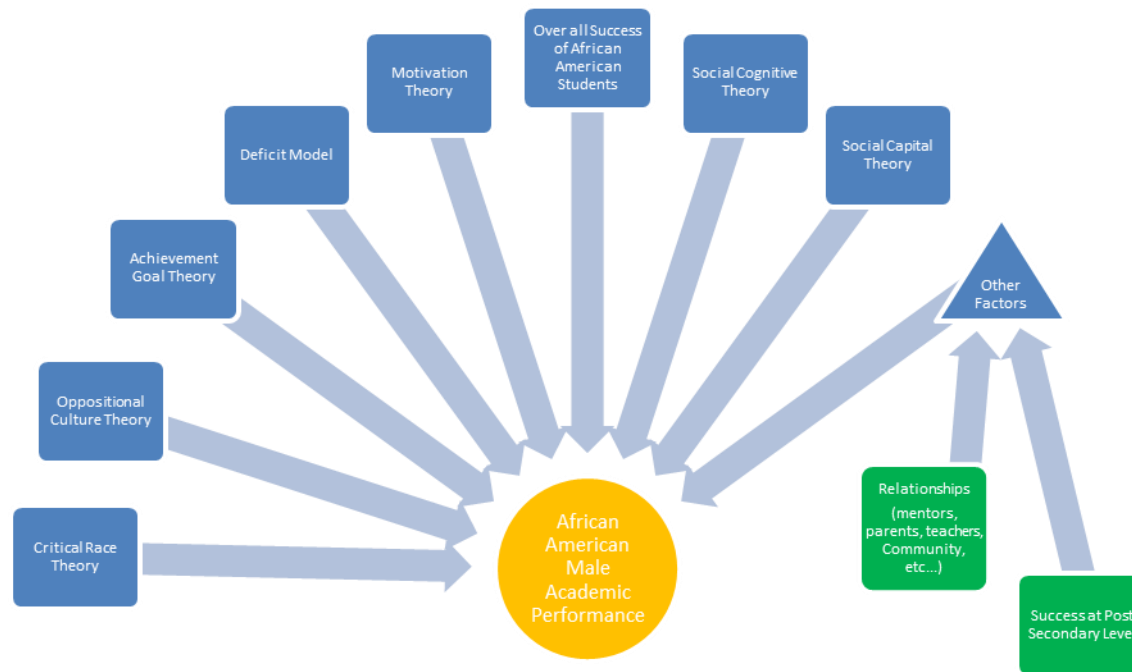
## **1.2 SIGNIFICANCE AND NEED FOR THIS STUDY**

The academic progress of African American students is often discussed by applying theories regarding why African American students are or are not successful (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Carbado, 2002; Carter, 2008; L. E. Davis et al., 2003; Duncan, 2002; Edwards, Mumford,

Shillingford, & Serra-Roldan, 2007; J. P. J. Griffin, 2005; K. Griffin & Allen, 2006; Gutierrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda, 2002; Hampson, Rahman, Brown, Taylor, & Donaldson, 1998; Jarret, 1997; Kaplan & Maehar, 1999; Leigh, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Love, 2004; Lynn & Adams, 2002; McIntosh, 1988; McMillan & Reed, 1994; Moje, 2000; Oyserman, Grant, & Ager, 1995; Polite, 1994; Scott, 2003; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Stinson, 2006; L. R. Thompson & Lewis, 2005; Vaught, 2008; Weatherspoon, 2006; Wiggan, 2008; Wilson-Jones & Cain Caston; Wing Sue et al., 2007) or by discussing the absent/presence of key relationship/family supports (Battle, 2002; Booker-Baker, 2005; Brown-Wright & Tyler, 2010; Downey, 2011; Ferguson, 2003; Fields-Smith, 2005; Greif, Hrabowski, & Maton, 1998; Holland; Howard, 2008; Irving & Hudley, 2005; Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges III, & Jennings, 2010; Maton & Hrabowski, 1998; Moore III, et al., 2008; Noguera, 2002; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005; Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998; Saunders, Davis, Williams, & Williams, 2004; Serpell, Hayling, Stevenson, & Kern, 2009; Singer, 2005; Tatum, 2006; G. L. Thompson, 2003; Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2010; Watkins, 2006; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003; Woodland, Martin, Hill, & Worrell, 2009; Wyatt, 2009; Yan, 1999). When African American achievement linked with success is studied it is often observed from the perspective of giftedness (Bonner II, 2001; Bonner II, Jennings, Marbley, & Brown, 2008; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Hughes, 2010; Tomlinson, Gould, Schroth, & Jarvis, 2006) or at the post-secondary level (Bennett et al., 2004; Hamrick & Stage, 2004; Muhammad, et al., 2008; Strayhorn, 2010; Warde, 2008). Figure 1 shows how success is discussed in relation to African American males.

Figure 1 shows that many have attempted to explain why some African American males succeed and others have been less successful by showing ways in which African American male academic performance is studied. Researchers have applied several theories to the study of

African American Male Achievement. Some of these theories are: Critical Race Theory, Oppositional Culture Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, Motivation Theory, Social Cognitive Theory and Social Capital Theory. Figure 1 also shows that African American male academic achievement has been studied, and is most often studied, using a deficit model. Lastly, there are other factors that researchers contribute to the academic success or struggle that African American students experience in school. These factors are also displayed in Figure 1. These include the relationships that either benefit or harm minority students and/or the success that African American students experience at the collegiate level. Each of these theories and factors will be further explained in the Literature Review.



**Figure 1.** Ways That African American Success Are Currently Studied

### **1.2.1 Purpose of the Study**

There is far less research that speaks to the African American male students that have beaten the odds to become academically successful, viable, productive, citizens during their K-12 educational experience. This study looked at the phenomena of academically successful African American males and from their perspective determine what success meant to them specifically as well as why and how they attained success as well as what led to their academic success. From this study, the researcher gained insight into how academically successful African American males: 1) occupy relationships that help to support and sustain academic success; navigate social lives and relationships that help to develop and sustain academic success; 2) develop specific attitudes and behaviors that are consistently exhibited and lead to academic success; and 3) flourish in the school environment under a particular set of factors (family relationships, teacher supports, school environment) that may or may not cultivate and sustain academic success. The data gained from this study yielded information that can impact educational policy and instructional practices to support minority students.

### **1.2.2 Research Questions**

Successful African American males have something that sets them apart from their underachieving peers. This study sought to discover what this something was and how it was developed. It was believed that successful African American males face the same barriers that their unsuccessful peers face, but have developed a coping mechanism or support system that enables them to overcome these barriers. The following questions were used to guide a study of

the attitudes and practices of African American male students that were successful in the school setting:

1. In spite of the achievement gap that exists in urban schools/school systems between African American and white students, what accounted for the success of a few African American males? What were the attitudes and behaviors that consistently appear in African American males who perform successfully in the urban school environment?
2. Did the attitudes and behaviors of successful African American males differ with grade point average?
3. Did academically successful African American males have family support systems that contribute to high academic achievement?

### **1.2.3 Theoretical Frameworks: Critical Race Theory and Resiliency Theory**

The following questions guided the research study: How was African American male success being studied? At the time of this study, African American male success was frequently studied from a perspective that focuses on test scores and curriculum and not the voices of the people who are most affected the African American males. This perspective did not capture the role that “racial and achievement self-perceptions interact to shape students’ achievement ideologies and school behaviors” (Carter, 2008). From a position of dominance, educators have framed the Achievement Gap discussion around their presuppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings (Love, 2004). This privileged position fails to consider the voices of the minority students that speak to the student’s values and wisdoms that lead to positive academic success.

What theoretical frameworks support the study of minorities and outliers (students who are successful against the apparent odds)? Critical Race Theory and Resiliency Theory were used to study African American Male Success. Critical Race Theory challenges mainstream achievement ideology and acknowledges the significant role of various forms of racism that impede the achievement of African American students (Carter, 2008). When Critical Race Theory was paired with Resiliency Theory, African American success/achievement could be seen as a mechanism to build upon student strengths rather than a rehash of the obstacles that hinder success. Pulling from the work of Rutter and Garmezy (1983), resiliency is conceptualized as the individual's ability to positively respond to stressful situations. There are resiliency factors that enhance an individual's coping abilities (Jarret, 1997). When speaking to African American males we can begin to hear about resilient factors that they may noticeably or unnoticeably attribute to their academic success.

How can Critical Race Theory and Resiliency Theory capture the attitudes and behaviors of successful African American males? Critical Race Theory provides minority students with a voice in the achievement gap discussion where they were once silenced. Issues of race and identity development move to the foreground. The importance of race is discussed by Ladson-Billings (1998), "It is because of the meaning and value imputed to whiteness that CRT becomes an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power." Through the lens of Critical Race Theory African American students can begin to share their voice and how they have achieved success under the current educational structures and systems. A place where all students' experiences and needs are valued can be developed. African American students can

begin to have input into the process of teaching and learning through shared decision making with other students, teachers, and administrators. Like Freire (Freire, 2001), education takes on less of the banking approach, where knowledge is deposited into a student, but becomes a mechanism to engage the interests, culture, and knowledge that the student already possesses.

Resiliency Theory (Krovetz, 1999) describes factors in families, schools, and a community that exist in the lives of successful children and youth and compares these protective factors with what is missing from the lives of children and youth who are not successful. Resiliency Theory serves to explain the components of what are used by African American males when exposed to the tenets within Critical Race Theory to obtain academic success. The deficit model practices have studied the achievement gap issue and prove to be ineffective in closing the achievement gap. It is believed that studying this problem from a resiliency framework will provide those transferrable practices to help support academic successful for African American males (Warde, 2008).

The researched leaned on Critical Race Theory and Resiliency theory because CRT addresses flaws in the educational system and Resiliency Theory addresses supports for the student. Although these theories appear to be adverse to one another, Critical Race Theory speaks to the systemic challenges that an African American male student who possesses resilient characteristics (Resiliency Theory) will need to address to obtain academic success. There is a tension between the public education system and the under achievement of minority students. These tensions were defined as a strained relationship between the educational system and the minority students that it serves. Later this tension and its impact on the academic success of students of color, in particular African American males were discussed.



Success must be studied by comparing a successful case to an unsuccessful case (Brinkerhoff, 2003). Success Case Methods is reported in story form and seeks the very best a program or initiative has produced to determine the value of a program (Brinkerhoff, 2003). Examining beliefs and attitudes of successful and unsuccessful African American males will help discover the commonalities that lead to this success. This type of study will determine the value of attitudes, behaviors, and support systems self-reported by African American males and their impact on the academic success. A success story is not a testimonial. It will help researchers to pinpoint data that lead to academic success for African American male students (Brinkerhoff, 2003).

#### **1.2.4 Research Design**

This will be a qualitative, case study that will use Success Case Methods to guide the study of African American male success. By focusing on resiliency factors that separate the academically successful males from the academically non-successful males it is believed that the release of truths that are relevant to these young men's educational experience will surface. Through the lens of Critical Race Theory transferrable tools, resiliency factors, or perhaps strategies to maneuver systemic racism may be provided to young men who are not successful thus closing the academic achievement gap.

This study relied on student interviews with twenty African American male, high school students. Fifteen students who: 1) are proficient or advanced in both Reading and Math on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), and 2) have a 2.5 grade point average (GPA) or higher. Nine students who were considered non-academically successful, in that they have a grade point average below 2.5 and have scored Basic or Below basic on their PSSA were

also interviewed. All interviews were tape-recorded. This study further explored pilot interviews already conducted. Based on four previously conducted interviews, this study expanded to twenty-four subject interviews that examine academic performance among African American males. These interviews were expected to vary in length from 45 minutes to one hour and 45 minutes. Two pilot interviews were also included in this study. The interviews were informal and open-ended, and conducted in a conversational style. An interview protocol was used that was slightly modified from the protocol developed during a Research Assignment/Pilot Study performed in the spring of 2010. This Research Assignment will be discussed further in the methods section.

Comparative analysis was used to find patterns from the interviews after they have been transcribed; data will be collected, analyzed and coded for reoccurring themes. Reoccurring themes from preliminary research were: definitions of success, compliance, resistance, socio-economic differences, identity development, and comfort with racial, social, and gender differences. The interviews were transcribed along with the interviews, follow-up interviews, observations, as well as discuss casual encounters, if any with subjects. Memoranda were also written while listening to taped interviews, typing transcripts, and reflecting upon a particular interview. In addition to the interviews and follow-up interviews, other data was obtained other data throughout the study, such as comments from administrators, teachers, and parents.

In the style of a Success Case Methods study, nine African American males that had not achieved academic success were also interviewed. Their academic status was measured by a score of basic or below basic on the Reading and Math PSSA and a grade point average below 2.5. A grade point average below 2.5 renders students' ineligible for the Pittsburgh Promise, a district based scholarship provided to students who attend a school district school or Charter

School. The participant's narratives were used to compare their academic practices and relationships to those of successful African American males to determine if there were differences and similarities that give successful African American males an advantage. Table 1 describes this Success Case Methods study and how each theoretical framework addressed each research question. Although these questions leaned on information that leads to success of high school African American males, the actual interview questions had both academically successful and non-successful African American males describe success. The manner in which this will be done will be further explained in the Methods section.

**Table 1.** African American Male High School Success Study

| Methodology: Ethnographic Success Case Methods Study  |                        |                   |   |   |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|---|---|
| Research Questions  | Theoretical Frameworks |                   | Examination   | Hypotheses  |
|   | Critical Race Theory   | Resiliency Theory |   |   |
| In spite of the achievement gap that exists in urban schools/school systems between African American and white students, what currently accounts for the success of a few African American males? | X                      | X                 | Using the perspective and voice of successful African American Males this study will examine what systemically and personally (for the males) attributes to academic success.   | Strong family relationships, positive attitudes and an ability to communicate positively with others accounts for academic success in African American males.(Hampson, et al., 1998; Jarret, 1997)  |
| What are the attitudes and behaviors that consistently appear in African American males who perform successfully in the urban school environment?   | X                      | X                 | Tapping into the voice of African American males this study will allow them to discuss their attitudes and behaviors that support positive academic success and if these attitudes and behaviors are impacted or not impacted by the school system. | Academically successful African American males have an effort based attitude toward school and see school as being important to their future success. (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006)                    |
| Do the attitudes and behaviors of successful African American males differ with grade point average?  | X                      | X                 | This study will search for the protective factors that support or do not support the success of African American males at various grade point average ranges.   | African American males in integrated schools are likely to be academically successful and are better able to develop a counter-narrative to support their academic success. (Lee, 1999; Love, 2004) |
| Do academically successful African American males have family support systems that contribute to high academic achievement?   |                        | X                 | Relationships and social interactions are examined for protective factors that support positive academic success.   | Academically successful African American males receive positive support from at least 1 family member.  |

### **1.2.5 Summary**

African American males have an academic experience that is far different from white males. African American males confront negative factors that hinder their positive academic performance (Frazier, 2009). Despite these negative factors there is a small group of African American males that do succeed. This study will allow the voices of twenty African American males (ten academically successful and ten non-academically successful) to be heard. The current literature often talks about African American males as non-academically successful beings, whereas this study attempts to use the voices of African American males to share their stories about academic success and schooling. They will give us a window into their academic and social experiences that contributed to their positive academic status. The African American male perspective is often not heard. Currently the nation and many school districts search for solutions to improve the quality of education and the educational environment to support the achievement of all students in particular minority students and often specifically African American students. The magic bullet has not been discovered to address the issues of minority achievement. Providing insight into the perspectives of African American male students and the consequences of schooling can make a huge impact to inform policymaking at the State and School District levels across the nation.

This study hypothesized that academically successful African American males had strong family relationships, positive attitudes and an ability to communicate positively with others (Hampson, et al., 1998; Jarret, 1997). They also had an effort based attitude toward school and see school as being important to their future success (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006). African American males in integrated schools were likely to be academically successful and were better able to develop a counter-narrative to support their academic success (Lee, 1999; Love, 2004).

The analysis of interviews with African American males was used to support or challenge these hypotheses.

This section detailed the problem and significance of the study as well as the purpose research questions that guided this study. A review of the literature will be presented to guide the research and data collection.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section presents a review of the related literature and examines the various models, theories, and relationships that support or are needed to support African American male academic success. This section first examined the theories and theoretical models that discuss African American male academic performance. It followed with an examination of the relationships and community supports that were recommended or in place to develop academically successful African American males. This was accomplished by examining the social theories and constructs that defined relationships that contribute to academic success for African American males. Lastly, literature on successful African American males that were already labeled as gifted and those that were successful at the post-secondary level was examined to gather information regarding the practices, strategies, and relationships that have led to their success.

This section also discussed race and racism. For the purposes of the Literature Review, race was defined here as the socially constructed meaning attached to a variety of physical attributes including: skin color, eye color, hair texture and bone structures of people in the United States and elsewhere. Racism is defined as the beliefs that one set of characteristics is superior to another set (e.g., white skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes are more beautiful than brown skin and brown hair) (Singleton, 2006). It is believed that the sheer cultural and physical characteristics of African American students, especially African American males, constitute a negative educational social structure that has been stubborn to change or deconstruct.

## **2.1 THEORIES**

There are many theories and theoretical models that speak to the success or lack of success of African American male students. The theories used to support this study are: Critical Race Theory, Resiliency Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, Deficit Models, Oppositional Culture Theory, Oppositional Culture Theory, Social Capital Theory, and, Social Cognitive Theory. These theories and theoretical models will be used to determine what common themes surface that speak to the factors that lead to African American male success and to investigate Success Case Methods. Table 2 represents the authors that use theory/theoretical models to discuss African American male achievement. In the column labeled OTHER THEORIES, the following theories/theoretical models are represented: Social Cognitive Theory, Social Capital Theory, Oppositional Culture Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, and Theory of Planned Behavior. These theories will not be considered specifically but are embedded in the literature that is discussed in this section. The discussion will focus on the factors that lead to academic success for African American males.

## **2.2 CRITICAL RACE THEORY**

In this section, Critical Race Theory will be defined. Next the tenets of Critical Race theory will be explained. Critical Race Theory will be further used to explain the achievement gap discussion. The definition of CRT and the tenets will be linked to African American male academic achievement and the manner in which this topic is addressed in American. Lastly, Critical Race Theory's connection to the Achievement gap discussion will be summarized.



### **2.2.1 Critical Race Theory Definition**

The epistemological framework of Critical Race Theory emerged as a challenge to the positivist and legal discourse of civil rights (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT brings the issues of race and racism in social institutions to the foreground, while providing strategies to eliminate racism as part of a larger goal. Critical Race Theory focuses heavily on “white privilege”. White privilege is defined as certain advantages and benefits that are attributed to an individual that come with being a member of a dominant race (Delgado & Stefancic). In this case the dominant race is referred to as White. According to Ladson-Billings, examining race and racism should begin with an understanding that “Whiteness” has been positioned as the ideal status/property in society and that White people need to acknowledge the privileges associated with being White (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Whiteness has become the educational standard in the public school system (Love, 2004; Singleton, 2006). African American students are not intellectual inferior to white students but cannot ignore the achievement disparity. This study will examine the intersection of systemic racism (CRT) and academic achievement (Resiliency) and the impact that systemic racism and academic achievement have on each other.

**Table 2.** Theories and Theoretical Models of Achievement

| Source                      | Theories and Theoretical Models |                   |                |                |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
|                             | Critical Race Theory            | Resiliency Theory | Deficit Models | Other Theories |
| Carbado, 2010               | X                               |                   |                |                |
| Carter, 2008                | X                               |                   |                |                |
| Davis et. al, 2003          |                                 |                   |                | X              |
| Duncan, 2010                | X                               |                   |                |                |
| Edwards et. al, 2007        |                                 | X                 |                |                |
| Griffin & Allen, 2006       |                                 | X                 |                |                |
| Griffin, 2005               |                                 | X                 |                |                |
| Gutierrez et al., 2002      |                                 |                   | X              |                |
| Hampson et al., 1998        |                                 | X                 |                |                |
| Jarrett, 1997               |                                 | X                 |                |                |
| Kaplan & Maehr, 1999        |                                 |                   |                | X              |
| Krovetz, 1999               |                                 | X                 |                |                |
| Leigh, 2003                 | X                               |                   |                |                |
| Lopez, 2003                 | X                               |                   |                |                |
| Love, 2004                  | X                               |                   |                |                |
| Lund, 2010                  | X                               |                   |                |                |
| Lynn & Adams, 2010          | X                               |                   |                |                |
| McIntosh, 1988              | X                               |                   |                |                |
| McMillan & Reed, 1994       |                                 | X                 |                |                |
| Moje, 2000                  |                                 | X                 |                |                |
| Oyserman et. al, 1995       |                                 |                   |                | X              |
| Perry, 2002                 | X                               |                   |                |                |
| Putnam, 2001                |                                 |                   |                | X              |
| Scott, 2003                 |                                 |                   |                | X              |
| Solorzano & Yoss, 2002      | X                               |                   |                |                |
| Solorzano & Yoss, 2010      | X                               |                   |                |                |
| Stinson, 2006               |                                 |                   | X              |                |
| Thompson & Lewis, 2005      |                                 |                   |                | X              |
| Vaught, 2009                |                                 |                   |                |                |
| Weatherspoon, 2006          |                                 |                   | X              |                |
| Wiggan, 2007                |                                 |                   |                | X              |
| Wilson-James & Caston, 2002 |                                 |                   |                | X              |
| Wing Sue et al., 2007       | X                               |                   |                |                |

### 2.2.2 Critical Race Theory Tenets

Synthesizing the work of Glenn Singleton and D. J. Carter the five tenets of Critical Race Theory have been compiled. These tenets help to frame and challenge popular achievement ideology which often dismisses the presence of educational inequality in the United States (Carter, 2008).

The basic tenets of Critical Race Theory focus on:

1. The counter story-There is significance of experiential knowledge and the use of storytelling to analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render African Americans and other minorities one down (Carter, 2008; Singleton, 2006).
2. The permanence of racism- Racism is normal in American society and CRT provides strategies for exposing racism in its various forms (Carter, 2008; Singleton, 2006).
3. Whiteness as property- Critical Race Theory challenges traditional and dominant discourse and paradigms on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to affect people of color (Carter, 2008; Singleton, 2006).
4. The critique of liberalism- Critical Race Theory challenges liberal society's claims to "colorblindness", neutrality of the law, and change in systems and institutions that make positive steps for minorities incremental. This tenet makes a commitment to social justice for people of color (Carter, 2008; Singleton, 2006).
5. Interest convergence- As long as an institution or system can see the benefit or value of helping a minority it will (Singleton, 2006).

These tenets help to frame the conversation that the current authors use to discuss the achievement gap/disparity. The tenets will also act as a filter that is used to listen to the voices of people of color, especially those of African American males who partake this study.

### **2.2.3 The Counter Narrative and Achievement**

This section will discuss the role of race and racism in the field of education through the lens of the Critical Race Theory tenet of the Counter Narrative. This section will discuss the impact that racist relationships have on conversations about African American students as well as the impact on students, in particular African American males. It will also offer recommendations to improve public education to support positive academic achievement for African American males.

Since *Brown vs. the Board of Education* the nation has been engaged in conversations around how African American children are educated (Love, 2004). However, these conversations usually develop out of the perspectives of the dominant white middle class. The achievement gap is discussed from a deficit perspective that emphasizes the failure of African American children in relation to White children (Love, 2004). Certain groups of Asian students achieve higher scores on standardized assessments than White students. It is never spoken that White children may be inferior or that there is an achievement gap between White students and Asian students (Love, 2004). The achievement gap/disparity hence is only attributed to African Americans, Latinos, and people of color. White students are left in a class of “otherness” above students of color.

There is no doubt that on average minority students are out-performed by White students. African American students are predictably the lowest performing group at every socio-economic level (Singleton, 2006). Since the No Child Left Behind Act was passed in 2001, the educational practices of teachers and administrators have been closely scrutinized. The educational system is being held accountable for the performance of all its children. Despite these measures, African American children continue to struggle academically and African American males are at the bottom of struggle.

Framing the conversation of the achievement gap in a manner that African American children do not feel defeated and inferior is essential. In a New York Times article (Lee, 1999), one student commented, "If your doctor told you, you can't run anymore, would you try to go out and run? If someone says again and again that you can't achieve, you don't even try." A concern is that when educators discuss African American achievement immediately the type of neighborhoods, parents, and the financial status of Black students take center stage. This is the tension of addressing academic achievement for African American students. There are factors in the communities and homes of many of our under-performing students of color but not all of them. There are students of color who do not value their education or school. This is not the case for all students. There are schools that do realize high achievement for students of color, but these are very few. Why? What have these schools done or not done to support their students of color? The counter narrative offers an alternative view for us to examine how race and racism are embedded into educational settings (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003).

#### **2.2.4 The Permanence of Racism**

The one place in the school house that welcomes African American males unconditionally is athletics. African American males can be excellent athletes and academic students or excellent athletes and poor performers academically. The school house will take both (Beamon & Bell, 2006). It is hard to be an African American male that is either academically successful or low performing and not athletically talented (Duncan, 2002). African American males are often seen as non-intellectual beings. This is not overtly spoken, but covertly established (Wing Sue, et al., 2007).

It is believed that educators must begin to tear down these invisible social structures, rebuild them with support and educational systems that promote the positive academic performance of African American males (Love, 2004; Singleton, 2006). This group of students has been alienated from the educational system and it is important to reverse this trend. Race is an obvious issue in education when we continue to see African American children at the bottom of the education pile. The importance of race is discussed by Ladson-Billings (1998), applying Critical Race Theory to education becomes an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and conversations, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power (Carbado, 2002). For African American males there are educational structures that perpetuate academic struggle and failure. These must be torn down and rebuilt with positive structures. Failure to do so will guarantee the continuation of achievement disparities for students of color, in particular African American males (Love, 2004).

### **2.2.5 Whiteness as Property**

Audrey Thompson (2001) eloquently defines Whiteness as property:

Whiteness as property treats whiteness not as a biological category but as a social construction...whiteness is regarded as “natural”...conceived of as legal or cultural property, Whiteness can be seen to provide material and symbolic privilege to whites, those passing as white, and sometimes honorary whites. Examples of material privilege would include better access to higher education or a choice of safe neighborhoods in

which to live; symbolic white privilege includes conceptions of beauty or intelligence that not only are tied to whiteness but that implicitly exclude blackness or brownness.

In public schools, the cultures and legacies of African American people do not receive the same value and status of that of the White culture. White culture is seen as morally neutral, normal, ideal and average (McIntosh, 1988). African American students are seen as different and deficient from the norm. Building on students' strengths and not their weaknesses is barely discussed. Students are unfortunately seen as containers to be filled and placed in the right conditions, instead of co-owners of the educational process (Freire, 2001). Filling a student's academic container is referred to as a "banking method" of education. Students function as repositories for knowledge but not generators of knowledge (Carbado, 2002). I believe that African American children will continue to underachieve as long as their culture and experience is marginalized and discounted.

During slavery and sometime after, literacy and education was to be associated with Whites only. It is a known fact that slaves would be whipped or hung for attempting to read and that some Southern Slave Codes made reading and writing illegal and punishable. African Americans knew the importance of literacy and education as a vehicle to freedom (*I Will Be Heard!*, 2002). Reading and writing was seen by many slaves and civil rights leaders as a vehicle for racial uplift and liberation (Perry, et al., 2003). It is amazing to think that education was so vital to slaves that they would risk their lives to read and it appears that we cannot get many modern African American children motivated in school. It would be wise for us to examine the tension between the systemic pressures of the normalize social constructions of race and education (Singleton, 2006) and the intersection of the influence an African American child has on their academic success (McMillan & Reed, 1994). The academic social structure that exists in

public education has made a contribution to the achievement of African American students (Carter, 2008). The extent of this contribution has been debated, but one has to wonder about the system's contribution. In 2007-2008, among both males and females, 83 percent of public school teachers were White, 7 percent each were Black or Hispanic, 1 percent each were Asian or of two or more races, and less than one percent each were Pacific Islander or American Indian/Alaska Native in 2007-08 ("National Centers for Education Statistics," 2012). What message does this send to African American children?

Application of Critical Race Theory to the education system becomes a bridge to cross the academic disparity issue. It is believed that educators must understand that their beliefs and values have a direct impact on the achievement of all students, teaching students that appear different necessitates the creation of a learning environment that fosters respect, tolerance, and intercultural understanding (Lopez, 2003). A good education cannot be a "White Property" right. If it does, students of color are excluded from having a good education on the basis of skin color, physical characteristics and perceive notions of what these characteristics embody, which will in turn continue the achievement disparity (Leigh, 2003).

### **2.2.6 Effort vs. School Structure**

It is essential for students of color to address the issue of aptitude. As mentioned earlier, students of color are not mentally inferior to white students. In the United States, there exists what can be called an educational tension between the dominant race and the minority cultures that approach the school house (Gay, 2000). This tension pits the minority student and societal challenges against the minority student's academic achievement and enforces institutionalized racism within the public school structure. The dominant culture insists on teaching and propagating its deemed



important knowledge and learning style on all learners. The dominant culture rarely seeks to incorporate the knowledge and learning styles of others (Gay, 2000) and because of this our country continues to fall behind in global academics. One area in particular where dominant culture hinders the progress of all learners is in addressing the issue of aptitude versus effort ("The Principles of Learning for Effort Based Education," 2003).

According to Resnick and Williams, the public school system has been built “around the belief that individuals are endowed with more or less measurable quantities of intelligence, aptitude for particular kinds of tasks, and innate abilities to master specific physical, creative, and intellectual skills” ("The Principles of Learning for Effort Based Education," 2003). Many adults can recount being advised by their School Counselor to pursue a specific path after their K-12 education based on the perceived ability they possessed as a student. Many educators believe that some children have “it” and others are “dumb as stones”. This attitude is reflected in many of the old Warner Brothers cartoons of a one room school house with a student sitting in the corner, on a wooden stool, with a dunce hat on top of his head. Breaking through this mindset in the realm of education is daunting.

Resnick and Hall pull on the theories and philosophies of pioneering psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, a highly prolific author. Vygotsky's interests in the fields of developmental psychology, child development, and education were extremely diverse. The philosophical framework he provided includes not only insightful interpretations about the cognitive role of tools of mediation, but also the re-interpretation of well-known concepts in psychology such as the notion of internalization of knowledge. Vygotsky introduced the notion of zone of proximal development, an innovative metaphor capable of describing not the actual, but the potential of human cognitive development ("Lev Vygotsky," 2010). Resnick builds on Vygotsky's

interpretations to define intelligence, learning, and cognitive development as social practices. Resnick believes in the idea that with more effort, one can learn even the most difficult things ("The Principles of Learning for Effort Based Education," 2003; L. Resnick & Williams-Hall, 2003). Hence intelligence is not a preconceived factor stored in the DNA of the chosen few. Resnick again leans on Vygotsky to explain that children develop in a socio-cultural context where they participate in formal and informal exchanges. Socialization includes the acquisition and use of knowledge, ways of representing knowledge, and ways of thinking and reasoning with that knowledge, which along with language would constitute intelligence ("Socializing Intelligence," 1997). This cycles back to tension between minority and dominant culture. If a student's culture, knowledge, ways of thinking and reasoning are not accepted in the dominant cultures definition of intelligence, are we in fact excluding a segment of students based on what they bring or do not bring to the educational table? For example, I have seen many African American children arrive at Kindergarten eager to learn. However, they may not know the sounds of the alphabet or even recognize the letters of the alphabet. I have heard teachers speak of students like I describe with disparaging terms and immediately provide these students with sub-standard instruction. It is many of these same students that can recite extensively rap lyrics, help to manage younger siblings, and have social skills and ways of navigating the world that would put some adults to shame. Unfortunately, these rich skills that they possess are often overlooked and under-valued in the classroom.

Through the socialized intelligence it is believed that people can become more intelligent through sustained targeted effort and the upper limits of the human capability are unknown. Resnick's warrant for the claim that human capability is open-ended can be found in two bodies of psychological research that began independently and later converged. One line of work, by

social developmentalists, pertains to beliefs about intelligence. People's beliefs differ markedly and are closely related to how much and what kinds of effort people exert in learning or problem solving situations. The other line of work, by cognitive scientists, addresses the self-monitoring strategies and self-management of learning called metacognition ("The Principles of Learning for Effort Based Education," 2003; L. Resnick & Williams-Hall, 2003).

Social psychologists' research on achievement goal orientation shows that people's beliefs about the nature of intelligence and their dispositions toward learning are associated ("The Principles of Learning for Effort Based Education," 2003). The monumental learning is in the agreement with the social psychologists. However, I am hit with the tension that parents and educators struggle with supporting students who do not naturally put forth effort toward their studies or do not show a natural inclination toward their academics. We must look at the system and its structures that perpetuate academic inferiority for minority students. We also must determine if what we provide for students in the way of a public education meets the needs of students. We must begin to incorporate student culture, knowledge, ways of thinking and reasoning into the urban school experience. Expecting students to wear the one size fits all educational t-shirt will not close the gap.

Teachers can become major hindrances in the academic performance of students. If a teacher feels that a child cannot learn, this teacher is less likely to provide the student with rigorous educational opportunities (Booker-Baker, 2005). Some students may need more assistance than others. Teachers are observed as the sage on the stage or engaged in what Freire would term banking education, filling students with knowledge (Freire, 1993). Telling as an effective instructional strategy rarely supports learning. Students cannot be filled with knowledge. Learning is a social activity in which students must be engaged.

Pulling from Vygotsky's work, teachers should work with students to increase learning. Vygotsky uses a term called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD is the range of tasks that a child can complete independently and those completed with the guidance and assistance of adults or more-skilled children. The lower limit of ZPD is the level of skill reached by the child working independently. The upper limit is the level of additional responsibility the child can accept with the assistance of an able instructor. The ZPD captures the child's cognitive skills that are in the process of maturing and can be accomplished only with the assistance of a more-skilled person. Scaffolding is a concept closely related to the idea of ZPD. Scaffolding is changing the level of support. Over the course of a teaching session, a more-skilled person adjusts the amount of guidance to fit the child's current performance. Dialogue is an important tool of this process in the zone of proximal development. In a dialogue unsystematic, disorganized, and spontaneous concepts of a child are met with the more systematic, logical and rational concepts of the skilled helper ("Lev Vygotsky," 2010). This Zone of Proximal Development is a foundational concept in the Effort Based Learning movement. Helping educators to tap into this Zone is the challenge.

Unfortunately the higher limits and scaffolding of the zone of proximal development are not happening for many urban students. Teaching in the capacity mentioned above would support student learning and engage students in the learning process. Students would become partners with teachers instead of passive observers. Effort Based Learning can be a means to closing the achievement gap if the behaviors and actions of the educational system could truly espouse its core values. Effort Based Learning is the goal, but many teachers are not trained in it. Teachers are trained to efficiently distribute the content they have learned from their college major.

### **2.2.7 Critique of Liberalism**

This literature is not meant to be critical of White educators exclusively. African American and minority educators can also be perpetrators of racism against African American students. This type of racism is referred to as internalized racism (Singleton, 2006). Internalized racism is an active form of self-hatred as well as the disapproval of other people of color because they lack White color, culture, and consciousness (Singleton, 2006). As an African American I have judged other African American's as being "ghetto" or "too hood" when observing their behavior and actions in academic settings. I have found myself in many occasions exhibiting characteristics of internalized racism. People of color often buy into and even tell stories from the perspective of the majority and hold the ideology of the majority (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Providing African American students, especially males with a quality education does not rest solely in the hands of White educators.

Educators must take a hard look in the mirror to determine what part they have played in replicating the system of underachievement for students of color. When injecting race into the examination of student achievement, many educators take the stance of being race neutral and claim that they do not see the color of the students that they teach, they merely see children. To ignore the race of their students is to perpetuate racism by reinforcing that there are no cultural differences between Whites and Blacks and further normalizing the conditions of White culture (Singleton, 2006).

### **2.2.8 Interest Conversion**

The emphasis on academic performance and test scores has brought the achievement of children of color to the forefront. Schools and school districts face sanctions when students, especially minority students do not perform to achievement standards set. These achievement standards can be test scores, graduation rates, attendance rates as well as increasing the enrollment of minority students in gifted and advanced placement courses ("Adequate Yearly Progress," 2012). There has been an intense focus on data associated with the above achievement standards to avoid the sanctions. It is a little disingenuous to minority students to say that the new focus on minority academic performance is solely based on care and concern. Do educators really care or were they made to care?

### **2.2.9 Critical Race Theory Summary**

The authors in this section were reviewed to gain a better understanding of Critical Race Theory contained in discussion of the permanence of racism in society and/or in the educational system that hinders the success of students of color and in some instances African Americans in particular (Carbado, 2002; Carter, 2008; Duncan, 2002; Leigh, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Love, 2004; Lund, 2010; Lynn, et al., 2010; McIntosh, 1988; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, 2010; Vaught, 2008; Wing Sue, et al., 2007). These articles also speak about deconstructing the negative social structures that act as a mechanism to perpetuate racism (Carbado, 2002; Duncan, 2002; Leigh, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Love, 2004; Lund, 2010; Lynn, et al., 2010; McIntosh, 1988; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, 2010; Vaught, 2008; Wing Sue, et al., 2007). In particular, it is important to reinforce with students that effort creates ability and perseverance often leads to academic

success (L. Resnick & Williams-Hall, 2003; L. B. Resnick & Nelson- Le Gall, 1997; Vygotsky, 2010). Many articles also discuss the importance of having an achievement gap discussion that includes the voices of the minority students (Carbado, 2002; Carter, 2008; Duncan, 2002; Leigh, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Love, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, 2010). “Whiteness” as property that lays claim to educational system and marginalizes minority students is also found in the article’s discussions (Leigh, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Love, 2004; Lund, 2010; McIntosh, 1988; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, 2010; Vaught, 2008). Only one of the Critical Race Theory articles focused specifically on African American males (Duncan, 2002).

#### **2.2.10 Summary**

This section defines Critical Race Theory. The tenets of Critical Race Theory were discussed in relation to their impact on American society and culture. The effects of racism and schooling on African American students were also discussed. Table 3 notes how the Critical Race Theory authors wove the tenets into their discussion of student achievement. Also examined was the tension between student effort and the educational system and this tension impacts student achievement.

**Table 3. Critical Race Theory Tenets**

|                        | African American Males only | Counter-story minority voice | Permanence of Racism | Education as White property | Deconstruction of Negative Social structures | Interest Conversion |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Carbado, 2010          |                             | X                            | X                    |                             | X  |                     |
| Carter, 2008           |                             | X                            | X                    |                             |  |                     |
| Duncan, 2010           | X                           | X                            | X                    |                             | X  | X                   |
| I Must Be Heard!       |                             |                              |                      |                             |  |                     |
| Leigh, 2003            |                             | X                            | X                    | X                           | X  | X                   |
| Lopez, 2003            |                             | X                            | X                    | X                           | X  | X                   |
| Love, 2004             |                             | X                            | X                    | X                           | X  | X                   |
| Lynn & Adams, 2010     |                             |                              | X                    |                             | X  |                     |
| Lund, 2010             |                             |                              | X                    | X                           | X  |                     |
| McIntosh, 1988         |                             |                              | X                    | X                           | X  |                     |
| Perry, 2002            |                             | X                            |                      |                             | X  |                     |
| Resnick, 2003          |                             |                              |                      | X                           | X  |                     |
| Solorzano & Yoss, 2010 |                             | X                            | X                    | X                           | X  |                     |
| Solorzano & Yoss, 2002 |                             | X                            | X                    | X                           | X  |                     |
| Vaught, 2009           |                             |                              | X                    | X                           | X  | X                   |
| Vygotsky, 2010         |                             | X                            |                      |                             | X  |                     |
| Wing Sue et. al, 2007  |                             |                              | X                    |                             | X  |                     |



### 2.3 RESILIENCY THEORY

In this section, Resiliency Theory will be defined. The components of Resiliency Theory will be explained and linked to relationships and community support systems. The deficit model will also be challenged with a discussion of how to build resilient factors in low achieving African American males. Next, Resiliency Theory will be connected to the achievement disparity discussion focusing the current way in which the conversation is discussed. Lastly, Resiliency Theory's and its connection to the Achievement discussion will be summarized.

Many researchers approach African American academic achievement from a deficit perspective. It is known that African American males are at a higher risk of failure in school and harm in society (Edwards, et al., 2007; Jarret, 1997). Addressing risk from a "hospital model" has placed the educational system in a reactive stance that places more and more African American students into special education classes and remedial courses (Krovetz, 1999). Instead of a proactive stance, the educational system continues to espouse a deficit model that places African American students, especially males in instructional models that are nonproductive. "A proactive position is based on building capabilities, skills, and assets--that is, building resiliency. It emphasizes strengthening the environment, not fixing kids" (Krovetz, 1999).

Resiliency Theory adopts this proactive stance. Resiliency theory is based on defining the protective factors within the family, school, and community that exist for the resilient child or adolescent that is missing from the family, school, and community of the child or adolescent who later receives intervention (Krovetz, 1999). Successful African American males exhibit a certain level of resiliency in spite living in difficult neighborhoods, minimal resources, violence and negative stereotypes in the media (McMillan & Reed, 1994). Much can be learned from studying

successful African American males. In his research study on Resiliency, Martin Krovetz (Krovetz, 1999) discusses the following attributes that are characteristic of resilient children:

1. Social competence--the ability to elicit positive responses from others, thus establishing positive relationships with both adults and peers.
2. Problem-solving skills--the ability to plan, based on seeing oneself in control and on being resourceful in seeking help from others.
3. Autonomy--a sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently and exert some control over one's environment.
4. Sense of purpose and future--having goals, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, and a sense of a bright future.

When looking at the literature, many authors state that there are “protective factors” that make some students who would normally be at risk for failure, exhibit successful coping skills (Jarret, 1997). According to Jarret (1997), protective factors are those mechanisms that enhance the individuals’ coping abilities, which in turn decrease vulnerability to negative outcomes. Many times successful African American males face the same risk factors that their non-successful counterparts face, but find strength and security to make decisions that result in a positive result. Several key articles will be examined that talk about resiliency using the protective factors that Krovetz had listed in his text.

### **2.3.1 Positive Relationships**

Children that have stable nurturing relationships with parents or a parent substitute or have social networks that provide emotional support, promote competence, and promote healthy self-esteem are more likely to be resilient (Hampson, et al., 1998). Parents and caregivers play a significant

role in helping youth develop high self-esteem and a sense of self efficacy despite the obstacles (Jarret, 1997). Resilient children have had the opportunity to establish a close bond with at least one caregiver who provides attention and support (McMillan & Reed, 1994). Not only are parental/parent substitute relationships important to resilient children, resilient students are able to gain strength and encouragement from their like-minded peers (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006). Where supportive parents and positive peers are absent, mentors can serve as coaches and guides that nurture, teach, and model appropriate behaviors and prevent involvement in risky behaviors and actions. Poor parental relationships and lack of adult support often doom some African American males to lives of academic failure and legal problems (Morrison & Epps, 2002). However, there are a few that are able to survive by being able to develop problem solving skills.

### **2.3.2 Problem Solving Skills**

Resilient children have learned positive coping skills that are often carried into adulthood (J. P. J. Griffin, 2005). These children have developed a high self-esteem and confidence, are able to solve social problems, and believe they can influence events in their lives for the better (Edwards, et al., 2007). Resilient students attribute poor performance to internal factors such as lack of effort, not caring, not trying, not studying as much as they needed to, goofing off, and playing around. They also believe that poor performing peers could do better if they worked harder and took school seriously (McMillan & Reed, 1994). Resilient students also have support systems and relationships that intervene when poor decisions have been made that result in negative consequences. These support systems help students to overcome the results of the negative consequences in order to succeed (Jarret, 1997).

### **2.3.3 Autonomy**

Resilient students have a positive internal locus of control and take personal responsibility for their successes and failures, showing a strong sense of self efficacy. They see the world as a positive place in spite of the difficult issues they deal with (McMillan & Reed, 1994). When difficulties arise, resilient students believe that they are responsible to change their circumstances. Resilient children demonstrate personal control and take responsibility for their own actions in an attempt to make sense of traumatic events (Hampson, et al., 1998). Successful resilient children do not lament troubling circumstances or blame individuals for their condition. They believe that with hard work and effort they will eventually succeed (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006).

### **2.3.4 Sense of Purpose and Future**

Resilient students value education and deem it as important to move forward in the future (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006). Resilient children are committed to learning and improving themselves by doing well in school and being successful (Edwards, et al., 2007). Resilient children have high expectations for themselves and their performance (McMillan & Reed, 1994). The families of resilient children expect the best from them and believe that they will be successful adults by completing school well (Jarret, 1997). Resilient African American children have goals for themselves and will link with friends that are trying to reach goals such as college (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006).

### **2.3.5 Challenging the Deficit Model**

Many researchers would argue that the issues that we are experiencing with closing the achievement disparity between White students and African American students is a direct relationship to how the discussion is framed (Love, 2004; Singleton, 2006). Researchers believe that it is unfair to hold White students as the norm for academic achievement, ignore the structures and systems within education that stifle African American students, and measure African American progress and improvement solely from the perspective of standardized assessments (Carter, 2008; Love, 2004; Singleton, 2006). Glenn Singleton believes that there are systemic racial educational disparities that supply African American students with unequal opportunities. He also believes that these educational disparities deny minority students access to rigorous, challenging curriculum and resources that would aid in their success (2006).

Traditional medical models emphasize behavioral deficit or the risk behaviors that a student may exhibit. What is currently in place to support African American students is a “wait-to-fail” approach. In order for African American students to receive help and support they have to become unsuccessful or fail (Edwards, et al., 2007). Although there do exist pockets of success in some schools for African American students, overall this “wait-to-fail” support has only netted in minimal incremental progress for all African American and minority students across the country (Love, 2004; Singleton, 2006). Preventing poor performance before it ever starts should become the action taken. Just as we give children vaccinations to prevent disease, we need to implement and support environments that promote resilient protective factors to support the academic success of all African American children, especially males. We are currently experiencing an epidemic of failure for this group of students and the medical model is

not working fast enough to save many of the young African Americans that are daily disenfranchised by the educational process (Krovetz, 1999).

### **2.3.6 Resiliency and Achievement**

Not all resilient children are academically successful but what makes them different is that they persevere past academic struggle (Jarret, 1997). Parents and peers play a significant role in encouraging the resilient child to put forth effort to succeed, stay on the educational path, and value the importance of an education (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006; Jarret, 1997). The impact of systemic racism on African American students continues to fill many school houses with educators that have low expectations for students of color. It has not been long since African Americans were not allowed to read or learn. The impact of slavery developed a system of inferiority of African Americans that persists in the educational system today (Hampson, et al., 1998; Love, 2004; Morrison & Epps, 2002). This negative system is the elephant in the room that our country needs to discuss to begin to heal and make a positive impact on the academic achievement of African American students (Hampson, et al., 1998). In spite of the negative factors that exist in the school house, negative factors that exist in many inner city and rural areas, and low family support, many African American children come to school with the hope that someone will see value in their abilities and intellect and that they can find their place in the classroom.

### **2.3.7 Summary of Resiliency**

Resiliency focuses on the protective factors that support positive academic achievement of African American students or any student for that matter. The “wait-to-fail” model currently in place to support student achievement is not proactive or preventative. Consequently, students continue to fail in mass. Helping students to develop a positive self-esteem, self-efficacy, and problem solving skills will also support their positive academic success. Table 4 summarizes the incorporation of these protective factors by the authors when discussing resiliency and developing resilient students. Below are listed the characteristics that resilient students exhibit and that are attributed to their success. These are the characteristics that schools can help develop in students that are not successful by simply focusing on what students have, instead of what they lack.

Moore, Henfield, and Owens declare that the public school system is failing miserably with African American males (2008, p. 907). They state African American students’ perceptions of their high school teachers’ expectations of their educational future had a significant impact on these students’ aspirations (Moore III, Henfield, & Owens, 2008). Because African American males believe that they are viewed negatively by school officials, they are less likely to seek these officials out for help or support (p.917).

Resiliency can be increased when educators uncover the environmental factors, experiences, and programs that can reduce risk and increase student resilience (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006). Examples of resiliency can be introduced to African American males via an intervention model that increases social competence, improves decision-making, strengthens problem-solving, and bolsters assertiveness (J. P. J. Griffin, 2005). Providing students with increased academic support and positive personal attention is another method for building

resiliency (Edwards, Mumford, Shillingford, & Serra-Roldan, 2007). Helping African American males to develop habits of resiliency will support their transition from adolescents to adulthood, while providing them with tools to become successful (Bonner II, Jennings, Marbley, & Brown, 2008).

**Table 4.** Resiliency- Protective Factors/Characteristics of Resilient Children

| Source                | Protective Factors                        |                |         |                             |                             |
|-----------------------|---|----------------|---------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                       | Socially Competent/Positive Relationships | Problem Skills | Solving | Autonomous/High Self Esteem | Sense of Purpose and Future |
| Edwards et. al, 2007  | X   | X              |         | X                           |                             |
| Griffin & Allen, 2006 | X   | X              |         | X                           |                             |
| Griffin, 2005         | X   | X              |         | X                           |                             |
| Hampson et. al, 1998  |   | X              |         | X                           | X                           |
| Jarrett, 1997         | X   | X              |         |                             | X                           |
| McMillan & Reed, 1994 | X   |                |         | X                           | X                           |

Resilient children have or develop positive relationship readily that support their academic progress (Edwards, et al., 2007; J. P. J. Griffin, 2005; K. Griffin & Allen, 2006; Jarret, 1997; McMillan & Reed, 1994). Resilient children are able to solve problems and cope with negative life experiences (Edwards, et al., 2007; J. P. J. Griffin, 2005; K. Griffin & Allen, 2006; Jarret, 1997). Resilient students maintain autonomy, high self-esteem, and independent thinking under the pressure of negative social influences in part to the positive relationships that they maintain (Edwards, et al., 2007; J. P. J. Griffin, 2005; K. Griffin & Allen, 2006; Hampson, et al., 1998; McMillan & Reed, 1994). Lastly, resilient students are goal oriented and focused on the future (Jarret, 1997; McMillan & Reed, 1994). These characteristics are observed in resilient students and may be able to be developed in unsuccessful students over time.



## 2.4 DEFICIT MODELS

Here the deficit model will be discussed briefly as it relates to schooling for African American students. The deficit model is a reactive model that focuses on failure and negative characteristics of African American students rather than intervening to remedy these negative characteristics (Edwards, et al., 2007). This model fails to consider the learning styles and strengths of minority students and expects minority students to behave, learn, and be educated as white middle class students (Gutierrez, et al., 2002). The deficit model fails to explain why a group of African American students can live in the same neighborhood, experience the same oppressive factors, and attend the same ill equipped schools and some will be academically successful and others will not.

Deficit theories label African American students, especially African American males as incapable of measuring up to goals and standards determined by the schooling system as well as lacking the behavioral, social, and life skills and experiences to be academically successful (Stinson, 2006). African American males are readily accepted as athletes and performers and less likely to be viewed as intellectual or academic. African American males that are believed to be academically deficit are assigned to special education, ignored, and/or passed through the educational system (Morrison & Epps, 2002; Weatherspoon, 2006). Drawing attention to the plight of African American students with legislation without addressing the social structures and belief systems that exist regarding African American people is repeating the dichotomy that existed when the Declaration of Independence was passed. The document stated that all men were created equal, but did not espouse humanity to people of color. Although we cry “No Child Left Behind” with our voices and with beautifully written documents, we fail to deconstruct the

social system that perpetuates the leaving behind of African American students and factors that perpetuate poverty as a whole (Freire, 1993).

Addressing the scourge of slavery and racism in the United States is essential to helping African American students to understand themselves (Stinson, 2006). For years the United States legally inflicted an economic and social system that insured that African Americans had no access to Education (Love, 2004). Fast forwarding to the late 1990's the Comprehensive School Reform Legislation was enacted. This is a good starting place, but we have a long way to travel as a nation when discussing topics of race and tolerance. It is the elephant in the room. Until we address race and racism, we will continue to struggle with low academic achievement of one group over another (Singleton, 2006).

## **2.5 THE IMPACT OF RELATIONSHIPS**

This section will discuss relationships and many of the theories that describe the relationships that successful African American students possess with family, school officials, and community members. This section will first describe the relationships that African American students have within their immediate families. Next, it will describe what relationships successful African American students have with school officials. Lastly, we will discuss the community influence on African American students. Some discussions will be positive and some will be negative. However they will point out how successful African American students navigate these community relationships.

### **2.5.1 Parents/Families**

Parents play a huge role in ensuring the academic success of their child. Parents/guardians reduce the impact of risk by interceding with monitoring or supervision strategies to control their child's exposure to gangs, drugs, violence, antisocial peer groups, and premature sexuality (Jarret, 1997, p. 220). Parental monitoring, supervision, and control have been cited by others as a factor that delayed or entirely prevented problem behaviors among adolescents (Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998). Parents that use this practice are viewed as strict. Strict discipline may be perceived as conveying love and support because allowing a child to exhibit negative behaviors or fall into peer pressure or other distractions may have major, negative consequences given the realities of life for African American males (Maton & Hrabowski, 1998). These parents impose curfews and tight supervision. Students are encouraged by their parents to withdraw from neighborhood relationships. Parents vigilantly control their child's extracurricular activities which in turn reduces their child's exposure to dangerous peers and situations (Jarret, 1997). Dr. Joyce Epstein (2005) asserts that there is a positive relationship between family involvement and student achievement. She goes on to state that this relationship holds true across families of all socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds, and for students at all ages and levels (Epstein, 2005). Epstein further states, "Although family involvement typically diminishes as students get older, students benefit from family engagement through all grade levels." (James Comer as cited in Epstein, 2005, p. 2).

Geoffrey Greif et.al discusses the impact and importance of parenting primarily from fathers in supporting the academic success of their children and reducing the impact of risk. In their article they define fathers of successful students as being exemplary parents; they realize that good fathers can rear unsuccessful children (Greif, Hrabowski, & Maton, 1998). In this

article, the authors emphasize the importance of focusing on the normal and the resilient. Resilient forces are those that are not readily recognized by the school and social work arenas (Greif, et al., 1998). Fathers point to the support of the church, extended family, and sometimes the school as mechanisms that help boost student success (Greif, et al., 1998).

African American male's parents play a major role in helping young men to develop high self-esteem and a sense of self efficacy. Irving and Hudley make a connection to the importance of the parent/family role in helping students to develop the political-social skills to be successful in an academic environment, reiterating the importance of relationships in helping students to be successful (Irving & Hudley, 2005). Parents provide positive feedback to their child that encourages a strong sense of self (Jarret, 1997). Parents of successful African American males also provide a positive role model either through self or the extended relationships of religious and community organizations. Religious beliefs support individual striving and facilitate self-efficacy in a range of settings (Jarret, 1997). Thus successful African American males have been afforded an opportunity to develop socially constructed selves with the backing of important others in the social environment, both as models and as resources (Oyserman, Grant, & Ager, 1995).

Conversely to building protective factors, breaking negative chain reactions, and building self-esteem and self-efficacy, Spencer Holland (1991), seeks to determine why African American males are not successful in the academic setting and what solutions can address this problem. Holland believes that young African American males lack adult male role models. He considers this to be a primary factor affecting the young black males' ability to succeed in academic settings (Holland, 1991). He goes on further to assert that youngsters are being raised by care-givers (females) who may be repeating cycles of inadequate parenting and also know

little or nothing about interacting and/or surviving in male oriented environments as another factor that contributes to the achievement gap of African American males (1991, p. 40).

Where they may be lacking parents, the community provides successful African American students with social and institutional resources within the local neighborhood and in distant ones. Adolescents are linked to institutions and individuals that promote their prospects for positive social, economic, and psychological outcomes (Jarret, 1997). Parents establish ties to resource-rich individuals and institutions to enhance their child's life chances. Personal relationships become the vehicle through which resources are accessed. Key institutions for this success are often the church and school (Jarret, p. 225).

### **2.5.2 Parent/School Relationships**

Relationships are essential to the academic success and positive School Climate for all students (Comer, et al., 1999). In the text, *Child by Child*, the authors seek to address the social ills that are prevalent in school and low academic achievement by embracing diversity and building relationships devoid of biases and discrimination (Comer, 1999, p. 37). Through their proposed school development plan, stakeholders function under three guiding principles: collaboration, consensus, and no-fault (1999, p.2). Wasting time, blaming society, parents, or even teachers proves to be unproductive. The authors believe that implementation of the program with fidelity will improve student performance.

There are those who believe that African American students, in particular African American males are not successful due to the negative relationship between African American families and the school. Cheryl Fields-Smith (2005), sought to determine how African American parental involvement has changed since the Brown versus the Board of Education Supreme

Court decision. *Brown versus the Board of Education* (1954), was a landmark United States Supreme Court case in which the Court declared state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students unconstitutional. The decision overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896, which allowed state-sponsored segregation, insofar as it applied to public education (Love, 2004). Before *Brown*, as far back as slavery, African American parents highly valued literacy education (Fields-Smith, 2005). Also, before *Brown*, parents knew their place in the school which included traditional roles of attending conferences and school programs, working on committees that influenced curriculum policy and participating in activities that supported the classroom. Parental involvement was often indirect but meaningful and constant. Parents gave black principals and teachers authority to educate their children (2005, p. 131). The home, school, church, and community were intertwined particularly in the South. The village concept acted as a buffer from the oppression and discrimination that children endured and thus supported their success (2005, p. 132).

After *Brown*, African American parents felt that the home-school partnership depended on their initiation. They also developed distrust for the teaching staff and administration of integrated schools. In addition parents felt they had to advocate on the behalf of their children and other African American children at the classroom level. Parents further felt that it was necessary to engage in learning activities at home to go beyond what their children received in school (2005, p. 133). The study goes on to state that successful involvement by the parent requires knowledge of the benefits of participation in school affairs and the development of a savvy network within and outside of the school (2005, p. 134). Although this argument is not laid out by Putnam, one can surmise from his research that *Brown vs. the Board of Education* may have had a negative impact on the Social Capital of African American students by

untangling the connection that once connected the home, school, church and the community (Putnam, 2001).

Many studies cite the importance of parental involvement, but there is some evidence that suggests this involvement may benefit African American females more than African American males. High involvement from parents appears to be an essential for African American females to develop high future academic expectations (Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2010). However, not all parental involvement benefited African American males. Males experiencing higher levels of parent involvement at school reported a slight decrease in what they reported as future academic expectations (2010, p. 147). Low income and single parent families have limited access to building working relationships with their child's teachers due to issue like inflexible jobs (2005, p. 134). The ability to tap into positive relationships in the school and the community can add to or detract from the success of any student, especially African American males.

Where the home and school share a different perspective this often impacts African American students in a negative way. This is termed as home-school dissonance. Home-school dissonance is defined as the perceived differences between the values that exist in the student's home and community and those that are prevalent in the school that the student attends (Brown-Wright & Tyler, 2010). "Students that reported high levels of home-school dissonance also reported lower levels of future hopefulness, academic efficacy and self-esteem, and grade point average (2010, p. 126).

### **2.5.3 School Impact**

Edwards and McMillion found that a learning environment that offered encouragement and an opportunity for accomplishment was essential to the academic achievement of African American

males (Wilson-Jones & Cain Caston). Unsuccessful African American males can be supported by developing resiliency practices and it is believed that these practices can be shared with and used by African American males. Glenn Singleton (2006) believes that because of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the attention to the achievement gap between Brown and Black students and their White and Asian counterparts has gotten more attention (p. 2). In his Racial Autobiography, he discusses a positive relationship that his family had with his elementary school (2006, p. 101). Singleton's early family involvement in his education has caused him to become the success that he is today. What can we do for African American males that may not have positive family involvement and support systems? To begin this discussion, it would be valuable to define Critical Race Theory and Culturally responsive pedagogy/instruction.

The traditional curriculum does not reflect the experiences, histories, and issues that are common to African American males and could be reevaluated for the relevance that they have to various student populations (Howard, 2008). Also students are often provided with crowded classroom and inadequate course offerings (Hamrick & Stage, 2004). School is seen as a place where society reproduces itself in the interests of the dominant class. Teachers can break this cycle by purposefully learning about African American cultural history and critically reinterpreting what one has been taught. This practice will help teachers to deconstruct the dominant socially constructed version of reality (Hampson, Rahman, Brown, Taylor, & Donaldson, 1998). Rich learning environments that regard diversity and difference, assist learning in a variety of ways and use all the social, cultural, and linguistic resources of all its participants redefines the normalizing baseline of traditional classroom communities (Gutierrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda, 2002).



Teacher perception of African American males is believed to be a contributor to their poor academic performance. Paula Booker-Baker (2005) seeks to understand whether or not the education of African American students is being sabotaged. Baker also stresses the importance of cultural sensitivity and diversity of educators. In her article, Baker believes that African American students fair worse than other racial groups in traditional academic settings due to: low teacher expectation, policies that track students into programs that are less academically rigorous, and standardized tests that do not truly assess student learning, as factors that contribute to the achievement gap (2005, p. 245). Baker also believes that even deeper are cultural biases among educators that presume African American students need academic remediation to overcome deficits (2005, p. 249).

African American males are likely to be viewed as violent, suspicious, and dangerous (Oyserman, et al., 1995). Oyserman calls it the four Ds: dangerous, deviant, dumb, and deprived. Helping African American males to develop a positive sense of self is essential in light of the barrage they face to their character on a daily basis. It is also believed that students must be aware of racism and that successful African American students, especially males are at risk for racial discrimination (Oyserman, et al., 1995). It is believed that African American children should be prepared for possible racist and discriminatory experiences. Children that have this preparation will be psychologically healthy and able to resist racial oppression (Scott, 2003).

To close the achievement gap Booker-Baker recommends equitable treatment of African American students (Booker-Baker, 2005). Another way to close the achievement gap, according to Baker is to enable African American students an opportunity to value their culture and beliefs represented in the school setting (2005, p. 252). She clearly strives to convey that discrimination of African American students' beliefs and culture is systemic and structural in the American

education system. She further asserts that this discrimination works in favor of the culture that holds the power (White America) and against African American students and families.

Irving and Hudley discuss the impact of cultural stereotypes and its influence on the way African American students perceive academic achievement. They argue that cultural stereotypes are well known to adolescents where African American students are seen as intellectually incompetent and socially belligerent (Irving & Hudley, 2005). “Given this social-psychological threat, African American youth may devalue achievement striving and reject identification with school”, (2005, p. 480). Early detection of students’ low education expectations can guide educators to mechanism to support these at-risk students. Helping teachers to value and recognize students’ individual differences and behavioral styles can create an environment that is nurturing and supportive, which can lead to increased student success (p. 490). Disengaging pedagogy was linked to teachers who were less prepared, dismissive and showed low levels of motivation (Wiggin, 2008). When low student expectation meets low teacher expectation, a “perfect storm” of failure develops.

Due to the No Child Left Behind legislation, Fenning and Rose believe that African American children are overrepresented in exclusionary discipline consequences, which have a direct impact on their academic success (Fenning & Rose, 2007). School personnel are said to perceive African American students, in particular males as not fitting into the social structure of school. Students who are not perceived as a good fit are labeled as troublesome and dangerous (p. 537). Students will react to the expectations that are set before them. It is essential to raise awareness of institutional racism that will help teachers to address the racial inequities across all areas related to students (p. 552). An educator’s inability to deliver culturally responsive classroom management continues to contribute to the increase of the racial achievement gap

(p.553). Far too many teachers who would normally be deemed qualified, lack confidence about their abilities to teach African American children (Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges III, & Jennings, 2010). Providing teachers with a Critical Race Theory (CRT) dialogue may help increase confidence in providing culturally relevant instruction for African American children. A CRT dialogue is one in which race and learning differences are readily acknowledged and viewed as an asset. It also encourages diversity and student input into their own learning and educational trajectory. School leaders can help by creating learning environments that foster respect, tolerance, and intercultural understanding (Lopez, 2003).

Moore, Henfield, and Owens declare that the public school system is failing miserably with African American males (2008, p. 907). They state African American students' perceptions of their high school teachers' expectations of their educational future had a significant impact on these students' aspirations (Moore III, Henfield, & Owens, 2008). Because African American males believe that they are viewed negatively by school officials, they are less likely to seek these officials out for help or support (p. 917). Race appears to play a significant role in the way that schools interact with African American students, especially males. African American boys are doing less well across the board than are African American girls (L. E. Davis et al., 2003). Without a change in the unseen beliefs and feelings of teachers, change is almost hopeless.

Changing teacher beliefs is difficult but can be initiated through dialogue between white educators and educators of color around issues of race, racism, and classroom instruction (Singleton, 2006). African American males have often been perceived as behaviorally deviant, intellectually inferior and at risk for low teacher expectations and school underachievement (Neal, Davis-McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003). Breaking this negative stigma is

necessary to support African American male academic success. It has been said that we have done better with our brain-damaged kids than we have with our African American boys (Holley-Bright, 2008). Children who are highly engaged [in classroom instruction] expose themselves to more frequent self- and teacher- directed learning opportunities (Rodney, et al., 1999). Resilient students practice this strategy naturally, but unsuccessful students will need the support of a nurturing teacher to engage (Freire, 2001).

Teachers who do not believe that they are responsible to help African American students learn continue to see low academic success with this group of students. However, teachers that held high expectations for their African American students, were more likely to give more assignments to these students, and saw greater achievement from their African American students (J. E. Davis & Jordan, 1994). Davis (1994) goes on to state that remediation seldom helps African American males get back on track. African American males can be helped back on the school wagon by showing them the value and importance of school (L. E. Davis, et al., 2003). Also squashing the stigmatism that schooling is for females also can support academic progress for African American males (J. E. Davis & Jordan, 1994).

Stan Bowie discussed the three broad social supports required to positively impact what he terms at-risk children: (1) tangible, (2) informational, and (3) emotional. The different types of social supports are communicated by actions and behaviors that enhance the student's well-being (Bowie, 2004). Parents can be a major source of social support for African American males, but in their absence teachers and other mentors can have a positive impact (Comer, et al., 1999). Students that believe that their teachers do not care for them or about them respond in kind by not caring about their education or their teachers. This acquired attitude by the student, in particular African American males, results in low academic effort and disruptive behaviors

(Polite, 1994). Resilient at-risk students possess temperamental characteristics that evoke positive responses from the individuals around them. These characteristics develop early (McMillan & Reed, 1994). Family composition appears to have no significant relationship to at-risk students' success or failure (p. 138). Resiliency is a factor that seems to be natural; teachers can relate success to effort, help students to set goals around the students' interests and activities (McMillan & Reed, 1994).

Within the general education environment African American males are faced with a variety of situations that can potentially damage themselves (efficacy and esteem). The self is impacted by the individual, family, school, community, and government entities. Students are often misperceived as bad, intellectually inferior, are misidentified, misplaced, and mis-assessed.

Due to this fact, the school must work diligently to motivate unsuccessful African American males by implementing policies that promote (a) goal setting and self-regulation, (b) student choices, (c) student achievements, (d) teamwork and cooperative learning, and (e) self-assessment models rather than social comparisons (Obiakor & Beachum, 2005). Schools can and have been spaces in which powerful discourses of difference and power maintain inequitable relationships (Moje, 2000). For example, an African American male that may be associated with a gangster lifestyle and hip-hop who writes rap lyrics is often dismissed instead of helped to connect his literacy style to one that is broadly accepted (Moje, 2000). This connection would be an excellent opportunity to help this student find himself within the larger academic setting.

Schools that have successfully educated low income African American students, particularly males, have excellent principals, committed teachers, a love-ethic for Black children, and a strong connection to the communities and families they serve (Morris, 2008). School Counselors are viewed to be in the best position to assist and advocate for African American

males. They are among the few educational professionals in the school building who are trained to create and manage programs that enhance academic achievement, career development, and personal-social growth of students (Moore III, et al., 2008). Tapping into the supports that School Counselors can provide will have a positive impact on closing the achievement gap.

#### **2.5.4 Mentors**

Building positive relationships within and without the school house is essential for unsuccessful African American males (Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Stanley Battle believes that mentoring may be an impactful mechanism that will allow adults to be responsible for the success of African American males (Battle, 2002). There have been a number of mentoring organizations that have operated for many years like the Boy Scouts of American, 100 Black Men of America, Inc., the Urban League and other African American fraternal organizations (Bonner II, et al., 2008). Mentoring programs effects on African American males can be complicated and mentors must be careful not to convey the stereotypical attitudes and beliefs that are generally held in the educational environment (Duncan, 2002). To ensure academic success, mentors need to be able to instill a positive message of what it means to be an African American and an African American man (Graham & Anderson, 2008). There are enough negative messages and stereotypes that are being fed to African American males vicariously mentored through rap music (Johnson, Jackson, & Gatto, 1995). It is these negative messages that we must protect African American males against. Mentoring and related programs focused on African American males can provide relationships that have positive impacts on the identity formation of this at-risk group of men (Woodland, Martin, Hill, & Worrell, 2009).

African American males benefit from being able to identify other successful African American males (Oyserman, et al., 1995). Also, calling out the intellectual ability of African American males has a positive impact. Helping students to realize that effort can have benefits that support positive classroom achievement has helped some students to ask for increased academic challenge and built positive relationships in the classroom and the school (L. R. Thompson & Lewis, 2005).

Mentors were seen to have little or no impact on the success of African American males. Successful African American males are skilled at sorting through role models in the community that will either support their academic pursuits or those that will hinder. They stay clear of those that will hinder their academic pursuits (L. R. Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Not having other positive African American role models does not hinder the academic success of African American males. African American males are adept at selecting mentors even in the school house. Teachers can act as mentors too! Teachers can provide warm, supportive environments and exhibit caring to African American males that builds positive self-esteem and self-efficacy (Kaplan & Maecher, 1999). Teacher practice is said to be the most influential school effect impacting the success of African American students (Wiggan, 2008).

To help African American males be successful in college, one school has moved away from cultural deficit thinking and toward cultivating highly successful outcomes for African American male students. Faculty administrators do not wait for student to contact them. They address the students the minute they arrive on campus (Hughes, 2010).

### **2.5.5 Relationship Impact Summary**

Relationships are essential for the academic success of African American males. Parents play a key role in helping their children be successful in school. African American males need different support than African American females. What this support looks like is yet to be determined and further study on this phenomenon should be addressed. African American parents can help their children by providing accountability and structural frameworks that support positive academic achievement.

The neighborhoods in which students live also can play a key role in academic success. African American males that live in urban environments are more at risk for lower academic achievement. African American males in urban neighborhoods often do not model positive academic achievement and this is another risk for African American males. However, resilient African American males often find new role models to follow and develop identities that may be different from those of African American males in their communities. Mentors can play a major role in supporting positive academic success of African American males. Mentors can help African American males navigate the difficult process of developing a positive identity in light of what is seen in the media and acted out in urban communities. Successful African American males are adept at selecting positive role models from unconventional places when those in their communities and families are lacking, such as the school.

The school can also provide African American males with tremendous support by setting high expectations early. Teachers who set warm and welcoming learning environments for African American males, having challenging assignments and high expectations support the academic success of these students. Addressing issues of suspension and special education



placement that stabilize a system of institutional racism also can support the success of African American males. Table 5 summarizes key themes that were discussed in this section.

**Table 5. Relationship Themes**

| Source                        | Themes       |                         |                              |                                       |                                  |   |                     |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---------------------|
|                               | AA Male Only | + Parent/Family Support | +Parent/School Relationships | + School Impact/Student Relationships | + Teacher Expectation and Belief | Cultural Acceptance in Schools<br>Student Awareness of Racism<br>+ Self Image | + Impact of Mentors |
| Battle, 2002                  | X            |                         |                              |                                       |                                  |   | X                   |
| Bonner, 2008                  | X            |                         |                              |                                       |                                  |   | X                   |
| Booker-Baker, 2005            |              |                         |                              |                                       | X                                |   |                     |
| Comer et. al, 1999            |              |                         | X                            |                                       |                                  |   |                     |
| Davis and Jordan, 1994        | X            |                         |                              |                                       | X                                |   |                     |
| Davis et. al, 2003            |              |                         |                              |                                       |                                  | X   |                     |
| Duncan, 2002                  | X            |                         |                              |                                       |                                  |   | X                   |
| Epstein, 2005                 |              | X                       |                              |                                       |                                  |   |                     |
| Fenning & Rose, 2007          |              |                         |                              |                                       | X                                |   |                     |
| Fields-Smith, 2005            |              |                         | X                            |                                       |                                  |   |                     |
| Graham & Anderson, 2008       | X            |                         |                              |                                       |                                  |   | X                   |
| Greif et. al, 1998            | X            | X                       |                              |                                       |                                  |   |                     |
| Gutierrez et. al, 2002        |              |                         |                              | X                                     |                                  | X   |                     |
| Hampson et. al, 1998          |              |                         |                              | X                                     |                                  |   |                     |
| Hamrick & Stage, 2004         |              |                         |                              | X                                     |                                  |   |                     |
| Holland, 1991                 | X            | X                       |                              |                                       |                                  |   |                     |
| Holley-Bright, 2008           | X            |                         |                              |                                       | X                                |   |                     |
| Howard, 2008                  | X            |                         |                              | X                                     |                                  |   |                     |
| Hughes, 2010                  | X            |                         |                              |                                       |                                  |   | X                   |
| Irving & Hudley, 2005         | X            | X                       |                              |                                       |                                  | X   |                     |
| Jarret, 1997                  |              | X                       |                              |                                       |                                  |   |                     |
| Johnson et. al, 1995          |              |                         |                              |                                       |                                  |   | X                   |
| Kaplan & Maeher, 1999         |              |                         |                              |                                       |                                  |   | X                   |
| Matton & Hrabowski, 1998      | X            | X                       |                              |                                       |                                  |   |                     |
| Moje, 2000                    |              |                         |                              |                                       |                                  | X   |                     |
| Moore et. al, 2008            | X            |                         |                              |                                       | X                                |   |                     |
| Neal et. al, 2003             |              |                         |                              |                                       | X                                |   |                     |
| Obiakor & Beechum, 2005       |              |                         |                              |                                       |                                  | X   |                     |
| Oyserman et. al, 1995         |              |                         |                              |                                       | X                                | X   | X                   |
| Polite, 1994                  | X            |                         |                              |                                       | X                                |   |                     |
| Salem et. al, 1998            |              | X                       |                              |                                       |                                  |   |                     |
| Scott, 2003                   |              |                         |                              |                                       | X                                | X   |                     |
| Singleton, 2006               |              |                         |                              |                                       | X                                |   |                     |
| Thompson & Lewis, 2005        | X            |                         |                              |                                       |                                  |   | X                   |
| Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2010 |              |                         | X                            |                                       |                                  |   |                     |
| Wiggan, 2008                  |              |                         |                              |                                       | X                                |   | X                   |
| Wilson-Jones & Cain-Caston,   | X            |                         |                              | X                                     |                                  |   |                     |
| Wong et. al, 2003             |              |                         |                              |                                       |                                  |   | X                   |

## 2.6 GIFTED AND POST-SECONDARY AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

Giftedness in the United States is often defined in terms of intellectual ability (Bonner II, et al., 2008). However, in 1972 Commissioner of Education Sydney Maryland and former Pittsburgh Public School superintendent published the first federal definition of giftedness as:

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons, who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society. Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas singly or in combination: (a) General Intellectual Ability, (b) Specific Academic Aptitude, (c) Creative or Productive Thinking, (d) Leadership Ability, (e) Visual and Performing Arts, and (f) Psychomotor Ability [This was dropped from the definition. It was thought that students with great athletic talent were being discovered.] (Bonner II, et al., 2008).

It is amazing the area in which African American males are permitted to be successful, athletic ability, was removed from the definition of giftedness. It is almost as though there was a conspiracy to keep the label of giftedness far from ever being attributed to African American people, especially African American males.

African American males that exhibited academic success also exhibit similar attitudes regarding school. They believe they are smarter than their peers (Graham & Anderson, 2008; L. R. Thompson & Lewis, 2005). These gifted African American males took their school work seriously and exhibited social and academic leadership (Bonner II, et al., 2008; Graham & Anderson, 2008; L. R. Thompson & Lewis, 2005). They also took charge of their academic futures by selecting rigorous courses and were competitive in their academic pursuits (Graham &

Anderson, 2008; L. R. Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Gifted African American males also believed that their teachers thought they were smart and had the respect of their peers as being academically successful (Graham & Anderson, 2008; L. R. Thompson & Lewis, 2005). They also felt that their teachers engaged them in invigorating dialogue and held their “feet to the fire” (Tomlinson, et al., 2006). One young man believed that smart was something he discovered and worked at (G. L. Thompson, 2003).

Gifted African American males were well aware of the negative stereotypes and influences in their communities and the media. They also had knowledge of their cultural heritage and racial implications. These gifted males felt that their schools should do a better job at introducing more positive African American role models both in real life and in history (Graham & Anderson, 2008; L. R. Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Gifted African American males rely heavily on family, church, and school relationships and believe that it is these relationships that contribute to their success (Hughes, 2010; L. R. Thompson & Lewis, 2005; Tomlinson, et al., 2006). Gifted African American males appear to be the benefactors of strong relationships, academic ability, cultural awareness, and persistence. It is the combination of these factors that helps them to maintain their desire to remain academically focused and successful, Figure 2. Table 6 summarizes themes that surface in the study of gifted African American males.

**Table 6.** Gifted Themes

|                         | African American Males Only | Belief that their abilities are better than most students | Belief that teachers think they are intelligent | Cultural Awareness | Depend on the support of Adult Relationships |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|--------------------|--|
| Bonner II, et al., 2008 | X                           |   | X   | X                  | X  |
| Graham & Anderson, 2008 | X                           | X   | X   | X                  | X  |
| Hughes, 2010            | X                           |   | X   | X                  | X  |
| Thompson, 2003          | X                           | X   | X   | X                  | X  |
| Tomlinson, et al., 2006 |                             | X   | X   |                    | X  |

## **2.7 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW**

Figure 2 of Polite’s article provided an excellent pictorial summary of the literature reviewed for African American Success (Polite, 1994). Polite’s descriptors were posed in the negative, but this study will address them from a positive perspective. The review of literature provides a foundation for the study of African American male success. Examining the factors that lead to African American male success can help educators to find ways to transfer these factors to African American males that are less successful.

Examining the literature on successful African American males shows the importance of positive relationships in the home, in the school, and in the community. It also shows the importance of dismissing low expectations for African American males that may be residual baggage from the past slavery experience in the United States of America. It further shows that successful African American males welcome academic challenge and feel that they are respected for their intellectual abilities both by teachers and their peers. Although unsuccessful African

American males may not exist in a space that provides positive relationships and high expectations, educators can begin developing spaces in which positive relationships and high expectations exist.

There are African American males that are able to resist the call of the streets and overcome the lack of family support to be successful, but in some way they have found adult support. This support may be from a local church/mosque or in the school house. Academic success is social. Those students who are able to be successful have developed the skills to navigate relationships successfully and to become positive academic achievers. This research will examine these stories to gather data that will enable the hopeful discovery of transferable academic success factors. Figure 3 shows an overview of the literature base for this study.



**Figure 2.** Factors that help African American Males make Positive Choices

*Summary of Research Findings by Literature Strand*

---

| <i>Strand</i>  | <i>Source</i>  | <i>Summary</i>   |
|--|--|--|
| Relationships are essential to African American Male Success | Edwards et. al, 2007; Griffin & Allen, 2006; Griffith, 2005; Jarret, 1997; McMillan & Reed, 1994                                   | Successful African American males have the ability to build positive relationships and have skills that make them socially competent in building positive relationships. |
|  | Epstein, 2005; Greif et. al, 1998; Holland, 1991; Irving & Hudley, 2005; Jarret, 1997; Matton & Hrabowski, 1998; Salemet. al, 1998 | Parents can provide African American males with positive support, structure, and protective factors that will cause them to be academically successful.                  |
|  | Comer et. al, 1999; Fields-Smith, 2005; Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2010  | Positive relationships between the school and the home help African American males become successful in school.  |
|  | Bonner II, et. al, 2008; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Hughes, 2010; Thompson, 2003; Tomlinson, et. al, 2006                            | Successful African American males depend on the support of Adult Relationships.  |
|  | Gutierrez et. al, 2002; Hampson et. al, 1998; Hamrick & Stage, 2004; Howard, 2008; Wilson-Jones & Cain- Caston                     | African American males that have positive school relationships with adults are more likely to be successful in school.   |

---



| <i>Strand</i>   | <i>Source</i>   | <i>Summary</i>   |
|---|---|--|
|   | Booker-Baker, 2005; Davis and Jordan, 1994; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Holley-Bright, 2008; Moore et. al, 2008; Neal et. al, 2003; Oyserman et. al, 1995; Polite, 1994; Resnick 1997; Resnick 2003; Scott, 2003; Singleton, 2006; Wiggan, 2008; Vygotsky, 2010 | Teachers that exhibited positive attitudes toward, high expectations for, and provided academically challenging assignments to their African American males were able to build positive classroom environments, positive relationships with these students and increase the male's academic performance. |
|   | Battle, 2002; Bonner, 2008; Duncan, 2002; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Hughes, 2010; Johnson et. al, 1995; Kaplan & Maehar, 1999; Oyserman et. al, 1995; Thompson & Lewis, 2005; Wiggan, 2008; Wong et. al, 2003  | Mentors can be in the home, school, or the community. Mentors provide another protective factor that supports the achievement and success of African American males.   |
| Success African American Males held a positive self-image | Edwards et. al, 2007; Griffin & Allen, 2006; Griffin, 2005; Hampson et.al, 1998; Jarrett, 1997  | Successful African American males develop problem solving skills that support positive relationships and positive academic achievement.  |
|   | Edwards et. al, 2007; Griffin & Allen, 2006; Griffin, 2005; Hampson et.al, 1998; McMillan & Reed, 1994; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Hughes, 2010; Thompson, 2003; Tomlinson, et. al, 2006  | Successful African American males have a positive self-esteem and believe that their abilities make them better than the average student.  |
|   | Hampson et.al, 1998; Jarrett, 1997; McMillan & Reed, 1994; Thompson & Lewis, 2005   | Successful African American Males have a sense of purpose and make positive plans for the future.  |
|   | Bonner II et. al, 2008; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Hughes, 2010; Thompson, 2003; Tomlinson et., 2006  | Successful African American males believe that their teachers think they are intelligent and that their teachers believe in their abilities to be academically successful.   |

| <i>Strand</i>   | <i>Source</i>  | <i>Summary</i>  |
|---|--|---|
|   | Davis et. al, 2003; Gutierrez et. al, 2002; Irving & Hudley, 2005; Moje, 2000; Obiakor & Beechum, 2005; Oyserman et. al, 1995; Scott, 2003; Bonner II et. al, 2008; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Hughes, 2010; Thompson, 2003; Tomlinson et., 2006 | Successful African American males are culturally aware that racism can exist in the school and when confronted with racism have developed skills that helped them to cope positively. Successful African American males have a positive cultural awareness. |
| African American Males suffer in a negative, racial social system | Carbado, 2010;Carter, 2008; Duncan, 2010; Leigh, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Love, 2004; Lynn & Adams, 2010; Lund, 2010; McIntosh, 1988; Solorzano & Yoss, 2010; Solorzano & Yoss, 2002; Vaught, 2009; Wing Sue et. al, 2007                            | Racism is a permanent social structure that has an impact on the education of African American males. Quality education is viewed as white property and African American students often do not have access to a quality education.                          |
|   | Carbado, 2010; Duncan, 2010; Leigh, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Love, 2004; Lynn & Adams, 2010; Lund, 2010; McIntosh, 1988; Solorzano & Yoss, 2010; Solorzano & Yoss, 2002; Vaught, 2009; Wing Sue et. al, 2007   | African American male students can benefit from the deconstruction of negative educational social structures. This can be accomplished by showing the educational structure the benefit of this deconstruction on all student academic achievement.         |

**Figure 3.** Schooling of Success African American Males

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the factors that lead to the success of school aged African American males who are considered successful by this standard: Males have a grade point average of 2.5 or higher and are proficient and/or advanced on the Pennsylvania State System of Assessment. The secondary purpose is to reveal the impact that relationships have on developing success skills in high school African American males who meet the standard listed above. The research questions that will guide this study are:

1. In spite of the achievement gap that exists in urban schools/school systems between African American and white students, what currently accounts for the success of a few African American males? What are the attitudes and behaviors that appear in African American males who perform successfully in the urban school environment?
2. Do the attitudes and behaviors of successful African American males differ with grade point average?
3. Do academically successful African American males have support systems that contribute to high academic achievement?

This section will answer the following questions:

1. What are the hypotheses?
2. As a researcher, what are the ontological and epistemological beliefs of the researcher?

3. From what particular qualitative research paradigm will this study operate from?
4. What is the appropriate qualitative research approach to take based on the ontological & epistemological beliefs and research paradigm?

The research design and the role of the researcher are detailed in this chapter. Qualitative methodology was chosen for this study because it addresses the personal views of male African American high school students, their experiences in school, and their relationships.

### **3.1 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative methodology was selected for this study because it best addresses the personal views of high school African American males, their experiences as academic learners, and their opinions of success and non-success. Qualitative research is defined as being holistic, empirical, interpretive, and empathetic (Toma, 2011). There is a rich history to qualitative research that will not be discussed here. However, a specific characteristic of qualitative research that is important is the participant perspective (Hatch, 2002). This research seeks to capture the perspectives of African American High School students and the basis for their actions in the school setting. The students' voices will be prominent in the research report.

When developing the methods for this research, analyzing the data, and compiling the findings and results in this qualitative study, various qualitative approaches were used such as participant observation, success case methods, and case study just to name a few.

### **3.1.1 As a researcher, what are the hypotheses?**

This study hypothesizes that academically successful African American males have strong family relationships, positive attitudes and an ability to communicate positively with others (Hampson, et al., 1998; Jarret, 1997). These African American males also have an effort- based attitude toward school and see school as being important to their future success (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006). Based on the literature, it is also believed that African American males in integrated schools are more likely to be academically successful and are better able to develop a counter-narrative to support their academic success (Lee, 1999; Love, 2004). Using an analysis of the interviews with African American males, this study will either support or challenge these hypotheses.

### **3.1.2 As a researcher, what are the ontological and epistemological beliefs?**

It is important to identify beliefs about how the world is ordered (ontology) and how one can come to know things about the world (epistemology). The review of literature relies heavily on a Critical Race Theory perspective. This researcher believes that the world and more particularly the United States education system are heavily influenced by race and class. This would be this researcher's ontological belief. These values influence why this researcher wishes to study African American male High School success. The research will focus on the school district in which the researcher is an administrator. The researcher will provide her perspective of the city and the district that sits within it.

### **3.1.3 From what particular qualitative research paradigm will this study operate from?**

It was important for me to explain the background of the district to historically situated educational structures that have a real impact on the life chances of African American students, in particular African American males. Ontologically, this would be consistent with the Critical/Feminist Paradigm (Hatch, 2002). Emphasis will be from a Critical Race theory perspective. The review of literature emphasized Critical Race Theory and the voices of the minority. There is much literature that *speaks about African American males*, but there is much less literature that allows *African American males speak about themselves* and their own experiences. Successful African American males are the minority voice on which this study will focus. Critical Race Theory will be used to further explain and challenge the results of the data that I have collected from the interviews. The knowledge gained the research will be mediated through the researcher's political positioning as well as the beliefs and values that the researcher has outlined in the previous section.

It is also believed that there is a system within education that disenfranchises students of color, especially African American males. Using the lens of Critical Race Theory, the researcher believes that interest conversion explains the response of the educational system to No Child Left Behind. Prior to this legislation there was very little done to support the learning of students of color. It is further believed that positive relationships in the school house can support the success for many students. Evidence of this will be looked for in the interviews gathered from the males that in the study.

There are other perspectives that seek to explain race and the achievement of minorities in comparison to white people. One major perspective that gained traction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had a scientific basis. Some "scientists" have attempted to use

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution to support the intellectual and biological inferiority of non-white racial groups as being genetic (Hill-Collins, 2000). As of recent, some have used Herrnstein and Murray's Bell Curve to further cement the intellectual inferiority of minority groups (Herrnstein & Murray, 1996). Critical Race Theory addresses the systemic, social, and societal barriers that minorities face by framing the majoritarian perspective as one that ignores and marginalizes the intelligence and accomplishments of minorities (Carbado, 2002).

Meritocracy is another argument that is used to explain race and the achievement of minorities. Under meritocracy, the United States of America and the public education system, an individual will get out of the system what they have put into the system (Singleton, 2006). What meritocracy fails to consider again is the institutionalized racism and social structures that work against the achievement and success of minorities (Love, 2004).

### **3.1.4 What is the appropriate qualitative research approach to take based on the ontological and epistemological beliefs and research paradigm?**

Based on the research paradigm-Critical Race Theory, it is appropriate to conduct qualitative interviews of my research participants. A case study of twenty-four African American males will be conducted. A case study involves as this requires less time in the field and focuses on specific interests (Hatch, 2002). This will match closely to the research the researcher would like to conduct. The findings will hopefully be gleaned and interpreted to help impact school district policy. The researcher wishes to advocate for African American males using their voices. This type of observation was started in the field of anthropology and aims to uncover the perspective of a group in a particular place (Rollison, 2010). This approach is of interest to me because it is usually used in a small group setting.

Qualitative interviewing can gather information that cannot be obtained using other methods (Tierney & Dilley, 2001). Tierney and Dilley describe the case study as an interview method that focuses on a localized group of actors or a life history of a single individual. They go on to say that the students' perceptions of their actions are often the focus of the interview (2001). Case studies can be based on purposeful sampling (Tierney and Dilley, 2001). My research has a purposeful sample, African American males. This research will be a qualitative case study of African American males that have attained academic success at the high school level defined as having at least a 2.5 grade point average or higher and achieving a score of proficient or advanced on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment for Reading and Math. This grade point average was selected because this is the grade point average requirement of the Pittsburgh Promise. The Pittsburgh Promise is a scholarship program that guarantees every Pittsburgh Public School student a forty thousand dollar scholarship if they meet the following criteria:

- Graduate from the Pittsburgh Public Schools or one of its charter high schools;
- Be a student in the district and a resident of Pittsburgh continuously since at least the 9th grade;
- Earn a minimum of a 2.5 GPA;
- Maintain a minimum attendance record of 90%;
- Earn admission to any accredited public or private post-secondary school located in Pennsylvania.

The minimum grade point average of the Pittsburgh Promise is a 2.5 and was therefore used the cut-off of what would be considered academically successful or non-academically successful for this research.



## 3.2 METHOD

The methods and analysis approaches will be placed under the umbrella of Applied Thematic Analysis. According to Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012), Applied Thematic Analysis comprises several qualitative approaches that uses a set of procedures designed to identify and examine themes from textual data in a way that is transparent and credible (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Thematic analysis is the most common form of analysis in qualitative research. It emphasizes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns (or "themes") within data. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question. The themes become the categories for analysis. Thematic analysis is performed through the process of coding in six phases to create established, meaningful patterns. These phases are: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This study blended a few qualitative method strategies like Success Case Methods, Case Study Research, and Participant Observer Methods to gather data for analysis. Below it will be explained how each of these approaches were used.

A Success Case Methods framework was used to choose research participants and analyze data collected from the interview process. Success Case Methods was originally developed in the field of business to evaluate the effect of training on worker performance (Brinkerhoff, 2005). Success Case Methods (SCM) intends to produce concrete evidence of the effect or lack of effect that training has made in the lives of the actual trainees who used the learning in specific behaviors that show worthwhile results (Brinkerhoff, 2005). This study examined the positive and negative impact of the relationships that African American males possess that lead to positive/negative academic success. Success Case Methods intentionally

seeks to determine the very best a program has to offer and selects the most successful participants and the least successful participants with the use of an initial survey (Brinkerhoff, 2003). Unsuccessful persons are interviewed to determine why they were unable to use or benefit from the training. Successful persons are studied to determine: what exactly they used, when they used it, and how; what results they accomplished; how valuable the results are; and what environmental factors enable their application and results.

When examining African American males using the Success Case Methods, four groups were examined: two academically successful and two academically non-successful. The successful African American males were interviewed to determine what they considered successful, how and when they attained success, what they attributed this success to (relational and environmental factors). Unsuccessful African American males (African American males with a grade point average below 2.5 and basic and/or below basic on the Pennsylvania State System of Assessment) were studied to determine that what relationships they possessed and how these relationships they possessed differed from those of successful African American males. Their attitudes toward academic performance as well as the impact of their school on their academic performance were also examined. Figure 4 illustrates how Success Case Methods was used in this study. It builds upon a diagram used by Brinkerhoff (2003). Figure 5 shows the relationship of Critical Race Theory, Resiliency Theory, Success Case Methods, the Qualitative Research Methods and Analysis Methods that are used in this research.

**Initial Results**

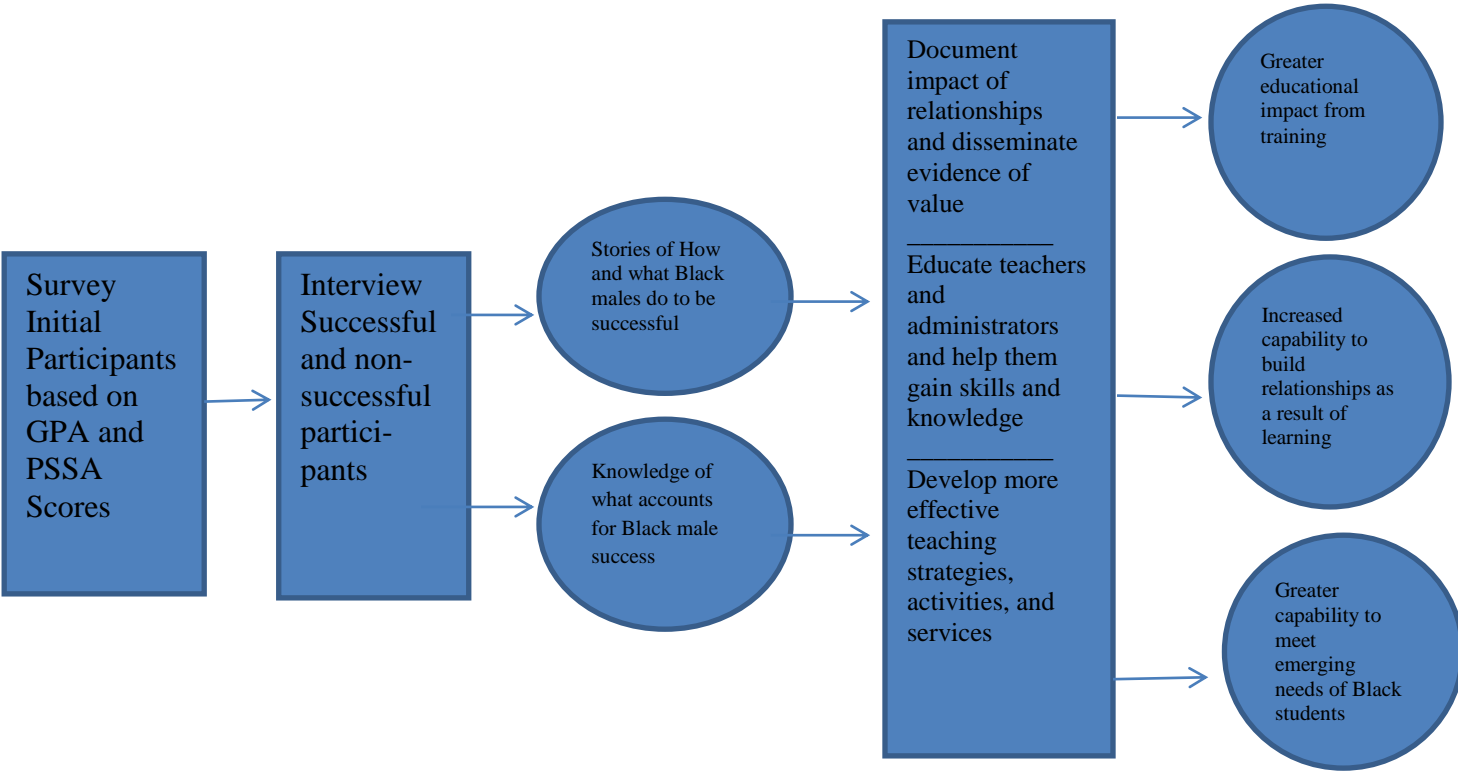
**Follow-Up**

**Immediate Results**

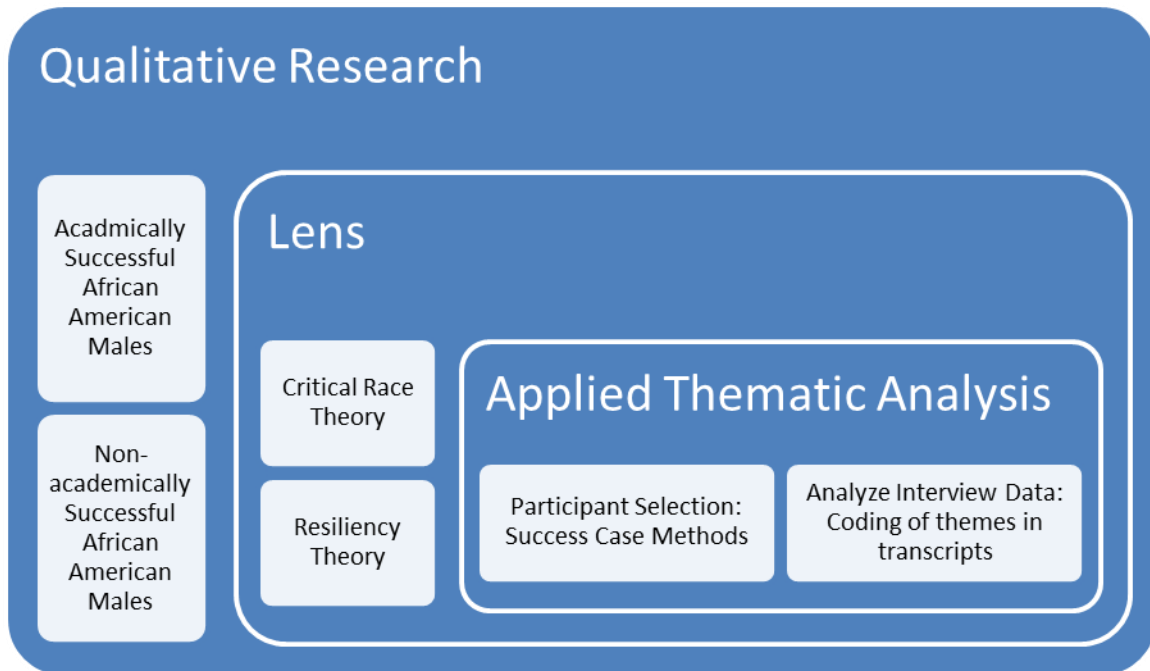
**Applications**

**Goals**

**Study**



**Figure 4.** The Success Case Method Evaluation Model (Binkerhoff, 2003)



**Figure 5.** Qualitative Research Framework

### 3.2.1 Exploratory Research

In the spring of 2010, with the help of a colleague, Ms. Deafenbaugh, the researcher conducted a research assignment in a Research Interviewing course with four African American males. Two of the young men were in middle school and two were in high school. The two in middle school were students at the school that the researcher served as principal. These two young men met the poverty guidelines as they both received free lunches according to the Federal regulations. These two young men were proficient on their PSSA, had over a 3.0 grade point average, and were well respected by the administration and teachers. The two young men in high school were sons of the researcher. They were both proficient and/or advanced on the PSSA, had over a 3.0 grade point average, and respected in school as well. They did not qualify for free lunch status and would have been considered middle class status. It was decided that Ms. Deafenbaugh would

interview and transcribe the interviews with the researcher's sons in order to allow them the freedom to discuss what success meant to them without trying to please their mother.

Ms. Deafenbaugh and the researcher started out with a template provided in class; Ms. Deafenbaugh was a seasoned researcher. It was recommended by the professor that the researchers develop main questions for our interviews. The researchers saw the main questions as topics, the follow up questions as actual questions and used probes to dig deeper. The probes used were words like tell me more, really, wow, right, etc. The researchers made a decision to start the interviews out with more general questions and questions about others experiences; then moving into questions about the boy's own personal experiences; ending the interview with a more general way to recognize the boy's achievements by asking him to offer advice to younger boys. It was an hourglass design for the question flow (Trochim, October 20, 2006). The design is called an hourglass in that we began interviews with general questions about academic success, moving to more specific questions about the African American male and his view of his own success, and ending with what general advice these young men wanted to provide to younger African American males regarding school success. The interviews were forty minutes to seventy minutes in length. Each was audio recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were coded for themes.

It was noticed that the boys had much to say about success and ways to define it. It seemed that the younger boys were complying with whatever the teachers said and focused on following directions. The older boys were less compliant and had elements of resistance to or being critical of school practices. The researchers wondered if these were age differences, socio-economic differences, or being in schools that operated from different philosophical stances on education. The middle school boys attended a traditional, comprehensive Kindergarten through

eighth grade school and the high school boys attended a magnet, arts high school. There were many elements that pointed to identity development (coming of age or self-realization narrative elements) as being a fruitful avenue for data analysis. Another interesting theme we saw was a comfort with difference, even to the point as one of the high school boys stated that he sought out situations in which he would be the only one and could prove himself as other's equal. The researchers gathered several examples from the boys of someone making friends across differences like various cliques or racial groups.

One of the researcher's sons said it really clearly, that smart white kids could be both smart and in the in-crowd, but black boys felt pressured to choose. From this statement, the researchers got the impression that to be a smart African American male was to be sentenced to a life of social isolation from much of peer life. The boys in this research assignment became friendly with everyone rather than just hanging with one small group intensely. They needed a strong net of other supports to "hold it together" and they appeared to develop other coping mechanisms in their ways of thinking that allowed them to be "ok" about this state of affairs. Such ways of perspectives included altruistic thinking and considering the greater good, like the future of their race. These young men felt that the perception of the African American race rested on the way they behaved and succeeded.

Another way of thinking was that everyone needs a friend no matter what and that you have to watch out for your younger siblings. These young men were always looking at those society would consider an underdog and looked to befriend them. They also felt that they were examples to their younger siblings and believed it was important to lead a good life. They developed leadership skills and perhaps this was their way of connecting to humanity and in a sense of always being in the roll of responsibility. Was it that their intellect that allowed for

them to get to this way of thinking? This was probably more associated with a much older adult pattern of thought or was it that their forced social isolation from their peers forces them into more emulation imitation or even contact with adults? They frame it as chosen, but it is thought that that choice was a false choice. Does the mere process of reading and studying students do in a school, which is a very socially isolating individualistic activity, mandate that socialization be minimized?

It was almost as if the boys traded off a sense of belonging in the present for achievement of future success in work and life. These boys supplied examples of successful people as those who had overcome obstacles and gone on to achieve the markers of life success of good job and good family. The boys all were finding school hard and I would imagine or hypothesize that the academics were only one source of stress for them, with the social stressors being another one. They might not be as able to articulate its impact on themselves so well. Each seemed to perceive school as a necessary evil, something they had to persevere to get to a better place. That they were receiving so much positive reinforcement from school success did not seem to compensate. It is possible that it did compensate or provide pleasure to them but we just did not ask the right questions.

Next steps following the pilot interviews were to speak with my sons and other African American males about schooling and academic success as well as read literature that spoke to African American male academic achievement. The pilot study compelled the researcher to investigate how African American males identify themselves academically and the impact of African American males accepting or not accepting themselves as academic successes. In reviewing the literature the researcher will be searching for themes that had already summarized in the Literature review. One of the themes that was discovered from the conversations and the

literature was that of relationships. The literature and the boys talked about relationships with parents, grandparents, other relatives, teachers, friends, coaches, pastors and church members, and community members. These speaks to social networks and capital that these young men possessed (Putnam, 2001).

From the research assignment Ms. Deafenbaugh wondered what a deeper, more nuanced understanding of African American males experience could provide educators seeking to attract more African American boys onto a path of hard earned academic success. To see if other researchers have found similar themes, the researcher went back to the literature to try and find others who had collected data on African American boy's experiences from their perspective. The researcher reworked the questions and selected new boys to interview. The researcher is particularly interested to what extent age, SES, or philosophy shaping the school environment mattered. The boys talked about teachers and their future plans and many other topics that will investigate further in addition to fleshing out an understanding as supported by the data on the themes of relationships and resiliency. This was a very interesting aspect in the Research Assignment.

### **3.2.2 Participant Selection**

As a central office administrator in a public school district, the researcher requested access to the district's student data base, through the District's International Review Board-IRB process, which includes student's grades, attendance, and assessment scores for students at all grade levels, in all schools. Success Case Methods study recommends starting the study with a survey. The survey for this study was modified from the one described in the Success Case Methods



process. The survey will not be based on whether or not the student feels he is successful. It will be based upon the student assessment scores and grade point average.

Through the IRB process, approval was gained to use the transcripts from the research assignment above to include in this study. The data that was gathered was so rich that it needed to be included and compared to the data that will be gathered for this study. To select the remaining participants for the study, males were sought that were 18 years of age and high school seniors. The first group was the academically successful group, comprised of eleven students. Permission to speak with the students of the African American Centers for Advanced Studies (AACAS) Council in the spring of 2012 was initially requested. Participants did not necessarily have to be members of this group to participate in this study. In regard to “contacted”, it is meant that solicitation for the study at the April 2012 AACAS meeting was where recruiting for this study began. These students represented the male and female African American students that were identified as academically gifted and talented either by an evaluation process or by their teachers. Participants in the academically successful group were selected based on the following criteria: African American male, 2.5 or higher grade point average, a score of proficient or advanced on the PSSA for both math and reading. Principals were also solicited to recommend their African American male students to participate in this study.

In keeping with the Success Case Methods protocol, the second group was the academically unsuccessful group, comprised of nine students. Non-academically successful African American males were recruited from the schools that the successful African American males attended in an attempt to gain a perspective regarding a similar school experience. Participants in this group were selected based on the following criteria: African American male,

a below 2.5 grade point average, a score of basic or below basic on the PSSA for both math and reading. This selection process was based on the Success Case Methods process that has two parts. The first part entails locating successful cases and the second part involves interviewing to identify success and documenting the actual nature of success (Brinkerhoff, 2005). A Success Case Methods study may also look at instances of nonsuccess to identify and report factors that seem to differ between successful and non-successful students as defined in this study (Brinkerhoff, 2005). This can be a great help in making educational decisions that support the positive achievement of African American students, in particular males. Examining the successful and the non-successful African American males is valuable because it also gives voice to non-academically successful African American males who often know what academic success is, but may lack the means to achieve it.

To protect the confidentiality of the students a pseudonym was given to each participant and used in the written documents. Ensuring the participants' confidentiality helped to preserve the integrity of the interviews by allowing the participants to be candid. These are ethical and moral issues that researchers must ensure. "Confidentiality means that the privacy of individuals was protected in that the data they provided was handled and reported in such a way that they cannot be associated with them personally" (Mertens, 2005).

Attendance in Advanced Placement courses was not made a selection criterion for this study. The reason it was not made a selection criterion for this study was that there are a few high schools within the district that were studied that had very little or no Advanced Placement course offerings in their schools. It was felt that adding this as selection criteria may have excluded viable candidates.

### 3.2.3 Data Collection

Data was collected in the form of one half to one hour interviews as well as the data that was collected from the District's student data system. The data collected from the District's student data system included: assessment scores, grade point average, and socio-economic status. Socio-economic status was based on whether a student received free or reduced price lunch. Students who received free or reduced price lunch met the Federal poverty guidelines. Specific socio-economic status data, like parent income, was not looked at initially. Socio-economic status was identified after students agreed to participate in this study. Using questions that were restructured based on lessons learned in the Research Assignment, the interview responses by the male participants was the main source of data collected and used. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. The transcribed interviews provided the data that was essential for analysis of this study. The perspectives from the interviewees of how these young men became or did not become successful were gathered during the interviews.

From the literature that was reviewed and the Research Assignment, it was hypothesized that positive relationships that academically successful African American males are the "how and why" that distinguishes them from their less successful peers. Thirdly, Yin states that during a case study, the researcher should specify the unit of analysis (2003). The unit of analysis for this research is high school, African American males, both successful and unsuccessful. It was the relationships that these young men possess will be looked at closely. These are the data collection steps that are recommended by Yin. Table 7 will describe the process used to identify potential participants all the way through to the actual interview.

**Table 7.** Process for Participant Selection

---

|        |                               |   |
|--------|-------------------------------|---|
| Step 1 | Gain IRB Approval             | International Review Board approval will need to be gained first from the University of Pittsburgh. I will then need to gain IRB approval from the Pittsburgh Public Schools International Review Board. Once these approvals have been obtained I can move on to step two.   |
| Step 2 | Participant Identification    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Currently enrolled students were identified using the PPS student information system none as RTI. Students will be selected for grade 12, age 18, ethnicity-African American, and gender, male.</li><li>2. Successful students were selected for a minimum 2.5 grade point average and a score of 3 (proficient) or 4 (advanced) on their Reading and Math PSSA.</li><li>3. Non-successful students were selected for a below 2.5 grade point average and a score of 2 (basic) or 1 (below-basic) on their Reading and Math PSSA.</li><li>4. The potential participant's socio-economic status will be determined by whether they receive or do not receive free or reduced school lunch. Students that receive free or reduced school lunch are considered low-socio economic status.</li></ol> |
| Step 3 | Participant Contact/Selection | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Successful African American males were contacted through the AACAS Council and/or their school principal.</li><li>2. Non-academically successful African American males were recruited from the schools that the successful African American males attend in an attempt to gain a perspective regarding a similar school experience.</li><li>3. Willing participants were provided with a consent form to participate in the study. Parental consent is not necessary for 18 year olds. Once consent forms are received, a letter will be provided to the student with thanks for his participation and an explanation of the study.</li></ol>   |
| Step 4 | Interview location            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. After consent forms are received from students, a date and time was scheduled with the participant for the interview at his school.</li><li>2. After the interview, if requested by the student a copy of their interview transcript was provided to the student in person as soon as the transcription was completed. These students had an opportunity to edit or make comments on the hard copy of the transcript to provide clarification or correction.</li></ol>   |

---

Table 8 provides the Interview Protocol and its link to the research questions. The questions in the interview protocol originated from the Research Assignment and the review of literature. Some of the original questions in the pilot were removed because they did not provide data relevant to African American male academic success. One of the questions was: Where do successful students sit in the class? The researchers wanted to see if successful students sat near the front of the room. All of the students in the study stated that students did not often sit in traditional rows in the classroom. Students could sit in groups in various locations within the room. Due to the information provided by students, it was decided in any future study to remove this question from the protocol. Also, there was a decision made to ask students to describe their attitude toward academic success. The goal was to see what attitude meant to the student first, so that it could be determined if there was a common definition that would help to tie together attitude toward academic success and effort. From the interviews, transcripts were made and data was collected from the participants. The analysis and interpretation steps in the data analysis section will be discussed.

**Table 8.** Summary of Data Collection Strategies for African American Male High School Academic Success

| Research Questions  | Data Collection Method  | Main Interview Questions   | Follow Up Questions  | Data Types  |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| Q#1-what factors currently account for the success of a few African American males? What are the attitudes and behaviors that consistently appear in African American males who perform successfully in the urban school environment? | Interviews with African American male students  | 1. What does it mean to be successful in your school?  | a. Can you tell me about a successful student?<br>b. Is success different for boys than for girls?<br>c. Is success different for black students than for white?<br>(Boys tend to view school as a feminine undertaking and Black students are often experience low expectations by their teachers (Weis, 2004). These questions seek to confirm this perspective.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racial themes</li> <li>• Success self-definitions</li> <li>• Resiliency themes</li> </ul>  |
| Q#2-Do the attitudes and behaviors of successful African American males differ with grade point average?  | Grade point average information provided by the school district.  | 2. Take a moment and think about a particular male who you think is successful. Please describe him to me.                       | a. What does he do?<br>b. How does he act?<br>c. What do other students think of him?<br>d. How does he interact with the teacher and other adults?<br>e. Describe his social life?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racial themes</li> <li>• Relationship themes</li> <li>• Identity formation themes</li> </ul>   |
|   | Interviews with African American male students.   | 3. Please define attitude.   | a. What is your attitude toward academic success?<br>b. When did you develop this attitude?<br>c. How has this attitude helped you?<br>d. Has anyone helped you develop this attitude?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success self-definitions</li> <li>• Relationship themes</li> </ul>   |
| Q#3- Do academically successful African American males have family support systems that contribute to high academic achievement?  | Interviews with African American male students and possibly significant others like family where available. | 4. Is academic success something to be shared? Why or why not?<br>5. What problems are there with being academically successful? | a. Please provide an example of how success is shared?<br>b. How should academic success be shared?<br>c. Who should academic success be shared with?<br>d. What do you get from sharing academic success?<br>a. Please give me one or two examples of a sacrifice, academically successful students would have to make?<br>b. Are there sacrifices that an African American male will have to make to be academically successful? Please say more.<br>c. Who would successful African American males go to for support? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success self-definitions</li> <li>• Relationship themes</li> <li>• Identity formation themes</li> <li>• Relationship themes</li> </ul> |
|   |   | 6. Would you consider yourself academically successful?  | a. If someone asked you for evidence of this, what would you tell them?<br>b. Who or what do you contribute your success to?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity formation themes</li> <li>• Relationship themes</li> </ul>  |

### 3.2.4 Data Analysis

When analyzing the data the Applied Thematic Analysis was used to compare responses of the academically successful students and the non-academically successful students. Applied Thematic Analysis is a common form of analysis in qualitative research. It emphasizes discovering, examining, and recording patterns (or "themes") within data (Guest, 2012). Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question (Guest, 2012). The themes become the categories for analysis. Applied Thematic Analysis uses a set of steps created to identify and examine themes from interview text. The primary goal is to present the participants stories and experiences voiced by the study as accurately and comprehensive as possible (Guest, et al., 2012). This method of analysis appeared to sit best with examining the participants through the lens of the Critical Race Theory Counter Narrative. As the counter-narrative situates itself in the perspective of the minority voice (Perry, 2011). Table 9 describes the steps that the analysis of data takes in this study using Applied Thematic Analysis. It was also important here to define terms that will be frequently used regarding the analysis process. These terms are data, theme, code, codebook, and coding as defined by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2011).

- Data: The interview transcripts.
- Theme: A unit of meaning that is noticed in the data by the reader of the text.
- Code: A textual description of the semantic boundaries of a theme or a component of a theme.
- Codebook: A structured compilation of codes that includes a description of how the codes and how these codes are related to each other.

- Coding: Process by which the researcher links specific codes to specific data segments.

**Table 9.** Steps in Applied Thematic Analysis Data Analysis

- 
1. Read the interview transcript in its entirety against the audio transcript to correct potential errors in the transcription process.
  2. Transcripts will be read again and the reader will go through a structural coding process. Structural coding occurs when text is segmented based on the questions or prompts asked by data collector along with the response of the study participant (Guest, et al., 2012).
  3. During the structural coding process, codes will be developed and defined and labeled in the interview text segment. Codes will be collected in the codebook with an explanation of their relationship to each other using the Nvivo software program.
  4. Re-read the entire data set, and code the data based on your generalizations.
  5. Decide if your generalizations are supported by the data, and write a draft summary.
  6. Write a revised summary and identify interview excerpts that support generalizations.
- 

Step one was completed through the earlier transcription process. The researcher read through all the transcripts very similar to how a novel is read. The goal here was to get a feel for the voices of the males that have been interviewed. Through the interview process, themes were discovered that were explored, this included the notion of developing attitudes toward academic success during both middle school and during grade ten and eleven as well as relationships that either existed or did not that support academic success. During Step two the researcher examined each question/prompt to search for themes related to Critical Race Theory and Resiliency theory looking for areas where the data may agree or where it did not. It was equally important to check researcher bias by making note of themes that were not in agreement with the



hypotheses as well as those that were. It was believed by this researcher that the lack of positive relationships for students of color has an impact on their school performance. It is believed that school performance can be improved with the addition of positive relationships. The data however may show that this may not be the case at all. During step three codes were developed, defined and collected into a codebook. Following step three the data in the transcripts were searched and marked to find where there was evidence that clearly called out the impact of relationships, both positive and negative relationships between the student and someone else and where relationships had not been a factor. Issues that were further explored are: Identity formation, relationships, networks, success self-definitions, resiliency themes and racial themes. In step five, other generalizations looking specifically for evidence in the data to support, alter, refine, or refute the researcher's beliefs about what was going on in the school lives of the participants were coded for (Hatch, p. 196, 2002).

Some generalizations have been made throughout this paper, such as positive relationships have a positive impact on student success. In step seven, the data was examined again to see if the researcher's generalizations were supported in the data. Step six was something that was done during the interview with the participants in follow-up questions. They were asked to define terms that may have been unclear or could possibly have had a different meaning. After these steps were completed, a summary of the findings was compiled and excerpts from the transcriptions were used to support the generalizations.

### **3.2.5 The Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative studies the researcher is the instrument for collecting data (Mertens, 2005). She goes on to state that qualitative research texts recognize the importance of the researchers'

reflecting on their own values, assumptions, beliefs, and biases and monitoring those as they continue in their study to determine the researchers influence on the study's data and interpretations (Mertens, 2005). As an African American female, the researcher has her own beliefs and biases in regard to the education of African American males and the impact of relationships on African American males and people in general. However, the researcher did not want to contribute to the oppression of African American male students by speaking for them (Mertens, 2005). The researcher wanted their voices to be heard. The researcher attempted to give students an opportunity to read over their transcripts and add to them or take away from them in areas they felt were not conveying the message they would like to be heard. This was not always possible due to the time it took to transcribe and loss of contact with the participants. As an African American female, educator, and mother, the researcher believes that she brought a certain level of comfort and trust to the interview process that allowed these males to be honest and candid (Di Domenico & Phillips, 2009). She also cautioned herself to explain portions of the interview that she may have taken for granted because of her racial membership.

### **3.2.6 Ethical Considerations**

“Students of color face a constant struggle as they routinely must work to overcome obstacles- in the classroom, with other students, with professors, administrators, law enforcement, and judges” (Dunbar, Rodriguez, & Parker, 2001). To adequately grab their experience, the interview must “reflexively engage” African American males in ways that capture these complexities of their lives (Dunbar, Rodriguez, & Parker, 2001). It was important for the researcher to allow the young men to read this research. This was an activity that was practiced during the Research Assignment with the middle school boys. They felt empowered to see their voices in black and

white and that their voices were being heard in my graduate courses. From this study, it is hoped to empower African American males, especially the participants in that their voices will make a valuable contribution to my learning and the learning of others. The researcher needed the young men in this study to know that they were helping her more than she could possibly have helped them. All too often researchers take on a dominant role and subordinate their interviewees (Ochs & Shchieffelin, 1979). The researcher wished to position the young men in this study as the holders of knowledge and her as one that sought their knowledge and understanding.

### **3.2.7 Methods Summary**

This section described the methodology for this study by defining the research design, participant selection and description, data collection method, and analysis. This section also provided the reader with a restatement of the purpose of the study and the research questions. The researcher's role with respect to maintaining confidentiality was discussed. The Research Assignment that framed the current research was also discussed.

## 4.0 ANALYSIS

This section contains the analysis and excerpts of narrative accounts of twenty-two African American High School students and two middle school aged students. These males reflected on their academic experiences and choices they made that impacted their schooling. As discussed in the previous section, four of the young men, the two middle school aged and two high school-aged, participated in an exploratory research activity in 2010. The other twenty male students were recruited through contact with either their school principal or counselor in 2012 and 2013.

The Literature review addressed how positive adult relationships support the academic success of African American males (Bonner II, et al., 2008; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Hughes, 2010; G. L. Thompson, 2003; Tomlinson, et al., 2006). It was also reviewed that positive relationships between the school and the home also support the academic success of African American males (Gutierrez, et al., 2002; Hampson, et al., 1998; Hamrick & Stage, 2004; Howard, 2008; Wilson-Jones & Cain Caston). Resilient African American males have developed problem solving skills, built positive relationships with peers and adults, have a sense of purpose and plan for their future (Edwards, et al., 2007; Graham & Anderson, 2008; J. P. J. Griffin, 2005; K. Griffin & Allen, 2006; Hampson, et al., 1998; Hughes, 2010; McMillan & Reed, 1994; G. L. Thompson, 2003; Tomlinson, et al., 2006). The literature review also spoke to the importance creating an educational environment that constantly addresses institutionalized racism and its negative impact on minority students, especially African American males (Carbado, 2002;

Carter, 2008; Duncan, 2002; Leigh, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Love, 2004; Lund, 2010; Lynn & Adams, 2002; Lynn, et al., 2010; McIntosh, 1988; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Vaught, 2008; Wing Sue, et al., 2007).

#### **4.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to interview African American males to determine: 1) how the relationships they occupy that help to support and sustain academic success as well as how they navigate social lives and relationships that help to develop and sustain academic success; 2) how they develop specific attitudes and behaviors that are consistently exhibited and lead to academic success; and 3) how they flourish in the school environment under a particular set of factors (Family relationships, teacher supports, school environment) that may or may not cultivate and sustain academic success.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. In spite of the achievement gap that exists in urban schools/school systems between African American and white students, what currently accounts for the success of a few African American males? What are the attitudes and behaviors that appear in African American males who perform successfully in the urban school environment?

2. Do the attitudes and behaviors of successful African American males differ with grade point average?
3. Do academically successful African American males have support systems that contribute to high academic achievement?

The researcher wanted to discover factors that contributed to the academic success of African American males. There are a minority of African American males that are able to achieve academic success. It was also hoped to compare the attitudes and behaviors of academically successful African American males to those of non-academically successful African American males.

### **4.3 INTERVIEW PROCESS**

Seven of the nine High Schools in the District Study had students who participated in this research study, because these seven schools had a principal and/or counselor who expressed a willingness to participate. One K-8 school was included. This is the school that the middle school aged males in the pilot study attended. From these seven schools fifteen of the participants would be considered academically successful based on the criteria and nine would be considered academically non-successful.

There were a total of twenty-four interview subjects included in this study. Four interviews took place in the spring of 2010. All of the 2010 interview subjects would have been considered academically successful. Two attended the K-8 school that the researcher was principal at and two attended the same high school in the same school district. In 2012, six

subjects were interviewed from two additional high schools in this same district. In 2013, fourteen subjects were interviewed from four additional high schools in this same district.

Out of the 24 interviews, 21 were conducted in person and audio recorded for later transcription. These interviews took place at the school in a private room with the interviewer and the interview subject. However, in 2012, two interviews took place in one of the high school principal's office. The young men were hand selected by the principal. The students had a comfortable rapport with this principal and appeared to be more willing to speak because the principal was present. In 2013, three interviews were conducted over the phone and audio recorded for later transcription. These interviewees were unable to make a face to face meeting, but expressed a willingness to participate in the study. It was hoped that this study would have equal numbers of participants that were academically successful and non-academically successful. The researcher relied upon the administrators and counselors who selected participants for this study to adhere to the criterion. This was not always the case. There were two occasions that seventeen year olds were selected for this study. When the participant's age was determined to be below the criteria of the study, the interview was ended. More will be said about this later in this section.

#### **4.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study uses Critical Race Theory and Resiliency Theory to guide the study. Critical Race Theory addresses the issues of race and racism in social institutions, while providing strategies to eliminate racism as part of a larger goal (Solorzano & Yosso, 2010). Resiliency theory is based on defining the protective factors within the family, school, and community that exist for the

resilient child or adolescent that is missing from the family, school, and community of the child or adolescent who later receives intervention (Krovetz, 1999). In this research Critical Race Theory and Resiliency Theory coexist. Students can be successful through the use of characteristics within the Resiliency Theory framework to address Critical Race Theory factors within the educational system that reinforce systemic racism and marginalization of minority students (Moje, 2000). Krovetz states that resilient students exhibit a combination of the following characteristics: Social competence--the ability to elicit positive responses from others, thus establishing positive relationships with both adults and peers. Problem-solving skills--the ability to plan, based on seeing oneself in control and on being resourceful in seeking help from others. Autonomy--a sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently and exert some control over one's environment. Sense of purpose and future--having goals, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, and a sense of a bright future (Krovetz, 1999).

## **4.5 SCHOOL DISTRICT AND SCHOOL PROFILES**

At this point it may be import to define some key terms that will be used in this section. The following terms may only have relevance to this school district so they will be defined to provide context to the district and school descriptions.

### **4.5.1 Terminology**

***Feeder pattern:*** Every student in the school district is assigned to a neighborhood school by the student's address. Neighborhood schools are also referred to as "feeder" schools. "Feeder" comes



from feeder pattern. Addresses in the same area are grouped into a feeder pattern and assigned to the same neighborhood school ("Registration and Enrollment in PPS," 2013).

***Magnet School:*** Magnet schools and programs allow students to pursue special interests, talents or career goals. Magnet schools are not neighborhood specific so students who reside anywhere in the District are eligible to attend. Students must apply and are admitted by lottery if application is received before mid-December or general registration if application is received after December. Some magnet programs in Pittsburgh serve the entire school (e.g., School C High School) and others are programs incorporated into a school (e.g., School A pre-engineering) ("Registration and Enrollment in PPS," 2013)

***Free/Reduced Priced Lunch:*** Free and reduced price meals are for students who are enrolled in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), previously known as Food Stamps or TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and Foster Children meal applications. Children getting SNAP, previously known as Food Stamps or TANF can get free meals regardless of their income. Also, a child(ren) can get free price meals if their household income is within the free limits of the Federal Income Guidelines (Gutowski, 2013).

***Pittsburgh Promise:*** Every student that attends this District's schools or charter schools within, is eligible to receive up to \$40,000 for over 100 colleges and universities within the state as long as they meet the following criteria:

- Graduate from a Pittsburgh Public High School or one of its charter high schools.
- Be enrolled in the Pittsburgh Public School district continuously since at least the beginning of 9th grade.
- Be a resident of the City of Pittsburgh continuously since at least the beginning of 9th grade.

- Graduate with a minimum cumulative, un-weighted GPA of 2.5
- Graduate with a minimum attendance record of 90%

The following section will provide a summary of the schools that the interview subjects attended. This summary will include a description of the schools as a whole and individually. To summarize the high schools as a whole 62.2% of high school students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (a measure of family poverty). The 2012 percentage of high school students proficient/advanced on the Pennsylvania State System of Assessment for Reading and Math was 56.2% and 42.9% respectively (Harris, 2012). In 2012, 57.7% of the graduating high school seniors were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise (Harris, 2012). The demographic information described below is also summarized in Table 10 that follows this section. The school district population is approximately twenty-five thousand students. There are fifty-seven countries represented in this district. There are 55% African-American students, 33% White students, and 12% other races in this district (Gutowski, 2013).

It is also important to note that in August of 1992 a complaint against this School District was filed with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) charging the District violated sections of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act. The District and the Advocates for African American Students, the group that filed the claim, reached a Conciliation Agreement in September 2006. The Conciliation Agreement included 94 action steps that addressed how the District could reduce racial achievement disparities, provide instructional support, and create an environment of equity for its African-American students (Gutowski, 2013).

#### **4.5.2 School A**

School A is a grade 9-12 neighborhood school with a Pre-engineering magnet program, an Engineering Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, and an “English as a Second Language” program. The school is situated in a predominantly white, middle class neighborhood. In 2012, 1342 students attended School A (Harris, 2012). In 2012, the student population was comprised as follows: African-American: 38.2%; White: 50.1%; Multi-ethnic: 4.3%; Asian: 5.2%; and Hispanic: 2.0%. The 2012 average daily student attendance at School A was 92.6% (Harris, 2012). In 2012, 46.3% of the School A students were eligible for free/reduced lunch. This is below the district average. The 2011 graduation rates for School A students were as follows: overall student population 80.1%, Black students 65.7%, White students 90.3%, free/reduced price lunch 65.7% and Special Education students not listed. Based on the graduation data it appears as though all the Black students that attend this school would be considered at or below the Federal poverty limit. It also appeared that either this school had no seniors in special education or that no students in special education graduated. These were assumptions and need to be explored further at a later date. Of the graduating seniors, 72.6% were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise. 47.7% of the Black students, 86.8 of the White students, and 22.7% of the low-income students were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise.

#### **4.5.3 School B**

School B was a grade 9-12 neighborhood school with Computer Science and Teaching Academy magnet programs; Automotive Technology, Automotive Body Repair, Machine Operations, and Refrigeration, Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning CTE programs; an

“English as a Second Language” program; and a teaching institute (Harris, 2012). The school is situated in a working class neighborhood that borders a predominantly White, middle-class, suburb. In 2012, 1230 students attended School B (Harris, 2012). The student population was comprised as follows: African-American: 30.6%; White: 53.5%; Multi-ethnic: 3.1%; Asian: 10.3%; and Hispanic: 2.4%. The 2012 average daily attendance for students at School B was 87% (Harris, 2012). In 2012, 63.6% of the School B students were eligible for free/reduced lunch. This is slightly above the District average. The 2011, graduation rate for School B students was as follows: overall student population 67.9%; Black students 63.6%; White students, 74.5%; low-income students 65.1%; and Special Education students 61.7%. Of the graduating seniors, 72.6% were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise. 36.3% of the Black students, 67.9% of the White students, and 33.6% of the low-income students were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise.

#### **4.5.4 School C**

School C was a grade 6-12 Arts Magnet school located in the heart of Pittsburgh’s downtown cultural district. In 2009, Pittsburgh School C was named a Blue Ribbon School of Distinction by the U.S. Department of Education. U.S. News and World Report awarded Pittsburgh School C a Bronze Medal in their 2010 America’s Best High Schools list (Gutowski, 2013). In 2012, 873 students attended School C (Harris, 2012). The student population was comprised as follows: African-American: 32.1%; White: 56.8%; Multi-ethnic: 6.8%; Asian: 3%; and Hispanic: 1.4%. The 2012 average daily attendance for students at School C was 93% (Harris, 2012). In 2012, 33.6% of the School C students were eligible for free/reduced lunch. This is well below the District average. The 2011, graduation rate for School C students was as follows: overall

student population 98.4%; Black students 100%; White students, 97.5%; low-income students not listed and Special Education students not listed. Of the graduating seniors, 87.8% were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise. 75.6% of the Black students, 96.1% of the White students, and 28.2% of the low-income students were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise.

#### **4.5.5 School D**

School D was a grade 9-12 neighborhood school with Health Careers, Business Administration, Culinary Arts, Finance, Technology, and Information Technology CTE programs (Harris, 2012). In 2012, 744 students attended School D (Harris, 2012). The student population was comprised as follows: African-American: 39.7%; White: 53.5%; Multi-ethnic: 4.7%; Asian: 0%; Hispanic: 0% and other 2.2%. The 2012 average daily attendance for students at School D was 80.8% (Harris, 2012). In 2012, 72.4% of the School D students were eligible for free/reduced lunch. This is above the District average. The 2011, graduation rate for School D students was as follows: overall student population 61.6%; Black students, 51.8%; White students, 71.6%; low-income, 51.8% students; and Special Education students not listed. Of the graduating seniors, 46.9% were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise. 20.9% of the Black students, 62.2% of the White students, and 27.7% of the low-income students were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise. Based on the number of Black students eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise, compared with the graduation rate, it would suggest that studying the experience of Black students in this particular school would be beneficial.

#### **4.5.6 School E**

School E was a grade 6-12 neighborhood school with a magnet entrance option, postsecondary focus. In 2012, 712 students attended School E (Harris, 2012). In 2012, the student population was comprised as follows: African-American: 95.4%; White: 1.4%; Multi-ethnic: 0%; Asian: 0%; and Hispanic: 0%. The 2012 average daily student attendance at School E was 85.1% (Harris, 2012). In 2012, 79.8% of the School E students were eligible for free/reduced lunch. This was significantly above the district average. School E is a school that has recently opened as one of three reconstituted 6-12 schools due to the closure of a near-by historic high school (Sostek, 2011). School E did not have a 2011, graduating class. Of the 2012 graduating seniors, 25.4% were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise. 23.6% of the Black students, no White students were listed, and 5.4% of the low-income students were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise.

#### **4.5.7 School F**

School F was a grade 9-12 Traditional Academy magnet school with Math and Science and Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) magnet programs; and Health Careers, Information Technology, Culinary Arts, and Cosmetology Career and Technical Education programs. In 2012, 637 students attended School F (Harris, 2012). In 2012, the student population was comprised as follows: African-American: 70.2%; White: 24.2%; Multi-ethnic: 5.3%; Asian: 0%; and Hispanic: 0%. The 2012 average daily student attendance at School F was 87.1% (Harris, 2012). In 2012, 81% of the School F students were eligible for free/reduced lunch. This is significantly above the district average. The 2011 graduation rate for School F students was as follows: overall student population 79.8%, Black students 79.1%, White students

83.3%, free/reduced price lunch 79.2% and Special Education students not listed. Of the graduating seniors, 49.7% were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise. 42.9% of the Black students, 60.5% of the White students, and 31.3% of the low-income students were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise. In 2012, approximately three hundred students were transferred into School F. This transfer occurred due to the Districts realignment plan that closed a nearby high school (Abraham, 2012).

#### **4.5.8 School G**

School G was a grade 6-12 Neighborhood school with Business Administration, Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, and Health Careers Career and Technical Education programs. In 2012, 534 students attended School G (Harris, 2012). In 2012, the student population was comprised as follows: African-American: 97.6%; White: 0.2%; and 2.2% considered as other. The 2012 average daily student attendance at School G was 89% (Harris, 2012). In 2012, 82.2% of the School G students were eligible for free/reduced lunch. This is significantly above the district average. Due to a new school grade level configuration, there is not graduation rate data. Of the graduating seniors, 27.8% were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise. 26.1% of the Black students, no White students were listed, and 20.8% of the low-income students were eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise. Prior to 2011, School G was a high school of approximately 300 students in grades 9-12. In 2011, under the district's realignment plan, School G became a single gender, 6-12 school of approximately 600 students. School G absorbed students from a grade 5-8 school and a nearby 9-12 high school. Both school had been closed due to the realignment plan (Rosenthal, 2011). Later in the school year, the single gender initiative was scrapped due to a poor implementation plan (Chute, 2012).

#### **4.5.9 School H**

School H was a grade K-8 Neighborhood School. This school offered Vocal and Instrumental Music classes. In 2011, 358 students attended School H (Harris, 2012). In 2011, the student population was comprised as follows: African-American: 71.2%; White: 21.2%; Multi-ethnic: 7.0%; and Other: 0.6%. (2011 demographic data was collected for this school because the school was closed at the end of the 2011-2012 school year.) The 2011, average daily student attendance at School H was 90.7% (Harris, 2012). In 2011, 81.4% of the School H students were eligible for free/reduced lunch. This is above the district average. This is a Kindergarten through eighth grade school. As such there is not graduation rate data. The District begins to keep formal record of Pittsburgh Promise eligibility in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, therefore there is no Promise Ready data for this school.



**Table 10.** Demographic Information for the PPS District 2012-2013 School Year

| Schools | Population |           |           |           | Free/<br>Reduced<br>Lunch<br>Status | Graduation Rate                |             |       |             | Promise Readiness           |             |       |       |
|---------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
|         | Total      | Black     | White     | Other     |                                     | Total<br>Student<br>Population | Over<br>All | Black | White       | Low-<br>Income/<br>Spe. Ed. | Over<br>All | Black | White |
| A       | 1342       | 38.2<br>% | 50.1<br>% | 11.5<br>% | 46.3%                               | 80.1<br>%                      | 65.7<br>%   | 90.3% | 67.5%/NA    | 72.6<br>%                   | 47.4<br>%   | 86.8% | 22.7% |
| B       | 1230       | 30.6<br>% | 53.5<br>% | 15.8<br>% | 63.6%                               | 67.9<br>%                      | 63.6<br>%   | 74.5% | 65.1%/61.7% | 57.5<br>%                   | 36.3<br>%   | 67.9% | 33.6% |
| C       | 873        | 32.1<br>% | 56.8<br>% | 14.2<br>% | 33.6%                               | 98.4<br>%                      | 100%        | 97.5% | NA/NA       | 87.8<br>%                   | 75.6<br>%   | 96.1% | NA    |
| D       | 744        | 39.7<br>% | 53.5<br>% | 6.9%      | 72.4%                               | 61.6<br>%                      | 51.8<br>%   | 71.6% | 58.8/NA     | 46.9<br>%                   | 20.9<br>%   | 62.2% | 27.7% |
| E       | 712        | 95.4<br>% | 1.4%      | 0%        | 79.8%                               | NA                             | NA          | NA    | NA          | 25.4<br>%                   | 23.6<br>%   | NA    | 5.4%  |
| F       | 637        | 70.2<br>% | 24.2<br>% | 5.3%      | 81.0%                               | 79.8<br>%                      | 79.1<br>%   | 83.3% | 79.2%/NA    | 49.7<br>%                   | 42.9<br>%   | 60.5% | 31.3% |
| G       | 534        | 97.6<br>% | 0.2%      | 2.2%      | 82.2%                               | NA                             | NA          | NA    | NA          | 27.8<br>%                   | 26.1        | NA    | 20.8% |
| H       | 358        | 71.2<br>% | 21.2<br>% | 0.6%      | 81.4%                               | NA                             | NA          | NA    | NA          | NA                          | NA          | NA    | NA    |

## 4.6 STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

There were a total of twenty-four interviews included in this study. Four interview subjects participated in the exploratory research activity in 2010. At this time two of the students were 12 years of age, one was 15 years old, and the last was 17 years old. IRB approval was gained to use the interview transcripts to support this research study. All of the 2012 and 2013 interview participants had to be 18 years of age. Two of the 2013 participants were in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade and did not have current Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA) Data. Their last known PSSA data was used. Their school was chosen because their principal wanted the voices of her students included in this study. However, when searching through the demographic information with the high school guidance counselor, we discovered that there was not a high school senior that met the criteria of the study. We did however, find eleventh grade students that fit the criteria. One of the participants in this study self-reported that he was also a father. This was not a question that was asked, so there may have been other fathers in this study, but there is one that is confirmed.

Males were categorized as academically successful or academically non-successful based on the following criteria: a) academically successful students had a minimum 2.5 grade point average and a score of 3 (proficient) or 4 (advanced) on their Reading and Math PSSA; academically non-successful students were selected for a below 2.5 grade point average and a score of 2 (basic) or 1 (below-basic) on their Reading and Math PSSA. Table 11 summarizes the demographic information of the interview participants. Participant numbers highlighted in green note the students that would be considered academically successful. It should also be noted that students who may have met the studies requirements for success by their GPA, may not have met

the studies requirement for success based on one of their assessment scores. However, they were still considered successful. This was the case for 4 of the participants, numbers 2, 5, 12, and 18.

**Table 11.** Participant Demographic Information

| Participants | Pseudonym | Age | Grade | GPA   | PSSA Reading Status | PSSA Math Status | Lunch Status | School |
|--------------|-----------|-----|-------|-------|---------------------|------------------|--------------|--------|
| 1.           | Art       | 12  | 6     | 3.8   | Advanced            | Advanced         | FRL          | G      |
| 2.           | Bob       | 13  | 6     | 3.5   | Basic               | Proficient       | FRL          | G      |
| 3.           | Craig     | 15  | 10    | 3.4   | Proficient          | Advanced         | FP           | C      |
| 4.           | Don       | 17  | 12    | 3.66  | Advanced            | Advanced         | FP           | C      |
| 5.           | Ed        | 18  | 12    | 2.7   | Proficient          | Basic            | FRP          | D      |
| 6.           | Fred      | 19  | 12    | 2.8   | Below Basic         | Below Basic      | FRP          | D      |
| 7.           | Greg      | 18  | 12    | 2.0   | Below Basic         | Below Basic      | FRP          | B      |
| 8.           | Hal       | 18  | 12    | 1.76  | Below Basic         | Basic            | FRP          | B      |
| 9.           | Ian       | 18  | 12    | 2.98  | Advanced            | Proficient       | FP           | D      |
| 10.          | Joe       | 18  | 12    | 1.12  | Below Basic         | Below Basic      |              | D      |
| 11.          | Kip       | 18  | 12    | 2.349 |                     |                  | FRP          | E      |
| 12.          | Leo       | 18  | 12    | 3.684 | Proficient          | Below Basic      | FP           | E      |
| 13.          | Matt      | 18  | 12    | 2.189 | Below Basic         | Below Basic      | FRP          | E      |
| 14.          | Nate      | 18  | 12    | 3.447 | Advanced            | Proficient       | FRP          | F      |
| 15.          | Oran      | 18  | 12    | 2.218 | Below Basic         | Below Basic      | FRP          | F      |
| 16.          | Paul      | 18  | 11    | 2.705 | Advanced**          | Advanced**       | FRP          | G      |
| 17.          | Quincy    | 18  | 11    | 2.053 | Basic**             | Below Basic**    | FRP          | G      |
| 18.          | Ron       | 18  | 12    | 3.696 | Proficient          | Basic            | RP           | C      |
| 19.          | Sam       | 18  | 12    | 2.776 | Proficient          | Proficient*      | RP           | C      |
| 20.          | Tom       | 18  | 12    | 2.645 | Proficient          | Proficient       | RP           | C      |
| 21.          | Umar      | 18  | 12    | 2.673 | Advanced            | Proficient       | FP           | A      |
| 22.          | Vince     | 18  | 12    | 3.711 |                     |                  | FP           | A      |
| 23.          | Will      | 18  | 12    | 2.143 | Basic               | Basic            | FRP          | A      |
| 24.          | Xavier    | 18  | 12    | 1.305 | Below Basic         | Below Basic      | FRP          | A      |

Note. Participants 1-4 were interviewed in 2010; Subjects 5-10 were interviewed in 2012; Subjects 11-24 were interviewed in 2013. \*PSSA retest. Participants scored below proficient on the first administration of the PSSA and a retest was administered. \*\*Eleventh grade PSSA scores were not available. The last available assessment scores were used. Using the Federal Income Guidelines (FIG) the participants' lunch status is listed. FRP students receive free lunch under the FIG. RP students pay a small portion for their lunch. FP students pay the full cost of their lunch.

## **4.7 DATA**

Data were collected in the form of interviews and transcribed. These transcriptions were read and coded by question and for themes that appeared to reoccur in many of the transcripts. The transcripts were transferred into the QSR NVivo 10 program. Inside the QSR NVivo 10 program the transcripts were coded by question and also by themes. In the following sections using the lens of Resiliency and Critical Race Theory the transcripts were analyzed. The researcher looked for relationships that participants had or did not have as well as attitudes and beliefs that arose around academic success, actions or behaviors that also arise. The researcher compared successful and non-successful students to determine if there were commonalities and where might the distinctions have been. In keeping with Critical Race Theory, the themes were not developed by the researcher, but were pulled out of the responses of the participants. The researcher did not attempt to connect pre-conceived themes with participant responses. Rather interviews were read and reread to ensure that the themes were interpretations based on the participants' responses. Participants were given a pseudonym based on a letter from the alphabet to protect their anonymity. For example participant number one was given a name beginning with the first letter in the alphabet. Participant two was given a name with the second letter of the alphabet and so on. This pseudonym was used along with their age when using their quote in the text.

### **4.7.1 Interview Questions**

First the interview questions were coded separately to determine what themes surfaced among the participants within the questions asked. Interview questions can be found in Table 12.

Secondly, within the questions there were words or themes that consistently were shared by the participants. These words and themes were categorized, coded within QSR Nvivo 10 and were highlighted in Table 13. Question 1 was not included in the chart because it was a demographic question. A detailed explanation was listed below. Due to the nature of the conversation, sometimes participants answered a question before the researcher had an opportunity to ask it. There were also times that the conversation was being guided by the participant. When this occurred, an interview question may have been skipped or omitted in order to allow the participant to share his views or perspectives.

**Table 12.** Interview Questions

| Main Interview Questions   | Follow Up Questions   |
|--|---|
| 2. What does it mean to be successful in your school?  | 3. Can you tell me about a successful student?<br>4. Is success different for boys than for girls?<br>5. Is success different for black students than for white?  |
| 6. Take a moment and think about a particular male who you think is successful. Please describe him to me. | 6b. What does he do?<br>6c. How does he act?<br>7. What do other students think of him?<br>8. How does he interact with the teacher and other adults?<br>9. Describe his social life?   |
| 10. Please define attitude.  | 11. What is your attitude toward academic success?<br>12. When did you develop this attitude?<br>13. How has this attitude helped you?<br>14. Has anyone helped you develop this attitude?  |
| 15. Is academic success something to be shared? Why or why not?  | 15b. Please provide an example of how success is shared?<br>15c. How should academic success be shared?<br>15d. Who should academic success be shared with?   |
| 17. What problems are there with being academically successful?  | 16. What do you get from sharing academic success?<br>18. Please give me one or two examples of a sacrifice, academically successful students would have to make?<br>19. Are there sacrifices that an African American male will have to make to be academically successful? Please say more. |
| 21. Would you consider yourself academically successful?   | 20. Who would successful African American males go to for support?<br>22. If someone asked you for evidence of this, what would you tell them?  |
| 24. Is there anything that I may have missed that you feel is important to include?                        | 23. Who or what do you contribute your success to?  |

#### **4.7.2 Success in School by Grade Point Average**

Using the QSR Nvivo 10 software program, the main interview questions were analyzed by grade point average. Grade point average was used because it was the main indicator for academic success that also correlated with the assessment scores. Because of the grade point average and assessment/test score correlation there was no need to use both characteristics in the coding process. The next section will discuss the results of the coding queries by question.

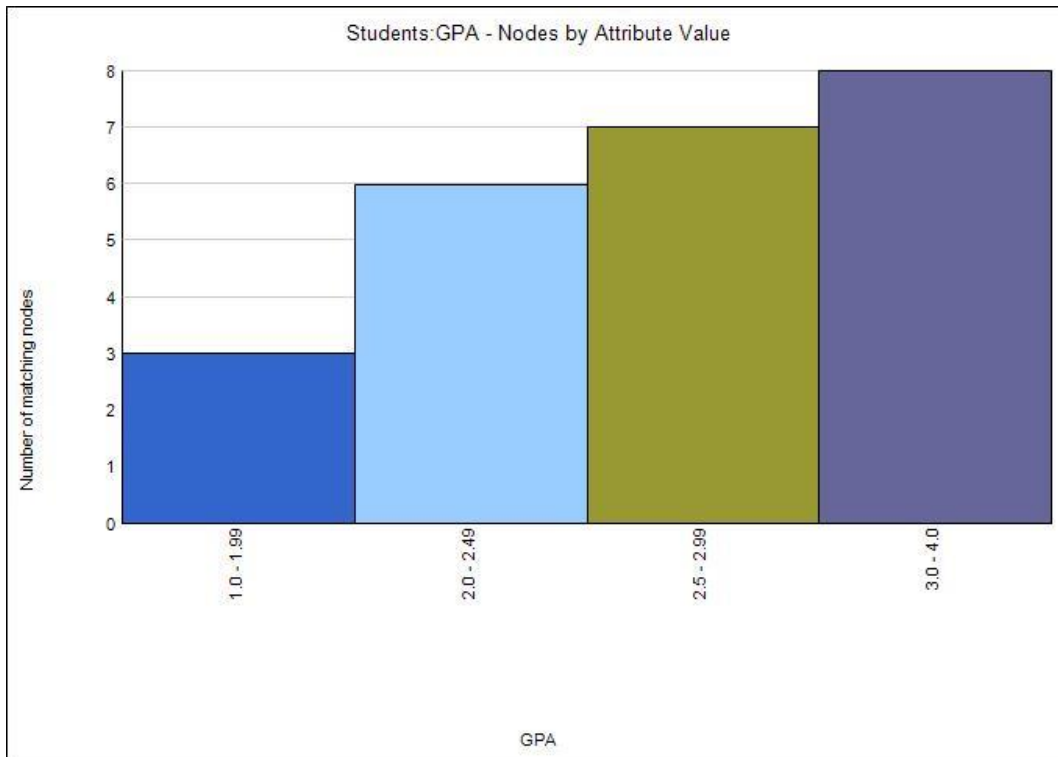
**Table 13.** Themes from Interview Questions

| Themes   | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q5 | Q6 | Q7 | Q8 | Q9 | Q10 | Q11 | Q12 | Q13 | Q14 | Q15 | Q16 | Q17 | Q18 | Q19 | Q20 | Q21 | Q22 | Q23 | Q24 |   |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| Getting good grades/ or grades   | X  | X  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |   |
| Goals, Future, College, Work   | X  | X  |    | X  |    |    |    |    |    |     | X   | X   | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     | X |
| Friends good and bad/ Popularity in and out of school (socializing)              | X  | X  | X  | X  |    |    |    |    |    | X   | X   |     |     | X   |     |     | X   | X   | X   |     |     |     |     |     | X |
| Romantic Relationships   | X  | X  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   | X   |     |     |     |     |     |   |
| Relationships with teachers + AND -  | X  |    | X  |    | X  |    |    |    |    | X   |     |     |     |     | X   |     | X   |     | X   | X   |     |     |     | X   |   |
| Applying oneself/ working hard   | X  |    |    | X  | X  | X  | X  | X  | X  | X   | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     | X |
| Race/ Stereotypes  | X  | X  | X  | X  | X  |    |    |    |    |     |     |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | X |
| Athletics popularity and distractor  |    | X  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |   |
| Male Dominance/ Typical male roles   |    | X  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |   |
| Focus & drive vs. Distraction & laziness   | X  | X  | X  |    |    | X  | X  | X  | X  | X   | X   |     | X   |     |     |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     | X |
| White parents more involved/ White students better prepared                      |    |    | X  |    | X  |    |    |    |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |   |
| Black parents support or lack of reason for success or not                       |    |    | X  |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   |     |     |     |     | X   |     |     | X   | X   | X |
| Black students don't do well in school   |    |    | X  |    | X  |    |    |    |    |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | X |
| Black neighborhoods negative influence   |    |    | X  |    | X  |    |    |    |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |   |
| Positive influences and mentors  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | X   | X   | X   | X   | x   |     |     |     |     | X   |     |     |     | X   |   |
| Moment of realizing that doing bad is not helping/ wishing to do better earlier. |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | X   | X   | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | X |
| Positive Attitude/ Confidence  | X  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | X   | X   | X   | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     |     |     |     | X |
| Problems with academics and reading  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | X   | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |   |
| Representatives of all Black males   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | X |
| Reciprocity  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |   |
| Helping others   |    |    |    |    |    | X  | X  | X  | X  |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |   |
| Being teased for being successful  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     |     |     |     |     |     |   |
| Not getting credit for hard work and intelligence                                |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | X   |     | X   |     |     |     |     |   |

## 4.8 ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following section describes the results of analyzed interview questions using a query run in the QSR Nvivo 10 software program. Some of the results were summarized in narrative form and some were summarized in chart form based on the nature of the question. In that this was a study where participants were selected utilizing the Success Case Methods Study approach, questions were analyzed using grade point average as a factor. One of the goals of this study was to determine if there were similarities and differences to how academically successful African American males and non-academically successful males viewed school, schooling and success. With this in mind analyzing the data by a grade point average comparison made the most sense (Guest, et al., 2012). Figure 6 shows how many students were represented at each grade point average level. When discussing each of the grade point averages ranges later in the analysis the following names were used as a representation. High success (HS) will represent students in the 3.0 to 4.0 grade point average range. Average success (AS) represents students in the 2.5 to 2.99 grade point average range. Low-average success (LAS) represents students in the 2.0 to 2.49 grade point average range. Lastly, minimal success (MS) represents students in the 1.0 to 1.99 grade point average range.





**Figure 6.** Students: GPA- Nodes by Attribute

There were three students in the minimal success (MS) 1.0-1.99 grade point average range. Six students were in the low-average success (LAS) 2.0 to 2.49 grade point average range. These two groups would be considered non-academically successful. There were seven students in the average success (AS) 2.5-2.99 grade point average range. Eight students were in the high success (HS) 3.0-4.0 grade point average range. These two student groups would be considered academically successful. It should also be noted that there was not a participant in this study that attained a 4.0 grade point average.

Analysis of the questions in this section was organized by the three research questions for this dissertation (see Table 12). Questions one thru five were asked to gain insight for research question one, “What factors currently account for the success of a few African American males?” “What are the attitudes and behaviors that consistently appear in African American

males who perform successfully in the urban school environment?” Questions six thru fourteen sought insight regarding research question two, “Do the attitudes and behaviors of successful African American males differ with grade point average?” Lastly, questions fifteen thru twenty-three were asked to gain insight into research question three, “Do academically successful African American males have family support systems that contribute to high academic achievement?” Question 24 was asked in keeping with Critical Race Theory to allow the participants to contribute important factors based on their voice and perspective.

It was also important to note that some participant’s quotes are repeated in various sections. Quotes were selected carefully to represent the common narrative that surfaced in the voices of the participants. When quotes were reused, this was due to the simplicity and eloquence of the manner in which a particular participant was able to capture a theme.

#### **4.8.1 Demographics**

Question one was a demographic question. In this question students were asked to state their name, grade, age, and school. Students were asked their names so that the researcher would be able to use the school district’s information system to confirm grade point average, age, and assessment scores. Permission to use this system was granted through the school district’s International Review Board process. Age was always asked to ensure that student’s met the criteria to be a participant in the study. There were two occasions that 17 year old students were provided as participants. In this case, the interview did not pass question number one and the interview was stopped.

## **4.9 RESEARCH QUESTION ONE: FACTORS, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIORS FOR SUCCESS**

### **4.9.1 Systems Knowledge**

Question two asked students, “What does it mean to be successful in your school?” Using the QSR Nvivo 10 software program student responses were analyzed by grade point average. The minimal success (MS) students appeared to have no systems knowledge. Systems knowledge would be defined by the researcher as knowing how to relate to teachers and play the game of school. Responses by the participants were minimal as evidence by the response of this participant.

Xavier (18) talked about success at his school:

What it means to be successful in my school is academic wise, making sure I’m educated when I graduate from high school and most likely to get my high school diploma.

Students were not able to speak to specific incidences of success in their school. They do not mention success in school as preparing them for life beyond school. Only one student talked about success as getting good grades. One student mentions success as focusing on his goals, but not reaching them.

The low-average success (LAS) students talked about success as knowing/learning about oneself, getting good grades, making honor roll, going to college, and having the appropriate credits to graduate for college. Students did not mention systems knowledge like relationships with adults or school structure. Students are focused on themselves and making sure that they are in the right place/space to be successful. They appeared to lack what is termed here as school social capital. Building on Putnam (2001) and Strayhorn’s (2010) work around social capital

which states that social capital influences the academic achievement of African American males the researcher developed a new term for school aged social capital called school social capital. School social capital is termed as knowledge of the educational system and the ability to work with or around adults and peers within the educational system.

In the average success student responses (AS), this was the first time students began to talk about teachers and others liking them in school as well as having respect for the teachers, administrators, and other school staff. Doing all your work and getting good grades was a theme that was heard across grade point average groups. Students hint at school social capital as “this game of school” that they have learned how to play.

Fred (19) explained what it meant to be successful at his school:

Basically, good attendance, straightforward attitude, all the teachers and higher you know- what’s that word uh- people of importance here, like teachers, staff, even janitors and what not, be respectful of all of them. Attend class, a lot. You- doing like doing all your work even if it’s the little things like if you get good grades, but you still have other work you feel like you shouldn’t need to do because you already have a good grade, you just do those anyway because that’s just that deceives you and if you have good grades and you don’t do it, it goes down like really quickly, so if you miss anything that they’re looking for. Do all of your stuff no matter what. Turn them in on time. Follow deadline and basically have a good GPA.

Pride was mentioned first here also. Students talked about taking pride in their accomplishments. This group of students talked about working hard, listening to the teachers and doing everything that the teachers tell you to do. This was a shared narrative with low-average

success (LAS) students as well. Students were also working to get into college or working towards a career or life outside of school.

The high success (HS) students talked about getting good grades and not talking back to the teacher like their average success (AS) student counterparts. Unlike the other groups, this group viewed teachers as helpers, not just someone to comply with. They appeared to have a strong school social capital. The tension of having friends but not being too social was also mentioned. This group also spoke about having friends that they could relate to in class.

There was also a tension between being popular and still doing well in school as described by Craig (17):

I mean initially the whole get good grades and um not focus on being social too social but still having friends that you can relate to in classes and that will help you through it. Friends who are there to also help you succeed and teachers who are willing to work with you also just being in a good environment and being successful in school like knowing that that school will shape you to have a future and know where you want to go so.

Being in a good environment in school was seen as important. School was seen as a place to be shaped and prepared. Being a hard worker, an achiever and staying ahead of the game were something these students reported having done as well as looking forward to the next step in life like college or a job. Goals were not just for school but for the future.

Every group except the minimal success students had college and a career as their ultimate goal whereas the minimal success students' goal was doing well and graduating from school. High Success and average success students also had systems knowledge/school social capital that the low-average success and minimal success students did not possess. The high success and average success students learned how to interact with teachers and other school

personnel in a positive manner and were able to pay attention to subtleties and nuisances within school that lead to success. This may have been one contributor to their positive academic performance.

#### **4.9.2 Academically Successful Others**

Question three asked participants, “Can you tell me about a successful student?” This question was coded in the QSR Nvivo 10 software. The researcher wanted to determine if students were able to talk about a successful student that they were currently in school with. The researcher wanted to know how often students had an opportunity to interact with successful students, if at all. This question was also asked to gain a deeper insight into what the participants would consider as academically successful and who would they select.

Only one of the minimal success students was able to recall a specific student and this individual did not mention the name of the student. He described the successful individual as a friend and that this friend was Promise Ready and had a 3.0 grade point average. The other two students describe a successful student using what would be considered a generalization. A generalization describes characteristics of success but not one specific person that the student may know personally. These students were not able to describe a successful student inside or outside of their school, like a relative or friend.

The excerpt below shows an example of how Joe (18) described a successful student:

Um a successful student is when you come to school on time, never misses school, um does all their homework by when they're assigned it, participates in class, actually pays attention, takes notes when even notes are like they don't even supposed to be taking. And just being a star student.

The low-average students were still most often using a generic narrative of a student or someone without examples from personal experience. It was as though just knowing the “rules” were enough and the “rules” were used as a talisman to protect them from the trouble school brings to them each and every day. Only one student in this group was able to name a specific successful student. The two students who were able to describe a successful student outside of school described them to be a close relative.

In the average success student responses three students were able to name a specific successful individual. They also were able to tell what it was that made these students successful. Umar (18) talked about his successful student example like this:

He’s a great athlete and a great student. On and off the field.

Ed (18) described his classmate’s success in this manner:

Well she’s- she’s, I think been inducted into the national honor society. She gets straight A’s all the time. Everyone likes her; she’s popular.

Two average success (AS) students used generic descriptions to describe a successful student, one student thought about a former student who was at that had gone to college and one student could not think of a student that he would consider successful.

In the high success student group, four of the students were not asked this question. They were 2010 participants. The questions that the 2010 participants were asked did not include this particular question. There were only four responses in this grade point average band. Of the four two were generic responses and two were specific. It is noted of the students that responded to this question nine of the participants described a successful student in a generalization. Three described someone outside of school and one could not think of a successful student. Seven participants were able to name a specific student as successful. It appears that African American

males more often than not do not have an opportunity to interact with successful students. This may be due to courses that they take and the peer group that they surround themselves in. Table 14 summarizes how the participants described a successful student.

**Table 14.** Successful Students

| Grade Average Ranges |     | Specific Student | Generalized student | Someone outside of school | Could not think of a successful student |
|----------------------|-----|------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1.00-1.99            | MS  | X                | X X                 |                           |   |
| 2.0-2.49             | LAS | X                | X X X               | X X                       |   |
| 2.5-2.99             | AS  | X X X            | XX                  | X                         | X                                       |
| 3.0-4.0              | HS  | X X              | X X                 |                           |   |

#### 4.9.3 Success Difference by Gender

Question four asked students, “Is success different for boys than it is for girls?” According to Weiss (2004), males tend to view school as a feminine undertaking. This question sought to determine if this group of males had this perspective. Using a matrix in Table 15, themes that surfaced during the interviews were charted. An X was placed in a theme according the grade point average range that spoke about it. This allowed a comparison to be made of whether males at different grade point average ranges have different perspectives or thinking that may contribute to their academic success.



**Table 15. Is Success Different by Gender?**

| Success different for boys than for girls                           | Response   | 1.0-1.99<br>MS | 2.0-2.49<br>LAS | 2.5-2.99<br>AS | 3.0-4.0<br>HS | Total   |
|---|--|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|---|
| Responses   | Yes  | 2              | 1               | 0              | 1             | 4   |
|   | No   | 1              | 5               | 7              | 7             | 20  |
| Themes  | X= when a participant mentioned a particular theme |                |                 |                |               | Examples  |
| Goals, Future, College, Work  |  |                |                 |                | XX<br>X       | Leo (18, HS) I think everyone has the same goal when it comes to success. It has to do with being wealthy, well-educated uh having a job after college."  |
| Friends good and bad/ Popularity in and out of school (socializing) |  |                |                 | X              |               | Don (15, HS) Umm in most cases, hence society success can be determined to be different ah from sex to sex but in all actuality since we all are equal ahh I wouldn't say there should be too much of a difference between how success is measured between women and for men"   |
| Applying oneself/ working hard                                      |  |                | X               | X              |               | Leo (18, HS) It depends on the person. In my opinion, it's the same for everybody. It's just their motivation."   |
| Motivation  |  |                |                 |                |               |   |
| Focus & drive vs. Distraction & laziness                            |  | x              | X               |                |               | Greg (18, LAS) Especially during these years because it's far easier for a female to focus because they're usually intertwined socially and if you're social network is intertwined scholastically then you're pretty much tied right in while guys seem to be completely distracted and preoccupied with females more than females are occupied with males.  |
| Race/ Stereotypes   |  | X              |                 | X              |               | Xavier (18, MS) I would say no, like, because I think it's the same. But by race, it would be different. Not gender."   |
| Athletics popularity and distractor                                 |  | X              |                 |                |               | Hal (18, LAS) If people, you want people to know you. And if you get- if you're known in school, then you're popular. And usually people that's real known, the majority, I'm not going to say everybody, but the majority /them are the ones that don't go to college.   |
| Male Dominance/ Typical male roles                                  |  | X              | X               |                |               | Greg (18, LAS) The view of success- I would say it is universal, but the way we view success does differentiate greatly, greatly because there's a natural /??/ to the male success. It's very domineering, opposed to women want to be usually just adored.  |
| Girls as equal to boys or same as                                   |  |                |                 | XX<br>X<br>XX  | XX<br>XX      | Don (15, HS) Umm in most cases, hence society success can be determined to be different ah from sex to sex but in all actuality since we all are equal ahh I wouldn't say there should be too much of a difference between how success is measured between women and for men.   |
| Females more intelligent and/or focused                             |  | X<br>X         | x               | XX             | X             | Vince (18, HS) Because of the negative stigma attached to men and women in education, such as women are generally smarter than men, and that men often get into more labor intensive jobs, things like that" also a traditional view.   |
| Traditional Male female roles                                       |  |                | X               |                | XX<br>XX<br>X | Craig (17, HS) ...how a lot of the girls in my grade and coming up in my generation have a very, very strong independent view on life. And um like how you see in the movies how girls say this isn't back then you don't always have to open a door for me and pull my chair out anymore an treat me like a girly girl." Example of a challenge to traditional view.<br><br>For a girl, she can like, she can do that or she can find a man and you can do that for her and she can start off on that too." Example of traditional view. |

Across all the grade point average ranges males tended to believe that academic success was not different for males and females. It was when arriving at the responses of the average success and high success students that you hear them talk about girls as being equal or the same as males or success for girls as being equal or the same as boys. It should not be assumed that males in the minimal success and low-average success student groups did not share this belief. Females being equal or success for females being equal to males was just not mentioned

explicitly by this group. However out of the nine students in the minimal success and low-average success group, six believed that success was not different for males than for females. One thing of particular interest that arose was this notion of traditional male/female roles. Females were seen as more focused on school and males were seen as domineering. Within the high success student group there were three participants that talked about females challenging traditional roles. In the minimal success and low-average success student responses, females were seen as pretty and wanting to be adored.

It should be noted that the interviewer was a female. Participants may have felt it rude to answer this question in the negative because of the interviewer's gender. To further explore the topic of gender differences in education it might be helpful to have male interview male participants. One might get a more candid response by having a male student or peer interview male participants.

#### **4.9.4 Success Difference by Race**

Next students were asked, "Is success was different for Black students than for White students?" The notion of race surfaced in question four for a two of the participants. Again using a matrix, Table 16- Success by Race lists themes that surfaced during the interviews. An X was placed in a theme according the grade point average range that spoke about it. This allowed for a comparison to be made of whether males at different grade point average ranges have different perspectives or thinking around issues of race that may contribute to their academic success.

**Table 16. Success by Race**

| Success different for white students than for Black students                         |     | 1.0-1.99 | 2.0-2.49 | 2.5-2.99 | 3.0-4.0  | Total  |
|--|-----|----------|----------|----------|----------|--|
|  |     | MS       | LAS      | AS       | HS       |  |
| Responses  | Yes | 3        | 1        | 4        | 2        | 10   |
|  | No  | 0        | 5        | 3        | 6        | 14   |
| Themes (X= when a participant mentioned a particular theme)                          |     |          |          |          |          | Examples   |
| Goals, Future, College, Work   |     | X        | X        |          | XX       | Oran (18, LAS) I just got to get on it. My last report I had honor roll. 3.4. Close to high honor roll. This report I'm aiming for a 3.5, a 4.0 to be honest but at least I want a 3.5, but about the college tour, that really opened my eyes like and they like every college you went to they kept – each college was saying like to get in here you have to at least it was like a 2.6, like Morehouse, I really wanted to go there. That was a good school, you know. It was- it's epic down there. Real historical down there too so that- it was like they said something like you needed a 2.8 to come down here. I was like dag. To get into the school I really like I got to get my grades up, so after that I came back to school, I was a different person. |
| Friends good and bad/<br>Popularity in and out of school<br>(socializing)            |     |          | X        |          |          | Oran (18, LAS)Went on that last year, my junior year, and that really- some people, some of my friends tell me it's too late for you, you ain't got the Pittsburgh Promise, you might as well stop looking at college.   |
| Relationships with teachers +<br>AND -   |     | XX       | XX       |          | XX       | Joe (18, MS) She's doing her job, trying to make – she's actually trying to make your future better actually like actually give you opportunities to actually have a future. So just because she's giving you work, and you don't like the work, doesn't mean that you should hate a teacher for that and she's actually she'll actually be calm, cool, and she doesn't bother you at all, she does give you work. There's- you have no right to be mad at the teacher for that.   |
| Applying oneself/ working hard<br>Motivation   |     | X        | XX<br>X  |          | X        | Xavier (18,MS) I mean, I think it's because like maybe by the way the person grew up, or by where they're living, what area. It just like, their motivation's not put towards school. Or they don't understand how serious it is until it gets too late.   |
| Race/ Stereotypes  |     | X        | XX       | XX       | XX<br>XX | Joe (18, MS) Yeah. /That/- yeah definitely. And there- yeah because like wh- when you look at it um the African American race is really like just we tend to need more help on with lessons, class work, and all that other type of stuff. With the um actual the um whites it's pretty easy because they sit there, pay attention, and we actually get a little distracted.   |
| Athletics popularity and<br>distractor   |     | X        |          |          |          | Hal (18, MS) That's who they look up to, so even if they wanted to be like a famous player, but they don't know about what they about how that player got there, like they didn't even know that they had to be a student athlete so and they see their brother, he might be a good basketball player, but school he's not doing what he needs to so I mean I say it is kind of hard for African American male, I mean just in general African American students than white students.  |
| White parents more involved/<br>White students better prepared<br>& have role models |     | X<br>XX  |          | XX<br>X  | X        | Hal (18, MS) Yes because when you're younger, for a white student, they're they're getting raised some of them are getting raised up on like when they're younger do their homework. Um what else, they're just around a lot of success.   |
| Black parents support or lack of<br>reason for success or not                        |     | XX       |          |          |          | Xavier (18, MS) Cause it's not that like Black African Americans don't want to learn, I think it's just by standing in the hallways, you know, like not being um, not having that discipline, your parents telling you, you know, it's really important to get your education, so I think like maybe white people's parents push them more harder than Black parents.  |
| Black students don't do well in<br>school and/or don't want to<br>learn              |     | XX<br>X  | X        | XX<br>X  |          | Hal (18, MS) They're in the hallways, cutting class, going to every lunch, skipping school, want to get suspended, want to get in-school. That's some of their success and just being in the classroom when they're in the classroom, not doing their work, listening to music, texting and all that. So, they're not paying attention, so when the test comes around, they don't know what's going on, and then if they don't get help, they flip out because they're not getting their way. But the teacher was up there for two weeks explaining everything to them so now they don't understand.   |
| Black neighbor- hoods -<br>influence   |     | XX       |          | X        | XX       | Hal (18, MS) When they're growing up, for an African American male, they're growing up and they see a lot of shootings, people pulling guns, older brothers with guns that's only 14, 15 years of age, and they see them not go to school, so when they get older, that's their role model.  |
| Not enough + Black role<br>models  |     |          |          | X        |          |  |
| Society influences racial<br>differences   |     |          | X        | X        | XX       | Greg (18, LAS) I mean although as an African American, it's like you are striving for something more, and usually, not usually, but sometimes with Caucasian students, they tend to strive for monetary things or it's—the idea of success is completely different for both end of the spectrum just because of the way society is structured. It can't mean the same thing when a. there aren't the same opportunities-the same opportunities aren't as readily available, um and just that's pretty much it. Just not the same.  |
| Black and white given the same<br>opportunities                                      |     |          | XX       | X        | X        | Kip (18, HS) Uh, in some parts, but at the same time we're both, we're both given the same equal amount of opportunity so I don't believe that people should put that as a category.”  |

One of the first things that occurred after the chart was completed was to look at any theme that the high success students may not have had an X in that every other grade point range may have had an X in. This was also done for the minimal success students. This observation was made to determine if there is a pattern of thinking more consistent with academically successful students than non-academically successful students. One area that first stood out was the notion that African American students do not perform as well as white students. This theme did not surface among the high success students. They appeared to have a counter-narrative about success and race that helped them stay focused.

Bob (13) was emphatic regarding the abilities of African American students:

Successful, like I said successful has one meaning. To every person it's one (pause) meaning. Just because you're white doesn't mean that you're the smartest person in the entire world. You may, there might be other kids smarter than you.

Another area that stood out was that the minimal success students did not mention that African American students and White students were given the same opportunities. Actually, every student in the minimal success student group believed that success was different for African American and White students. The MS student group also believed that White students were somehow better prepared for school than they were and that African American parents were not as supportive of school and schooling. This group appeared to be overcome by "whiteness as property" in the education system. School was something that white students understood/owned and that Black students struggled to understand/own.

Hal (18) explained preparedness in this way:

Yes because when you're younger, for a white student, they're they're getting raised some of them are getting raised up on like when they're younger do their homework. Um what else, they're just around a lot of success."

Overall racial stereotypes were repeated by the students at the lower grade average ranges and debunked by the students at the higher grade average ranges. The acknowledgement of stereotypes and what society believes about African American students was most often recognized by the students from the low-average, average, and high success student groups. It appears that the minimal success students are not aware of the possible influence society has on how race is perceived. These are clear areas of distinction that may have an impact on whether or not a student is able to navigate schooling to become successful.

#### **4.9.5 Behaviors for Success Summary**

This group of queries was asked to find data to answer the first research question: "What factors currently account for the success of a few African American males?" and "What are the attitudes and behaviors that consistently appear in African American males who perform successfully in the urban school environment?" The responses from these queries begin to shed light into the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to academically successful males. Based on the responses from questions two thru five, high success students tended to have more traditional views of male and female roles and relationships. Although traditional role thinking may not be a view that some may consider ideal, it may in fact be this "man as dominant" perspective that allows these students to be more successful than their peers that do not possess this view. High success students were also aware of racial stereotypes and gender differences but in keeping with

resiliency research do not view these factors of barriers to their success. Although not spoken here, the notion of effort and hard work begins to surface as an attitude that one must have in order to obtain success.

#### **4.10 RESEARCH QUESTION TWO: ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS BY GRADE**

##### **POINT AVERAGE**

##### **4.10.1 African American Male Perspectives of Success**

Questions six through nine were kept together because they all related to the perspective of a male that the participants believed was successful. Table 17 captures all the responses to questions six through nine. It should be noted that not every participant was asked this group of questions or questions within this group, because of how the participant guided the interview. There were actually three questions that comprised question Six: 1. Describe a successful male. 2. What does he do? 3. How does he act? This was done because what the student does and how the student acts are characteristics that support a description of the academically success for male. When coding for the questions that made up question six participants' responses for successful males were coded for generalizations. Generalizations were descriptions of successful males that were not linked to a specific person. Classmates were considered people that participants were in class with or attended school with. Relatives could be a father, brother, uncle, cousin, or grandfather. Community/ Religious leaders were mentors from organizations outside of school in after school programs or clubs. These could also be coaches, pastors or other religious leaders. Celebrities are self-explanatory.

**Table 17. Successful Males**

| Q6 Successful Male  | 1.0-<br>1.99 | 2.0-<br>2.49 | 2.5-<br>2.99 | 3.0-4.0 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------|
| Generalization  |              |              |              |         |
| Classmate   |              |              | XXXX         | X       |
| Relative  |              | XX           | XX           | XXXX    |
| Community Member/Religious Leader   |              | X            |              |         |
| Celebrity (2 for Obama)   |              | X            | X            |         |
| Q6 What does he do?   |              |              |              |         |
| Does all work or works hard. Goes to class on time or Gets good grades. Work Ethic. | XX           | XXX          | XXX          | XXX     |
|   |              | X            | XX           | XXXX    |
| Stays focused. Addresses situations properly  |              | XXX          |              | XX      |
|   |              | X            |              |         |
| Motivator or helper/ Mentor   | X            | XX           | XXX          | XX      |
| Takes care of family.   |              |              | XX           | XXX     |
| Socializes/ Popular   |              |              | XX           | XX      |
| Q6 How does he act?   |              |              |              |         |
| Normal  |              |              | X            | XX      |
| Confident/has pride/ sets himself apart from others                                 |              |              | X            |         |
| Fun/Goofy   |              | XX           | XXXX         | XX      |
| Laid back, quiet, kind  |              | XXX          | X            |         |
| Smart, Intelligent, Articulate  |              |              | XX           | XXX     |
| Focused/serious   |              |              | XX           |         |
| Honest/giving   |              |              | X            |         |
| Positive/Optimist   |              |              |              | X       |
| Q7 What do other students think of him?   |              |              |              |         |
| Think he is too cocky or mean/ do not like him/Jealous of him                       | XX           |              | X            |         |
| Think he is weird   |              |              | X            |         |
| Appreciate him/ Like what he does/ Admire him/Respect him                           | X            | X            | XX           | XXXX    |
| They think he is cool/someone to relate to  |              | X            | XX           |         |
| Think he is funny   |              |              | XXX          |         |
| He is successful  |              | X            |              | X       |
| He is popular/ with people/ with ladies   |              |              | X            | XX      |
| Stands out/Not like everyone else   |              |              |              | XXX     |
| Q8 How does he interact with teachers or other adults?                              |              |              |              |         |
| View him or use him to support other students/ A helper/ A resource                 | X            | XX           |              | XXX     |
| Teachers/ adults support him and/or respect him                                     |              |              | XX           |         |
| Respect him/ Speak positively about him   | X            |              |              |         |
| See him as a leader and a problem solver  |              | X            |              |         |
| With comfort/ confidently   |              | XX           |              |         |
| Humbly/ respectfully  |              |              | X            |         |
| Some teachers do not appear to relate well to him                                   |              |              | X            |         |
| Friendly with him   |              |              | X            | XX      |
| Speaks up for himself and stands his ground   |              |              |              | XXX     |
| Q9 Describe his social life?  |              |              |              |         |
| Do not know about his social life   |              | X            |              | XX      |
| Not many friends and/or Not much hanging out and/or Not a large social life         | X            |              | XXX          | X       |
| Popular with friends and/or Popular with girls                                      |              |              | XX           | X       |
| Active/Community service oriented/helping others                                    | X            | X            |              |         |
| Spends time with family   |              | XX           | XXX          | X       |
| Enjoys hobbies  |              |              |              |         |
| Has a social network/ professional network/ work related social life                |              | XX           |              |         |

For questions six through nine themes were reused for often students used similar terminology for what someone did and how they acted. Anytime students mentioned working

hard, this could apply to working hard in school or at a job or activity. What was attempted to be captured was this notion of hard work or strong work ethic. Students were consistently talking about focus in a manner that signified being able to stay the course and accomplish goals and tasks. This was how focused was coded here. Mentor in this setting meant that the person offered guidance, information, or support that benefited the participant or others around the participant. This was why motivator and helper were added to this category. From the researchers perspective mentors were often helpers. Motivators did not necessarily have to be mentors, but mentors most often motivated and helped. Takes care of family was often associated with a relative. However this did come up as a description for the other categories as well. It appeared as though the participants were able to observe the support their success male provided to their family if the successful male happened to not be a family member. Socialize and popular were descriptors given when participants talked about their successful male as having friends and sometimes they used the terminology of “social” and “popular”. One term that came up was “goofy”. “Goofy” appeared to be an endearing term for someone who had a good sense of humor and who was fun loving. When students used these descriptors to explain what their success male did and how he acted an X was placed next to the theme. Students often prescribed more than one descriptor to their successful male.

#### **4.10.2 Analysis of African American Male Perspectives**

This group of questions was asked to shed light on the social observation skills that this group of African American males possesses. Participants were often observant of systems and structures without being able to clearly call out that a particular system or structure existed. These questions were also asked to determine whether or not students had a social network or school



social capital that could possibly promote academic success. These questions shed light on identity and how these young men view themselves and those around them.

#### **4.10.2.1 Describe a Successful Male**

Beginning with question six participants were asked to describe a successful male. In the average success (AS) and high success (HS) groups, students more often reported their successful male to be a relative or a classmate. High success (HS) students more often named their successful male as being a relative and the average success student's successful male more often being a classmate. A huge leap as a possible theory could be made that academically successful African American males have an academically successful relative or perhaps are friends with an academically successful male. More research would need to be completed to determine this as a possible theory. What can be said is that African American males have a higher chance of being academically successful if they have an academically successful relative or classmate with whom they interact with regularly. This individual would be able to support the male and share knowledge, in particular system's knowledge with the male. Although celebrities and community members were selected by the low-average success students, their success could be bolstered if they were afforded more time and interaction with a successful male relative or close mentor. The minimal success (MS) students appear to be in need of or would benefit from increased interactions with academically successful people in general, beyond the support currently provided by their teachers.

#### **4.10.2.2 What does he do?**

This question was asked to determine if success looked differently to students in each of the grade average bands or if it was define as the same. When asking what a successful student does the researcher was trying to determine if males at all grade average bands would describe success the same. Across grade average bands the students reported that their successful student worked hard in school or their career, got good grades, and/or came to class on time. This appeared to be a positive attribute and one that successful people would exhibit. Another common characteristic of a successful person was his ability to motivate, help, or mentor others. This goes back to the notion of sharing success. More often participants described a successful person as one that gives back and supports others success.

Kip (18) talked about his successful person is this way:

The reason why I define him as success is that he gives us a chance to live life and give us, just give us everything that he doesn't have and didn't have and helps us out in the world which today is hard for black males and young males to achieve without no motivation or aspiration. That's how I see it. Something like that.”

#### **4.10.2.3 How does he act?**

The average success (AS) and high success (HS) students were able to use more descriptors in their explanation of how a successful student acts. This may be due to the amount of time that they afforded in the presence of someone who is academically successful. It was interesting to note that every group except the minimal success (MS) students brought up this notion of their successful person as being fun or what many termed “goofy”. Students recognized that although their successful person was focused and worked hard, he still had a down to earth humor that made him fun to be with.

Fred (19) described this goofiness like this:

He's just a straight goofy person all around, like no matter how goofy he was though, goofy he is, when he has something to do, he splits up his mind. If he continues his goofiness, he's also serious about what he's doing, so like if he has something he has to do like homework or something he gets that done, and like the important things, anything important he does it. Or did it. Then you know, when he has his time to be goofy, he's goofy.

There was a student at each grade point range that stated that their successful person was confident, took pride in his self, or stood out in some way. There was a notion of being secure in ones being as a characteristic of a successful person.

Will (18) described his successful person's confidence like this:

He carries his self very well. Like he's not going to like regret something cause he knows that he made good decisions and he carries his self with confidence.

#### **4.10.2.4 What do other students think of him?**

The minimal success (MS) and low-average success (LAS) students reported that the successful student was "hated on" or thought of negatively. However, across all grade average bands the successful student was admired and respected by his peers. This appeared to be contradictory. High success (HS) students described academically successful males as having the ability to be oneself and to stand out from the crowd. This linked back to having confidence and being confident.

Leo (18) talked about his successful person's confidence in this way:

Uhm me and a, whoever watches ESPN...me and a few friends talk about him and they say ESPN First Take. He's probably one of the, he's the best analyst. He's not like everyone else. Like I said everyone else is scripted and sticks to it.

Art (12) simply stated that his successful person was different:

Yeah, like he's different from everybody else.

#### **4.10.2.5 How does he interact with adults?**

This question was asked to determine what type of interaction successful students had with adults, like teachers and administrators to examine the amount of school social capital. Resiliency Theory research stated that successful students were able to naturally build positive relationships with adults (Hampson et al., 1998). This question was asked by each grade average range to determine if academically successful students were perceived to have better relationships with adults than non-academically successful students. Minimal success (MS) students reported that some students did not think well of the successful student. They also stated that successful students work with the teacher to assist classmates with assignments. Average success (AS) and high success (HS) students reported that teachers most often did not think well of or take kindly to the successful students. This was interesting and goes against Resiliency Theory research.

Hal (18) viewed his successful student as a helper to the teacher:

He talked to his students- I mean he talked to his teachers a lot about other students, and saying how he can help them when he gets done with his work if they need help or do you need to stay after class with a couple students or stay after class and get some more work done or do you need help. He do a lot of different ways to help out the teachers.

Paul (18) talked about his successful students interactions with adults with emphasis on negative interactions:

Well, the teachers, he's – there's certain teachers that he's not quite fond of like he'll ask them like what type of work that needs to be done and the response that he gets sometimes he doesn't like, so it sometimes creates an altercation, but there's days where he can get around that and just wait a little longer and ask again and they'll give a better response, and then he just goes and does what he has to do.

Generally the successful student was seen as a helper and a support to his fellow students and his support is often employed by the teachers. Academically successful students tended to see the interactions of their successful person with other adults as friendly. They also felt that their successful person stood up for himself and stood his ground.

#### **4.10.2.6 Describe his social life.**

This question was asked to determine if successful students were giving up time with friends and/or leisure activities to be academically successful. The successful individuals that participants reported on did not appear to have huge social lives. They may in some instances possess some level of popularity with peers, but hanging out or going to social events was done sparingly. These successful males spent more time with their families than any other activity listed. This was seen by the participants as a positive trait.

Ed (18) described his successful person as having a positive social life:

People love him. I mean people talk to him. He talks to them but he doesn't really go out.  
It's in school he talks to people.

### **4.10.3 Attitude**

This section includes questions ten through fourteen regarding attitude. By asking these questions it was hoped to gain insight into the attitudes and perceived attitudes that success students possess. Students were asked questions about attitude to determine if there were differing attitudes about school and schooling that would be observable in each of the grade point average ranges. Below is a breakdown by question. Charts were used to have a visual representation of the responses by grade point average range.

#### **4.10.3.1 What is your attitude toward success?**

This was originally the tenth question asked of participants in this study. It was noticed after the first few interviews that students were struggling with the concept of attitude. This appeared to be an abstract concept to them or it may have been that they were trying to determine what the interviewer meant by attitude. Instead of defining attitude for the participants, it made more sense to dig deeper into the thinking of the participants to determine how they defined attitude. During the 2012 interviews this adjustment was made and students were first asked to define attitude, followed by asking them “What was their attitude toward success?” Table 18 displays the results of this question.

**Table 18.** Attitude toward Success

| Grade Average Ranges |     | Regrets not working hard from the beginning | School is hard for me. | Work hard/ Take school serious/ want to achieve | Feel less successful in reading and/or other Reading based subjects | Feels success in Math | Academic success in school seen as a way to succeed in life |
|----------------------|-----|---|------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|---|
| 1.0-1.99             | MS  |   |                        | XX  | X   | X                     | X   |
| 2.0-2.49             | LAS | X   | X                      | XXXX  | X   | X                     | X   |
| 2.5-2.99             | AS  | X   | XX                     | XX  | X   |                       | X   |
| 3.0-4.0              | HS  | X   | X                      | XXX   |   |                       |   |

Participants responded by defining attitude based on how easy or how difficult school was for them. They were not able to distinguish between having a strong work ethic and having a dislike of or inclination for a particular subject. Participants in each grade point range understood or believed that they believed that working hard in school was a positive attitude or attribute to possess. A student in every grade point average band except the minimal success (MS) students stated that they regretted not working as diligently as they could have during their entire high school experience. Again in every grade point average range participants lamented that school was challenging for them. Another interesting point was that at least one participant from each grade point average range except the high success (HS) students stated that reading was difficult for them. Not one of the high success students stated this. It should not be assumed that HS students may or may not struggle with reading, but it was interesting that they did not correlate the liking of a particular subject with the attitude definition. One of the low-average students believed that expressing his dislike of a particular school subject was disrespectful.

Matt (18) felt that discussing his negative feeling toward school work would be disrespectful:

My attitude. I don't, I don't know. Hum, I don't know. My attitude toward that stuff, I don't like showing it, because I feel like that is disrespectful.

Hal (18) associated his work ethic with his interest in reading:

My attitude, honestly, some things, like in English, /not all like that./ I don't think my attitude's not always 100% like I need to be and during English so that's why I'm having problems with it right now so, but like I won't study hard enough for English.

The topic of reading did come up with the high success students but it was not in a negative manner. One student expressed difficulty with his honors English course and the fact that he was the one of two African American males in the course. It was almost as though he was hinting to preferring math over reading, but somehow knew that he as an African American male felt the need to put forth just as much effort to be equally as successful in each course.

Craig (15) felt he was responsible to show other groups that African American males could be academically successful:

I guess I feel like I'm carrying a burden that I have to show everybody in the world that I can also be successful at math and I can also be successful at English like every other kid can and it's it's it is kinda difficult but when you walk into a room I do sometimes feel out of place.

There was not this notion of picking and choosing when to "turn on" or "turn off" his effort. His full effort appears to be on equally for English and Math. Not liking a subject did not mean that you do not work as hard at it. This may be a distinction worth exploring and a conversation worth having with all males- just because one does not like something, this does not give you a pass from not giving it a one hundred percent effort.



### 4.10.3.2 Attitude Definition

For the 2012 and 2013 interviews participants were asked to define attitude before they were asked to describe their attitude toward academic success. This question was asked to determine how participants defined attitude as related to success or if they would relate attitude to success at all. Most importantly, this question was asked to see if there would be a common definition or theme that surfaced from the participants definitions. Themes that surfaced in the response were charted. Themes were analyzed by grade point average range to determine if students at a certain grade point average’s definition of success may have been different with a higher or lower grade point average. The results of this analysis were captured in Table 19.

**Table 19.** Attitude Definition

| Themes  | Grade Average Ranges | 1.0-1.99 MS | 2.0-2.49 LAS | 2.5-2.99 AS | 3.0-4.0 HS |
|---|----------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| A feeling of confidence                                       |                      | X           |              | X           |            |
| Work ethic. Completing all tasks and completing them on time. |                      | XX          | X            | XX          | XX         |
| Positive perspective  |                      | X           | XX           | X           | X          |
| Liking or disliking a course                                  |                      |             | X            |             |            |
| The way one acts  |                      |             | X            | X           | XX         |
| One’s outlook on or interpretation of life                    |                      |             | X            | X           | X          |
| Understanding   |                      |             |              | X           |            |

A participant from every grade point average range except the minimal success (MS) students stated that the way an individual acts and their outlook/interpretation of life determines an attitude for success. These young men appear to not possess an understanding of the relationship between one’s outlook and perspective on life coupled with the actions that one makes as having an impact on the success or lack of success that one experiences.

Again the low-average success (LAS) student talked about not liking his English course. The interviewer probed to determine if not liking the course would make the student work less. The student claims that it did not.

Matt (18, LAS) described his struggle with reading:

I, I read. I read. I gotta read. Cause, I read cause I have to. But like if I was told to read a book that I really don't care about I wouldn't want to read it. If it was like Harry Potter book or something, I wouldn't, wouldn't try to read it.

The student may not care for reading in his courses but knows that reading is an important activity to pursue.

An average success (AS) student brought up the concept of having an understanding attitude of the teachers and processes within the school. He hinted to having knowledge of the system and what would help a student succeed academically in the school setting.

Fred (19) explained how knowing what a teacher wants and his teacher's intentions:

Well going here or having been here for like four years now, there's a lot of agitation, but you have to turn that agitation into uh you know, uh, understanding. Like a lot of teacher have their way of doing things and even though it bothers you and agitates, sometimes make you angry, you have to turn that into you know an understanding type of attitude of why they're doing that. They want to see you leave school, like with good grades, honors and all that because I'm pretty sure in their mind you have to think what would be the point of teaching the kids if they're not going anywhere."

Fred realized that he may have had to adapt to ways of doing that may not have been similar to his ways of doing. There was a level of adaptation that he had been able to recognize needed to be made in order to be academically successful. He also chose to believe and view

teachers as assistive even though they were asking him to do things differently than he may have wanted or thought that they should have been done. He developed a positive attitude towards how his teachers interacted with him which undoubtedly had a positive impact on his academic achievement.

#### 4.10.3.3 When did you develop this attitude?

Question twelve asked participants when they developed their attitude toward academic success. This question was asked to determine at what point students developed a positive or negative attitude to school and schooling and whether or not successful students develop this attitude during a particular developmental period. This question had significant implications on how to support African American males and when this support should be provided and/or increased. In Table 20 the responses to “when this attitude was developed” was categorized by unsure, elementary, middle school, ninth grade, tenth grade, eleventh grade and twelfth grade. Unsure was used because students did not directly answer this question or students did not provide a specific time as to when they developed this attitude.

**Table 20.** When Was This Attitude Developed?

| Grade Average Bands | Unsure | Elementary | Middle School      | 9 <sup>th</sup> | 10 <sup>th</sup> | 11th      | 12th |
|---------------------|--------|------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------|------|
| 1.0-1.99            | MS     | Hal        |                    | Joe             |                  | Xavier,   |      |
| 2.0-2.49            | LAS    | Greg       |                    | Quincy          | Kip, Will,       | Oran,     |      |
| 2.5-2.99            | AS     | Ian        |                    | Paul            | Ed, Tom,         | Sam, Umar | Fred |
| 3.0-4.0             | HS     | Art, Bob,  | Craig, Nate, Vince | Leo             | Don, Ron         |           |      |

At this point in the interview process students at each grade average range lamented not working as hard as they could have during their schooling experience. However, the many of the students reported developing a positive attitude toward success in grade ten or grade eleven. For students from the average success (AS) and high success (HS) groups a late awareness about having a strong work ethic and taking school seriously may mean the difference between attending a prestigious university versus a state college or junior/community college. However, the result for the minimal success (MS) and low-average success (LAS) groups was much more consequential. Without having an outstanding skill or athletic ability, these students almost do not have a shot at attending a state college or junior/community college without being enrolled in some remedial or support program.

#### **4.10.3.4 How has this attitude helped you?**

Question thirteen asks participants, “How has this attitude helped you?” This question sought to have participants reflect on their success attitude and which aspect of schooling this attitude has impacted. Based on the responses by the participants six key themes surfaced. Participants talked about their success attitude impacting them academically, systemically, and socially. They also reported that their success attitude helped make them more responsible, brought clarity/focus as well as things that did motivate them about to be more deliberate about their studies. Each participant gave a theme that they felt their success attitude either did for them or what they did as a result of wanting to be successful. Participant’s success impacts were connected to a theme. Based on their grade point average, students were given a color code: red, minimal success (MS) students; yellow, low-average success (LAS) students; green, average success (AS) students; and blue, high success (HS) students. This color code was added to provide a visual representation of

a particular grade point average range’s successful attitude would impact a certain aspect of their educational experience. Table 21 provides this visual.

**Table 21.** How Has This Attitude Helped?

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Academically     | Hal (18, MS) <b>Has helped student do better in math.</b>   |
|                  | Matt (18, LAS) <b>Doesn’t know if this attitude is having a positive impact on him academically because he still does not like reading.</b> |
|                  | Oran (18, LAS) <b>Helps him to stay on track. Assuming this is academically.</b>  |
|                  | Ed (18, AS) <b>Says this attitude has helped him stay on track.</b>   |
|                  | Ian (18, AS) <b>Helped me to get on the ball.</b>   |
|                  | Paul (18, AS) <b>Helped him to control his anger and get his work done.</b>   |
|                  | Tom (18, AS) <b>Get things done. Not sure what those things are.</b>  |
| Systemically     | Nate (18, HS) Talks about it has helped him not complain about rule changes and things that occur in school.                                |
| Socially         | Will (18, LAS) <b>Has helped him make connections with people.</b>  |
|                  | Ron (18, HS) has helped to know when to be serious and when to relax.   |
| Sports/Hobby     | Don (15, HS) talked about music making him do better in school  |
|                  | Joe (18, MS) <b>says that sports motivated him to start doing better in school.</b>   |
| Responsibilities | Xavier (18, MS) <b>has a baby and wants to do well to support his child.</b>  |
|                  | Greg (18, LAS) <b>Found coming to school a chore and this positive academic attitude helps him to keep coming.</b>                          |
|                  | Sam (18, AS) <b>Helped him to do his HW, balance and pay his bills.</b>   |
|                  | Leo (18, HS) Helped him to get a job.   |
| Clarity          | Kip (18, LAS) <b>Asks self why he doing what he does and this brings clarity and purpose.</b>   |
|                  | Quincy (18, LAS) <b>Open his eyes for real.</b>   |
|                  | Fred (19, AS) <b>Has helped see what to focus on to get a good job or go to college.</b>  |
|                  | Craig (15, HS) and Don (17, HS) Talk about plans for the future and in specificity where he would like to go and what he would like to do.  |
|                  | P22 Says that it helps him to focus on learning and what’s to come in the future.   |

Note. Art, Bob, & Umar did not have a response for this question.

What was quite interesting was that no high success (HS) students reported that their successful attitude helped them academically. However, over half of the average success (AS) students reported their success attitude as having a positive impact on their academic experience.

Actually more students reported that their success attitude had a positive impact on them academically and also gave them clarity and focus.

Greg (18) talked about how he changed his focus:

I used to have like a tunnel visions type of focus, could only see one thing and just go towards that, not paying attention to, not even paying attention to what's in the way, but this attitude helped me broaden my focus, pretty much like a full spectrum. I can see everything around me, and realized that it's not just a matter of me advancing, it's a matter of me advancing and make sure that no one gets in the way of me advancing.

It appeared as though depending on the student and his interests a positive attitude toward school and education had a positive impact in a variety of ways. It may have improved relationships, academics, increased clarity and focus or it may have positively impacted all of these aspects. It really depended on the student. A positive attitude toward school appears to have a positive outcome on school social capital.

#### **4.10.3.5 Who helped you develop this attitude?**

Question fourteen asked participants, "Who helped you develop this attitude?" This question was specifically designed to dig into this notion of the positive impact of relationships on a student's academic success. It was also asked to see if family relationships were more often reported by academically successful students. These relationships could be with relatives, school personnel, a mentor, community member or a friend. Based on the responses, categories were designed to capture the student's responses. Again, these responses were distinguished by grade point average range to determine the presence or absence of relationships at a particular grade point average band. Participants were placed in the column of their selection and were given an initial where applicable to denote who helped them develop their academic attitude. Table 22 captures

this information. In the parent column, mother and father are represented by the letter M and F respectively. If a student mentioned both parents a B was used to symbolize both parents. GM represents grandmother. Red responses represented a negative or minimal support from this source. Again the beginning letters were used to represent teachers, administrators, and counselors in the chart. However coach was spelled out to not confuse counselor and coach.

**Table 22.** Who Helped You Develop This Attitude?

| Grade Average Ranges   | No one   | Father or Mother | Siblings, cousins                              | Grandparent | Mentor, Teacher, Counselor, Coaches, Administrators | Friends  |
|------------------------|----------|------------------|--|-------------|---|----------|
| 1.0-1.99               | MS       | Hal              | Xavier-M, Joe-B                                | Xavier-GM,  | Joe-AT  | Joe      |
| 2.0-2.49               | LAS      | Greg Matt        | Quincy-M<br>Will-F,                            | Quincy-Bro  | Kip-GM,<br>Quincy-GM,                               | Oran-Men |
| 2.5-2.99               | AS       | Ian              | Ed-MFGM,<br>Sam-M, Tom-M<br>Umar-MF            |             | Paul-CT<br>Umar-Coach                               | Ed, Tom  |
| 3.0-4.0                | HS       |                  | Craig-M<br>Don-MF, Leo-M,<br>Nate-M,<br>Ron-MF |             | Don-T   | Leo      |
| <b>Total Responses</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>13</b>        | <b>1</b>                                       | <b>3</b>    | <b>5 (3 are teachers)</b>                           | <b>4</b> |

A total surprise was that four students from every grade average range except the high success (HS) students reported that no one helped them develop their successful attitude. They stated that this was something that they did for themselves. This unexpected response was intriguing and sad that these young men did not have support at home, from school, or from their community to do well and succeed.

Greg (18, LAS) answered the question of whether someone helped him develop his attitude:

No. It's the majority of things that define me or just pertain to me are very intrinsic.

Students gave more than one person as a contributor to their academic success. It was expected that family relationships would have a positive impact on a participant's academic success. Seventeen out of the twenty-four students selected a relative as the individual that helped them develop their success attitude. Of the seventeen that selected a relative, thirteen selected their mother, father or both parents as having helped them develop their success attitude.

#### **4.10.4 Attitude Summary**

This group of queries was asked to gain data to answer the research question: Do the attitudes and behaviors of successful African American males differ with grade point average? Based on the responses of the participants, successful people have positive outlook on life. Helping others and sharing their success was something that successful individuals appeared to like to do. In keeping with the resiliency research, successful people were positive about their future prospects and set goals that they were or had taken steps to achieve. A strong work ethic was essential to success. Parents and other relatives played an influential role in helping African American males attain academic success. Teachers, administrators and mentors also played a key role in academic success. Persisting and persevering with difficult subjects, racism, and social isolation were traits that academically successful African American males exhibited.

It appeared that one factor that leads to academic success was a close relationship with a successful person. High success (HS) students were able to better describe a successful male and almost always had an academically successful relative that supported them especially with systems knowledge to navigate the schooling process. The minimal success (MS) students did not appear to have relationships with academically successful individuals beyond teachers and



administrators. The minimal success (MS) students could benefit from increased interactions with academically successful people.

Characteristics that surfaced that were reported to be possessed by the academically successful were a sense of humor or commonness, individuality, a strong work ethic, a willingness to share, and focus. Minimal success (MS) students did not mention that successful people had a sense of humor, but the other grade average ranges did. This may be due to their limited interaction with academically successful individuals. However, the other participant groups stated that the academically successful person had a good sense of humor and acted very common/normal with people. In all grade bands there was the notion of the academically successful student having confidence and being able to act differently than his peers in order to maintain academic success. Succumbing to worrying about what others thought in order to fit in was seen as a hindrance to academic success. Academically successful students were viewed as hard workers who put their studies before leisure time activities and personal relationships. Some high success (HS) and average success (AS) students had foregone personal relationships and leisure activities to maintain their academic performance. The minimal success (MS) and low-average success (LAS) students looked back over their high school career and made a decision to focus on their academics as their senior year drew closer. This was often a detrimental decision. This all leads to focus. Academic success is the focus for the high success (HS) and average success (AS) students, whereas this focus comes late for the minimal success (MS) and low-average success (LAS) students. Focus brought about a perseverance and persistence even while experiencing difficult courses or being shunned by peers. All grade average ranges stated that their successful person helped many people and was easy to get along with.

## **4.11 RESEARCH QUESTION THREE: SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES**

### **4.11.1 Relationships**

This section examined the relationship structures, supports, and networks that were present or absent in the lives of the participants. It was hypothesized that academically successful males would have a family member that helped to support positive academic achievement. Below is an analysis of questions asked of the participants to determine the relationship that they possessed.

#### **4.11.1.1 Who should academic success be shared with?**

Question fifteen asked students about sharing academic success, who should academic success be shared with, and how to share academic success. In an attempt to find out how to reach students that were not successful, these questions were asked of the participants to gain possible strategies. Responses were written out by grade point average range to determine if students would provide differing responses according to their grade point average range. The results were captured in Table 23.

**Table 23. Sharing Academic Success**

| Grade Average Ranges                                    | Is academic Success Something to share?   | If yes, who would you share with?  | How should it be shared?   | Did a why come up?   |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| 1.0-1.99  | MS<br>Hal- Yes<br>Joe- Yes<br>Xavier- Yes   | Other African American males<br>African American students  | Tell them not to slack off.<br>Conversation/counsel.   | Many Black males are in fights and need support. African American students don't learn the same way white students do.   |
| 2.0-2.49  | LAS<br>Greg- Yes<br>Kip- Yes<br>Matt- Yes<br>Oran- Yes<br>Quincy- Yes<br>Will- Yes  | Students<br>Females because males don't like listening to other males.<br>Younger friends and siblings.<br>Everyone<br>Younger students  | Help them by getting to know them and if there are struggles in their home life or life in general.<br>Conversation/Counsel.<br>Assemblies/Meetings/counsel<br>Would share how to make the honor roll.<br>Sharing knowledge/information  | Students who have home issues struggle to stay focused in school.<br>If you don't share academic success you are holding back from the world.<br>Feels better by helping others. |
| 2.5-2.99  | AS<br>Ed- Yes<br>Fred- Yes<br>Ian- Yes<br>Paul- Yes<br>Sam- Yes<br>Tom- Yes   | Younger students & Peers not older than you<br>Share with cousins and friends.<br>Minorities (Native Americans, Japanese, Mexicans)<br>Everybody                                     | Telling folks about tutoring. Talking to and telling them about doing well in school and stay away from minimal ways to make money.<br>Not in an overbearing way counseling them about school.<br>Understand where kids are coming from religiously. Missing school to observe religious holidays. (Why is this only ok for Jewish and major Christian holidays?)<br>Tutoring<br>Reparations<br>Open a Rec center<br>Tutoring, not being selfish | Helping younger sibling do well makes me proud of myself.  |
| 3.0-4.0<br>Don didn't have a response to this question. | HS<br>Art- Yes<br>Bob- Yes<br>Cal- Yes<br>Leo- Yes<br>Nate- Yes. It depends on who wants to listen.<br>Ron- I guess.<br>Vince- Yes. | People who don't act bad in class.<br>Fellow students<br>Peers/ athletes<br>Younger generation.<br>Can teach younger and older. Like older people with the computer and cell phones. | Helping them to resolve issues.<br>Support groups like the gay/straight alliance.<br>Telling them about life's pit falls and how a teacher teaches.<br>Share information.<br>Encouraging people in your social circle.   | P18 Why not: person could become a competitor. Might become better than you.   |

This notion of sharing was abstract to a certain degree. However, the students appeared to tackle it in a thoughtful manner and often defined what sharing would look like when asked who

they would share academic success with and how they would share academic success. Many were happy to share their knowledge with others.

Ed (18) answers the interviewers question about sharing academic success:

Yes, definitely. I would definitely like if – I like talking to kids about it- like if I were to go to a middle school or elementary school, I wouldn't mind talking to kids about how to become successful, how I became successful, or whatever.

All the students believed that academic success should be shared. A small few felt that they did not want to be condescending while sharing and still a smaller number reported only wanting to support those who wanted support. Overall, everyone believed that academic success should be shared. The majority of the participants believed that success should be shared with younger students, African American males and their peers. The most reported way of sharing academic success was through talking and meeting. This talking would be about systems knowledge, academic content knowledge, counsel with problems and encouragement. The minimal success (MS) students wanted students to know that they should not slack off of their studies. No other group reported this as a response. It was interesting that the students believed that other males and students can be helped by talking to them, being that this was one of the complaints that students have about adults. Adults are reported to lecture and talk too much. The difference in what the participants reported had an undercurrent of concern, care, and urgency. This may also be because this group was less likely to receive the positive academic advice from their parents to help them be successful in school.

Oran (18, LAS) explains a way that he believes academic success should be shared:

I mean, more importantly I would say aca- hold hold meetings. That would be a good way to share. Hold and talk to the youth. Talk to us, high school period and you got to

really sink something into everyone's head. Because it's nowadays it's really it's hard to sink stuff like this into people's heads and they think about it like yeah this is what I need to look forward to, so that would be good. That would be good. Assemblies in school and talk about that. That'd be cool.

#### **4.11.1.2 What do you get from sharing academic success?**

With question sixteen students were asked what they get from sharing. This question was asked because helping others is an essential social activity. One recommendation to support positive academic achievement with African American males was to use older African American peers and/or mentors to provide tutoring and social skills and systems knowledge to younger African American males. This recommendation will be discussed in detail later. This question gets to the notion of support and supporting others. Helping others improves the helper's achievement, academic persistence, and attitudes (Jeffrey, 2005). There are also intrinsic benefits to helping as well as extrinsic. This question was designed to see if either of these benefits would be surfaced by the participants and to observe the responses of the participants at the different grade average ranges for similarities and differences. Table 24 captures excerpts of the participant's responses at the different grade point average ranges. Similar themes and answers were highlighted or colored coded to determine how often and at which grade average range these themes occur.

**Table 24.** What do You Get from Sharing?

| Grade Average Range |     |   |  |   |  |
|---------------------|-----|---|--|---|--|
| 1.0-1.99            | MS  | Feel like Changing someone's life   | Feeling of strength  |   |  |
| 2.0-2.49            | LAS | Hope that the individual will better themselves                           | Smile knowing I helped<br>Happiness  | If they start doing good, I feel good.<br>Doing something right makes me feel like I have accomplished something.<br>Gets self-respect for giving back. | A feeling of pride knowing that you're helping somebody. |
| 2.5-2.9             | AS  | Changing someone's life<br>Positive attention from relatives.             | I don't get personal satisfaction from helping others.<br>I feel good when I helped others.                | Feel better about myself because I am helping others. (Thinks this may be selfish.)   |  |
| 3.0-4.0             | MS  | Being able to help others.<br>Reciprocity. I give help then they help me. | Helps without looking for anything in return. Everyone needs a friend.<br>Happiness that I helped someone. | Makes me a better person knowing that I have helped someone.  | Good feeling. Likes to see others do well.               |

Students at each grade point average range most often responded that they believed that sharing academic achievement was a way of helping others and that helping others made them feel better about themselves in some way. Only one student in the study reported that he did not get satisfaction from helping others. However he did understand that if he did share his academic success that it would be helpful.

Ian (18) talked about not being motivated by sharing his academic success with others:

Not much. I'm not really that type of guy that gets like personal satisfaction out of like helping others, but I pretty much know that I'd be helping if I did stuff.

Another student believed that sharing his success could also hurt him because he would be supporting the competition.

Ron (18) talked about the competitiveness of helping in this manner:

Ron: Okay. It can be shared- academic /?/?/ or whatever can be shared so everybody can be successful, but then if it's shared then um if you're doing a job it just creates more complication against you if they um are running up in the same job careers and stuff. It's

up to you if you want to share it or not and if they have – they have the same ideas as you like at your job career.

Interviewer: I see. I see. So you're saying you may help somebody and they might do better than you?

Ron: Yeah they might like excel and um become better than you at what you're doing and take over your job. That's how I think of it a little it.

If in the education system we would like to see African American males more academically successful, we need to provide them with opportunities to be experts at topics and subjects in which they feel some success and comfort, like Math which was mentioned as a strength of some of the participants in this study. We could boost the academic esteem and academic engagement of African American males by providing them with an opportunity to give back to others.

Two students one from the average success (AS) group and one from the high success (HS) group brought up the notion of not really being motivated by helping others and competition. This was found to be an interesting mindset to be looked into as a research topic for future exploration. These two students would be considered academically successful. As students become more successful does this also make them take on an oppressive nature much like Paulo Freire (1993) describes? The prevalence of looking out for number one and competition should be further researched.

#### **4.11.1.3 Are there any problems with being academically successful?**

Question seventeen asked students if there were any problems with being academically successful. This question was asked to unearth if there was an issue that African American males at the different grade point ranges felt was significant enough to keep them from becoming as

academically successful as they could be in the school setting. Responses at each grade point average range were read and reread to sift out themes that surfaced during the interviews. Below is a list of the themes that were gathered from this response. An X was placed under each theme by grade average range response. Problems were added up at each grade point average range and under each theme. This was done to see if participants at a particular grade point average range would have more success problems than at another. A total of the problem themes were also gathered to see if any one theme was more pervasive than another. Where students stated that there was no problem with being academically successful, these response were considered non problems and subtracted from the problems or Xs reported at that particular grade point average range. For example, in the low-average success (LAS) student group there were nine total responses, but because two participants stated that they felt that academic success was not an issue only seven responses were counted in the “Total” column for the grade average range. Table 25 captures this information.

**Table 25.** Problems with Being Academically Successful

| Grade Average Ranges | No problems | Getting teased or called bad names | Balancing school/ academics and a social life.<br>Sacrificing social life. | People/ Teachers think you are cheating or that you are not as intelligent | Being in an unruly class or one where the teacher cannot relate well to the students | Acting intelligent upsets the teacher | Teacher expects you to be different | Having a cocky attitude and constantly comparing self to others | Not many role models of color | Stress or fear of trying or being successful | Being successful in one setting does not make one successful in another | Total |
|----------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|--|---|-------|
| 1.0-1.99             | MS          | X                                  | X  | X  |  | X                                     |                                     |   |                               |  |   | 4     |
| 2.0-2.49             | LAS         | XX                                 |  | X  |  | X                                     |                                     |   |                               | XX   |   | 7     |
| 2.5-2.99             | AS          | XX                                 | X  | X  | X  |                                       |                                     |   |                               | X  |   | 6     |
| 3.0-4.0              | HS          | X                                  |  | X  | X  |                                       | X                                   | XX  | X                             |  | XX  | 10    |
| <b>Total</b>         |             | 5                                  | 3  | 7  | 4  | 2                                     | 1                                   | 2   | 1                             | 3  | 2   | 32/27 |



From the responses, it was most often reported by the participants that there was a bigger issue with balancing academics with a social life. Participants reported that school gets increasingly difficult the older they get and the social scene also gets increasingly attractive and hard to navigate. Balancing these aspects of their reality was often difficult and frustrating.

Ian (18) talked about how difficult school became as he advanced:

It gets harder as the years go on. You get caught up in a lot of different things like high school, the social scene and what not, so there are a lot of problems and plus sometimes you just get a teacher who's really tough or you get a class that's really hard and you didn't know it was going to be that hard, pretty much have to struggle to get through it.

There were almost as many responses that stated that being academically successful was not a problem at all and actually reported that being academically successful developed positive feelings.

Leo (18) expressed his sense of pride about his accomplishments:

No, I don't think so. It feels good. I feels good. It definitely feels good.

The next area of large response was one in which participants felt or believed that their teachers did not see them as academics or intelligent. Participants who responded in this manner cite instances where they were accused of cheating or that they were only getting good grades because they were friends with a White student.

Art (12) talked about not getting credit for his intelligence:

Right... Let's say there are two teams like, they think that team is going to win because she's so smart, like all they do is copy off ah her and they'll win.

Ed (18) went on to describe this phenomenon:

Not really, well most of my friends are white, so whenever I see a group of Black people that I know, they'll like "oh you play in the snow" or "the only reason you get good grades, you hang with the white people and they do all your work."

One participant's response was worth noting, because he hinted to knowing that there was a system in place that in order to be academically successful, one had to know how to navigate. It was interesting to hear from two participants. They felt that showing their intelligence upset or negatively impacted their relationships with their teachers.

Greg (18, LAS) explained his upsetting experience:

And I've gotten good at this game over the years. I've been watching it since I was six. And literally realizing what's happening. It's all in your tone of voice, your choice of words, when you're saying, how you're saying, your body language, your demeanor. I'm reading far past whatever you're saying to me. I know how you feel. And because I know that, because I usually know the ultimate goal of an interaction once it happens, I calculate my steps. If I know you're trying to push me over that edge, I take a real deep breather. Real deep breather. Okay. It may get bad. I prepare myself for when it's going to get bad. It happens. And because I'm so intelligent even the littlest thing that you say will, I'll pick up on it. I'm offended.

From the responses of the participants, academic success far out-weighed any problems that it could have cause. Being academically non-successful was considered the bigger issue.

Joe (18) described problems and why it is important to be academically focused:

There can be problems because you're not like you're sometimes you seem to be just so focused on school that you can be outside of school and what's the only thing that's on

your mind is school. That's good and all because you're trying to achieve just pretty much achieve greatness in school, but at the same time, it can be like it can be a good thing because without education like I said before, you're not like you're not really doing anything with yourself.

#### **4.11.1.4 Sacrifices for Success**

Questions eighteen asked participants about the sacrifices that successful students had to make. Question nineteen asked about the sacrifices that successful African American males had to make. These questions were asked to determine if African American males schooling experience has a nuisance or difference that other racial groups may not experience as well as if African American males saw themselves differently from other students that they attended school with. The themes that came up most often for sacrifices that an academically successful student would have to make, were social life, not having fun, sports and time. Social life was noted each time participants made reference to not having a social life, not being able to socialize or hang out with their friends. Social life was also noted when participants talked about being viewed as lame, not cool, or not fitting in with friends. Not having fun was noted each time students made reference to clowning around in class or with friends. Participants reported that sports can take away from academic success so this was noted as a theme. Lastly, participants reported not having much time for anything but studying. This was why time was selected as a theme. Table 26 gathers this data.

**Table 26.** Successful Students vs. Successful African American Males

| Categories  | Themes   | 1.0-1.99<br>MS | 2.0-2.49<br>LAS | 2.5-2.99<br>AS | 3.0-4.0<br>HS |
|---|--|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Sacrifices a successful student will have to make   | No social life                                       | XX             | XXXX            | XXXXX          | XXX           |
|   | Not having fun                                       |                | X               |                |               |
|   | Sports   |                |                 |                | X             |
|   | No time/ no time due to working hard.                | X              | XX              | XXXX           |               |
| Sacrifices African American Males will have to make<br><i>One 3.0-4.0 participant stated that there were no problems with being an academically successful African American male.</i> | No Social Life                                       | X              | XXX             | XX             |               |
|   | Fun  | X              |                 | XX             | X             |
|   | Negative life style (drugs, gangs)                   | X              | X               | X              | X             |
|   | Romantic Relationships                               |                | X               |                |               |
|   | Being a representative of all African American males |                |                 |                | X             |
|   | Time working hard                                    |                |                 | X              |               |
|   | Time with family and certain friends and familiar    |                | XXX             | X              |               |
|   | Sports   |                |                 | X              |               |
|   | Not being able to show full extent of intelligence   |                | X               |                |               |

What was definitely interesting was that low-average success (LAS) and average success (AS) students believed that there were more problems with being academically successful than students in the minimal success (MS) or the high success (HS) student groups. The low-average success (LAS) and average success (AS) students cited 33 problems. Combined the minimal success (MS) and high success (HS) students cited a total of 13, which was less than half of what was cited by the low average (LAS) and average success (AS) student groups. The responses to problems that academically successful African American males face was intriguing and could be further explored as a study all by itself.

While responses for an average success (AS) and high success (HS) students were more concentrated on having to give up a social life and not having time for other activities in life, responses in the African American male category were more wide spread. African American males continued to bring up the notion of having to impress their friends or not caring if they impressed their peers. This theme did not come up in the high success (HS) group.

Ian (18) talked about how he felt about the opinion of others:

Probably sacrificed opinions of others because I guess like getting back to the ghetto label- I don't know why they just don't care. Maybe it's the way they were brought up or maybe for the approval of friends, just to be heard, or for attention but I guess it's sacrificing some time with your friends or time out to try to be more academically successful.

Sam (18) stated that they would have to sacrifice time with negative friends, time with family, and/or negative things like guns, drugs, and gangs:

Sacrifices that an African American male will have to make- no, it would be the same as any American. It would just all depend on what /you want to end up as/ like an African American male, I mean usually they grow up in the urban areas, money's not a lot of times relevant, I mean /it's just not there/, I mean so if you're an African American male, from some, a good home and you know, with decent money, I guess- /??/ the sacrifices but like if you're coming from like projects or something like that, then I guess what you're sacrificing then is you're sacrificing the time for family, friends, a lot of things. You're sacrificing your boys in the hood I mean like, you see guys that really aren't going anywhere /but you know you can't be like them, you have to be better/. And they ask you "where you been" and all that so you're sacrificing all those /what probably could be your life/. If you're not careful.

Ed (18, AS) explained his experience this way:

Well, it depends on where you're from. Like if you're from a really like we're in St. Claire, there friends, you know how St. Claire is, they would have to give up all that

gang-banging, violence, they would have to give up all that if they wanted to be academically successful.

The social life that an academically successful student gave up seems to be superficial, more focused on not hanging out with friends and being more focused on one's studies. The social life that African American males gave up appeared to be more complex. There was almost a giving up of an identity and taking on an entirely different persona.

Leo (18, 12) talked about changes he made to himself:

Uh, um hum. That's a good one. Uh not too many. As far as, I actually had another discussion about environmental awareness. Uh sometimes as an African American you want to play around you want to make certain jokes and stuff like that. But I think you have to have environmental awareness. Uh sometimes change yourself up. Not just changing your personality but be a different person at certain times so you can get an education.

#### **4.11.1.5 Who do African American males go to for support?**

Question twenty asked the participants who African American males go to for support. Resiliency Theory claims that relationships that students possess support or hinder their academic success (Jarret, 1997). In asking who do African American males go to for support, the researcher was attempting to determine if African American males had someone to connect to and if what the participants reported would confirm what was believed regarding Resiliency Theory. Support responses were examined at each grade point average range to determine if participants at varying grade point average ranges would have more or less of a particular type of

support. The results of this examination are in Table 27. An X was placed next to the support figure each time a participant mentioned it in their response.

**Table 27.** Who African American Males Go to for Support

| Support Figures                                    | 1.0-1.99 | 2.0-2.49 | 2.5-2.99 | 3.0-4.0 | Total |
|--|----------|----------|----------|---------|-------|
| A successful person or someone worth looking up to | X        | X        | XX       | XX      | 6     |
| Administrator, Teacher, Counselor                  | XXX      | XX       | XXX      |         | 8     |
| Self   |          | X        | XX       |         | 3     |
| Mother, Father, or other family member             | XX       | XXXXXX   | X        | XXXX    | 13    |
| Mentors, clergy, religious members                 | X        | X        | XX       | XX      | 6     |
| Friends  | X        | XXXX     | X        |         | 6     |

As in question 14, who helped you develop this attitude, a family member was who participants reported as the person they would most go to for support. This supported the resiliency theory research in that these participants most often reported their mother, father or other family member as a source of support and encouragement. What was interesting was that students often mention mother, father, and/or family members as a support but most often did not discuss how these family members supported them. However, when they talked about a mentor or school personnel they used detail to describe their support.

Tom (18, AS) described the support he received:

Let's see. Uhm. There's a, there's a significant amount of people. There's a, there's counselors. There's the, teachers can really be cool about things and having, having them help like tea, especially School C teachers. They've, they've been like a great help towards a lot of the students, especially African American students and helping them like you know get assignments in and a lot of stuff. But a, yeah so like teachers. If like, if your parents are really like, has a, has a good attitude about that stuff, your parents I mean. There's a lot of people. They're never alone.

Another interesting point was that high success (HS) students did not select school personnel, themselves, or friends as people that they would turn to for support and the minimal success (MS) students would not turn to themselves for support either.

#### **4.11.1.6 Are you Academically Successful?**

Question twenty-one asked students if they believe that they are academically successful. Question twenty-two asked for evidence for the response. At the time of the interviews it was not always known what a participant's grade point average was. The initial screening in question one only ensured that students were in the appropriate age range to participate in the study. It was hoped that the school personnel that selected the students for this study would select participants based on the criteria requested by the researcher. In two instances, seventeen year old students were selected for interviews. Once their age was determined the interview was concluded and the criterion was reiterated to the school personnel.

Again, participants were not asked to share their grade point average, however some did self-report one. Grade point averages were checked after students had interviewed utilizing the School District's Student Information Reporting System. Not having participants self-report a grade point average allowed participants to construct their own meaning of success, how this success occurred and when this success occurred. Success was defined by them not the school system or School Criterion. Table 28 lists the responses of participants to these questions.



**Table 28.** Are you Academically Successful and Evidence

| Grade Average Ranges |     | Are you?   | Evidence?   |
|----------------------|-----|------------|---|
| 1.00-1.99            | MS  | No         | Didn't reach goals. Wishes he could do HS over again.                       |
|                      |     | Yes        | Report cards, teachers  |
| 2.0-2.49             | LAS | Yes        | Progress reports and my mother seeing me read more.                         |
|                      |     | Yes        | Listen to me. Listen closely.   |
|                      |     | No         | My actions and behavior.  |
|                      |     | No         | Report cards.   |
|                      |     | Yes        | Report card and teachers.   |
|                      |     | Yes        | How I work. While taking a test I give and receive help.                    |
| 2.5-2.99             | AS  | Yes        | I'm going to college.   |
|                      |     | Yes        | Transcripts.  |
|                      |     | Yes        | My portfolio and I am trying to start my own business.                      |
|                      |     | Yes and No | Report card.  |
|                      |     | Yes        | Work ethic.   |
| 3.0-4.0              | HS  | Yes        | Grade report.   |
|                      |     | Yes        | I do what I am told and really try to be successful                         |
|                      |     | Yes        | Because I am sitting here right now.  |
|                      |     | Yes        |   |
|                      |     | Yes        | Decent grades and report cards.   |
|                      |     | Yes        | 4 years of work, transcripts, test scores and college acceptance letter.    |
|                      |     | Yes        | Report card and I am promise ready.   |
|                      |     | Yes        | Kicked the winning field goal in the football game and grade point average. |

Twenty-two of the twenty-four participants considered themselves academically successful. In actuality it can be considered that twenty-three of the participants believed they were academically successful, because one participant answered yes and no to if he believed he was academically successful. He believed that aspects of his performance were successful whereas others were not.

Paul (18, AS) wavered about his success in this way:

Um I would, but then I wouldn't. I do what I have to do to get my work done, but there are some times where I just like I just like there are certain days where I don't feel like

doing the work and I just /put it aside/ but I'll always come back to it the next day and do what I have to do, so I can maintain my grades and what I have to do. And then, then there's days where I just push it aside and don't feel like doing it.

Evidence of success were generally grouped into categories of grades (grades, transcripts, report cards), work ethic (reaching goals, working hard, behaving or acting a certain way, doing something positive), college (college acceptance, Promise Readiness, college attendance), People (believe teacher and/or parents would report them to be successful), and test scores. Most often students pointed to their current report card and grades as evidence of their academic success. Next they pointed to reaching their own goals or having a strong work ethic as evidence of their academic success.

#### **4.11.1.7 What do you contribute your success to?**

Question twenty-three was very similar to questions fourteen and twenty. This question asked, "Who or what do you attribute your success to?" This question was asked to again determine if there was a relationship that helped support a positive attitude toward school and schooling. The responses to this question were categorized and specified in Table 29.

**Table 29.** Who do You Attribute Your Success to?

| Grade Average Ranges |     | Relative   | School Personnel | Mentor/Clergy<br>successful person | Self   | Friends                          |
|----------------------|-----|--|------------------|------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1.0-1.99             | MS  | Hal- Mom and Family<br>Xavier -mother  |                  |                                    |  |                                  |
| 2.0-2.49             | LAS | Greg- mother and father loosely.<br>Kip- brother, family, God.<br>Matt- Mom, Dad, Family<br>Quincy- Mom<br>Will-Grandma                            | Quincy- teachers |                                    | Oran- Self and bad experiences.  | Matt- Friends<br>Quincy- Friends |
| 2.5-2.99             | AS  | Ed- parents<br>Fred-sister and siblings, aunts, especially uncles<br>Paul-cousin<br>Sam-mother, grandmother, aunts and uncles.<br>Tom-mom and dad. |                  | Sam-mentoring program.             | Ian- realizes no opportunity without education.<br>Tom- self and volunteerism. | Tom- Friends.                    |
| 3.0-4.0              | HS  | Art-Mom<br>Bob-Grandmother<br>Cal-mom and cousin<br>Leo-Grandmother and God.<br>Nate-Mom and grandmother<br>Ron-Parents, grandparents and cousins. |                  | Leo-Mr. Malcolm                    |  |                                  |

Note: Joe was not sure who he would attribute his success to.

As with questions fourteen and twenty, the family was most often cited as the reason the participants believed that they were successful. Students often selected more than one relationship as a contributor to their success. However, with this question school personnel were less likely to be seen if at all as contributors to academic success. This was alarming in that the Pennsylvania School Code 4.11b Purpose of public education states,

Public education prepares students for adult life by attending to their intellectual and developmental needs and challenging them to achieve at their highest level possible. In conjunction with families and other community institutions, public education prepares students to become self-directed, life-long learners and responsible, involved citizens (The Pennsylvania School Code: Academic Standards and Planning).

Only one minimal success (MS) student stated that school personnel helped contribute to their academic success. If schools are in the business of challenging students to achieve at their highest level it did not show up in this study. This finding has considerations regarding how effectively schools are supporting African American male students.

#### 4.11.1.8 Additional Information

Question twenty-four was the last question asked of the students. This question was asked in keeping with Critical race theory and capturing the voice of the minority instead of the majority. Question twenty-four asked participants if there was anything that was missed or anything that they would like to add. As with the other questions, themes surfaced. These themes were gathered in a data table by grade point average range. An X was placed by the theme each time a participant at a grade average range provided it. Table 30 lists these responses.

**Table 30.** Anything That Was Missed

|   | 1.0-<br>1.99 | 2.0-<br>2.45 | 2.5-<br>2.99 | 3.0-<br>4.0 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Change in academic environment  | X            |              |              |             |
| Realizing implications/high stakes of high school                           | X            |              |              |             |
| Don't believe stereotypes   |              | XX           | X            | X           |
| There is a purpose for everything   |              |              |              |             |
| Happy to be doing well in school.   |              |              |              |             |
| Nothing more to share.  |              | X            | XXX          | X           |
| Parents shouldn't let up on their student/Encouragement is important        |              | X            |              | X           |
| Stay focused, avoid distractions, work hard, be determined                  |              |              | XX           | X           |
| Need more role models of color to be visible, not just rappers and athletes |              |              |              | X           |
| Some courses are more difficult based on a student's background             |              |              |              | X           |

Other than having nothing more to say, participants most often stated that they must put aside racial stereotypes in order to be successful.

Greg (18, LAS) wished that African American students could define their own success:

My last thought would be that if, if we as a people, African Americans, particularly African American males, want to succeed, we have to disassociate ourself from America's view of success because we're not accounted for in that view of success.

Students also wanted to see a decline in stereotyping and see more role models outside of sports and the music industry.

Don (15, HS) spoke regarding role models in this way:

I didn't want to be in this setting. I didn't want to be in school period. Why would I want to come back and teach in one but you know those are like the jobs that you know African American males need to start taking. Just as much as not my saying that you know it should be a balance. Maybe that's what I'm getting at there should be a balance in success throughout you know the world actually instead of their being you know all white teachers or all black rappers. There should be a side of both. Um, it's just its really segregated in the measure of success and that goes back to some question you asked earlier but its real segregated in you know that measure in that way because you have a whole lot of people that you don't have a lot of black people. Or you don't have a lot of white rappers. You don't have a lot of white superstar basketball players and that's what you know most people are missing speaking from a White kid's aspect. I'm not white but I do know a lot of white people so (laugh).

Minimal success (MS) students had a voice of regret regarding their schooling experience. One student poignantly lamented his attendance at a public school. He talked about how a student could still be a failure even though their grade point average may not be the lowest it could be.

Hal (18, MS) described how the system works in regard to grade point average:

Yes, I wish just – this goes back to African American males- I wish a lot of them could start off not into a Pittsburgh public school, go to a Catholic school, or a private school, or any other school to see how the environment's there, what you have to do there, put pressure on them if they like the school, they can get kicked out or get, make their GPA for sports a little higher because the only thing you have to do now, it used to be a 2.0, 1.5 now. Only thing you have to do is really get three D's, three C's and you can get an E and still have a 1.5. So that and more studying, studying hard, make it mandatory for African American males for meeting after school, tutoring, if they want to stay in the school or any other school. I mean that's basically all.

Xavier (18, MS) longed for an earlier realization of how hard school is and how it impacted life beyond school:

What I'd like to say is just like I didn't notice how hard it was until like I said my junior year and now that I notice how important it is because I'm a senior year and it's close to getting to the real world, like how I grew up and how it's like I'm a man now so now it's time to get educated and become someone.

#### **4.11.1.9 Relationship Summary**

This group of queries was asked to gain data to answer research question three: Do academically successful African American males have family support systems that contribute to high academic achievement? High success (HS) and low-average success (LAS) students more often spoke of a parent or other close relative as the person they turned to for support. It was also interesting to note that high success (HS) students did not turn to teachers, administrators, or friends when they needed support. A member of every other grade average range reported that they would turn to a

teacher, administrator, or friends for support. For the highest achieving students, encouragement from parents and extended family helped set this group apart from their peers. When it came to who participants contributed their success to, more often parents were selected across all grade average ranges. In the low-average success (LAS) and average success (AS) student groups, after family, self and friends were seen as contributors to their academic success. It was interesting to note that minimal success (MS) and high success (HS) students did not claim friends or self as a contributor to their academic success. Average success (AS) and high success (HS) students reported that a mentor/mentoring program contributed to their academic success. In conclusion, family support is a constant theme that surfaces with the academically successful African American male. One point for future study might be the notion of losing one identity in order to be successful and when we say Black/African American male, what do we mean? Do African American males have to take on a different identity in order to be academically successful and if so, why? Some of the responses of the students hint to taking on a different identity in order to gain academic success. One wonders if there is a system at work that does not make room for the expression of race in academics (Carter, 2008).

#### **4.12 ANALYSIS SUMMARY**

Chapter four was analysis of the twenty-four questions asked of the participants in this study. Participants were selected using the Success Case Study Method to compare the responses of academically successful students to the responses of academically non-successful students. This was method was carried out to determine if there was a mindset or behaviors that academically successful students possessed that non-academically successful students did not.

Relationships are important but depending on the grade average range the type of relationships become equally important. Parental/family relationships were important but the type of support provided from these relationships was important. Family members have to be able to provide males with systems knowledge and accountability in order for academic success to be realized. Mentors and school personnel were able to fill in where parents may have been lacking. Parents were a key factor in the success of students in the higher grade point ranges, although students can achieve at the higher ranges without parental support. Students without parental support will need the assistance of a mentor or someone readily accessible. Students at the higher grade average ranges tended to select friends that may not be considered from their original peer group. These friends supported them with life issues as well as with school work. Low performing students tended to have friends that did not encourage them to be academically successful. Knowledge of the educational system and how to collaborate with teachers builds school social capital and increases the likelihood of becoming academically success. Academically successful students may not have always gotten along with teachers and administrators, but they did know how to navigate these relationships in order to be successful.

Focus, drive, and work ethic are essential for academic success. Students who lacked focus tend to not be able to set goals and have a plan for their future. They become like ships on the sea without sails or wind. The focus in this analogy would be where the students are attempting to steer their ship. The sails would be work ethic and the wind would be their drive to follow their goals and stay on task. Without these three components, students do not reach their full academic potential. It is hard to have work ethic and drive without focus. However, students can have focus without having a strong work ethic or drive to achieve more. Some students just do enough to get by and still are able to maintain decent grades.



## **5.0 HYPOTHESES**

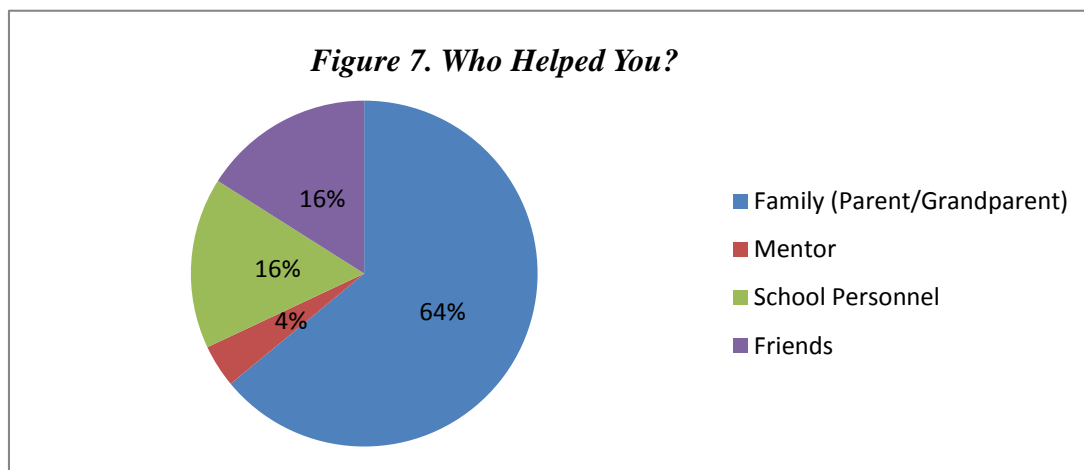
This section used the data to find evidence for or against the hypotheses that were made regarding this study. This study hypothesized that successful African American males have strong family relationships, positive attitudes, and an ability to communicate positively with others (Hampson, et al., 1998; Jarret, 1997). Academically successful African American males will also have an effort-based attitude toward school and see school as being important to their future success (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006). It was also hypothesized that African American males in racially integrated schools are more likely to be academically successful and were better able to develop a counter-narrative to support their academic success (Lee, 1999; Love, 2004). The findings based on the data are listed below.

## **5.1 HYPOTHESES**

Below is a summary of the hypotheses made in this study. The hypotheses were answered by using the data that was collected from the interview questions asked of the participants. The researcher aligned interview questions to hypotheses based on the correlations that were believed to exist between the hypothesis and the interview question. Using participant responses and data tables, summaries were compiled.

### 5.1.1 Strong Family Ties

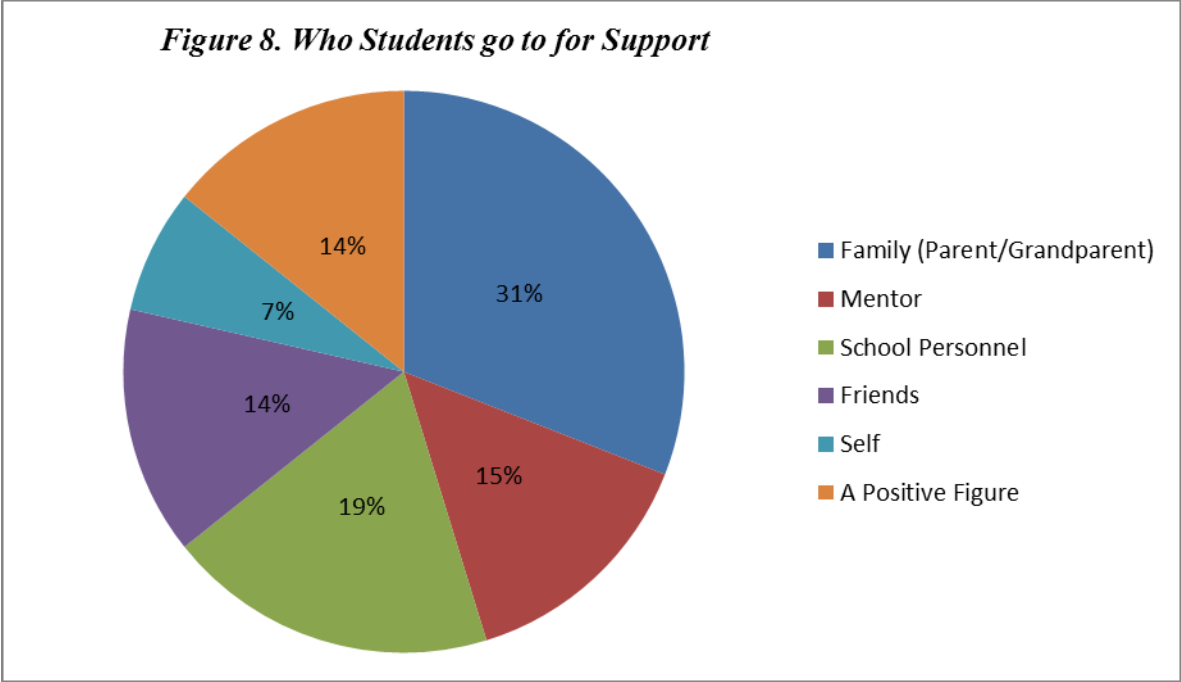
Using data gathered from questions 14, 20, and 23 this study attempted to prove that most often family relationships do in fact support positive academic performance. In question 14, when participants were asked who they go to for support, students in the average success (AS) and high success (HS) students most often selected their mother, mother and father, or a grandparent. Out of the fifteen participants in this grade average range three selected a friend, two selected a counselor/teacher, and one selected a coach. There were no high success (HS) students that answered that they helped themselves develop their academic attitude or no one helped them to develop their academic attitude. It should also be noted that participants were coded for more than one relationship that they believed had helped them to develop their positive academic attitude. A student could have selected a parent and a friend as in the case of participant 5 as seen in Table 22. Seventeen of the total participants selected a relative as the individual that supported their positive academic attitude. See Figure 7.



**Figure 7. Who Helped You?**

In question 20 students were asked who African American males went to for support. Again thirteen of the twenty four participants selected their mother, father, or another family member. As with question 14 students were coded for more than one positive relationship and may have selected a relative and a teacher. Students were not specific as to how their family members supported them but some did reference encouragement. It was interesting to see that average success (AS) and high success (HS) students did not feel that they developed their positive academic attitude in question 14, but in question 20 two average success (AS) students (see Table 27) stated that they looked to themselves for support. No high success (HS) students looked to themselves for support. Question 23 asked students who they contributed their success to. Students again were coded for more than one selection. Most often a relative was selected as the individual that these participants believed contributed to their academic success. In past responses, mother and father were most often cited. However, in this question siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents also were listed almost as much as mother and father (Table 29).

In this study, it appeared that students at the highest grade average ranges are supported by a relative or family member. This was not to say that students that did not have strong family support cannot achieve, it was simply noted that the highest achieving students in this study do cite family relationships as a factor contributing to their academic success. It should also be noted that minimal success (MS) and low-average success (LAS) students also selected parents and/or a relative as contributors to their academic success. Although students in this grade average ranges were lower performing, these were participants who self-reported that they were attempting to improve their academic performance and that most often they were encouraged by a family member. Figure 8 shows this representation.



**Figure 8.** Who Students Go to for Support

**5.1.2 Positive Attitudes**

To search for evidence of the employment of a positive attitude, questions 10, 11, 12, and 13 was examined. Interview queries and tables were used to gather information to determine address this hypothesis. Interview queries were used to determine how often participants talked about having a positive attitude. Positive attitudes were not necessarily discussed by participants using the terminology of “positive attitude”. The notion of having a positive attitude toward school was eluded to, but not often explicitly mentioned. In Table 19, only five students correlated their definition of attitude with a positive attitude. In Table 18 students talked about their attitude toward success in terms of being a hard worker and wanting to achieve. There was this notion that they were not allowed or would be considered disrespectful if they showed disinterest in a subject or course. This appeared to be correlated to the participants’ attitude toward success.

Matt (18) talked about his feelings toward reading:

Matt: My attitude. I don't, I don't know. Hum, I don't know. My attitude toward that stuff, I don't like showing it, because I feel like that is disrespectful.

Interviewer: You don't like what?

Matt: Showing that I don't like reading and stuff because it's disrespectful.

Matt (18) went on to dig into his feelings about reading:

I, I read. I read. I gotta read. Cause, I read cause I have to. But like if I was told to read a book that I really don't care about I wouldn't want to read it. If it was like Harry Potter book or something, I wouldn't, wouldn't try to read it.

Don (15) talked about his struggles with reading:

...just a whole bunch of things. I don't, cause I'm still the kind of guy I don't like to read. Although I have to and I'm in an AP literature course don't like to read. Don't tell my teacher.

It is almost as though students were hinting at school as a necessary evil. Students needed to do what they were supposed to, work hard to get to the next level albeit college, military or a career.

Quincy (18) talked about what he needed to do to be successful:

To me that means that you have achieved everything that you wanted to when it comes to your – your education, as far as like going to college, getting your degrees, making sure you handle yourself, as far as like school and knowledge. Period.

This portion of the hypothesis cannot be confirmed based on the interview data found within the transcripts. Students did not always possess a positive attitude toward school and expressed difficulty with particular subjects (Tables 18 and 19). Some courses were even thought

of as irrelevant. What students did realize was important was working hard to maintain good grades and complete assignments. It did appear that the high success (HS) and average success (AS) did have more positive attitudes about academic subjects than the minimal success (MS) and low-average success (LAS) peers.

### 5.1.3 Positive Communication

One of the components of Resiliency Theory is the characteristic of social competence- the ability to garner positive responses from others that establishes positive relationships with both adults and peers (Krovetz, 1999). Interview data and previous Tables were used to determine how students communicated with their peers and teachers. Question one was examined to see if students would note positive communication with teachers and peers as a sign of academic success. In Table 31 ways in which students talked about interacting with school staff and their peers was noted. Mostly, students spoke of success as working hard and achieving goals. They did not often speak of relationships as a factor impacting academic success.

**Table 31.** Question One and Correlations to Communication

| Grade Average Ranges                | 1.0-1.99<br>MS | 2.0-2.49<br>LAS | 2.5-2.99<br>AS | 3.0-4.0<br>HS |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Do what the teacher says            |                | X               | X              | XX            |
| Showing respect to school personnel |                |                 | XXX            | X             |
| Not being social                    |                |                 |                | XX            |
| Respect of teachers                 |                |                 |                |               |
| Friends like you                    |                |                 | X              |               |

Relationships with teachers did not appear to be cordial interactions, but in order for these participants to be successful they had to do what the teacher said and conform to school “ways” of doing things.

When responding to the question of sacrifices that African American males would need to make to be academically successful, minimal success (MS), low-average success (LAS), and average success (AS) students most often selected not being able to have a social life. High success (HS) students did not select not being able to be social as a sacrifice. However, there were some high success (HS) students that talked about having to develop a different or alternative peer group.

Ed (18) talked about developing a peer group other than his race:

Interviewer: People? Does it cause conflict with you? Does being successful cause any conflicts for you?

Ed (18): Not really, well most of my friends are white, so whenever I see a group of Black people that I know, they’ll like “oh you play in the snow” or “the only reason you get good grades, you hang with the white people and they do all your work.”

Don (17) talked about his peer group:

I have some bl African American male friends who don’t dress nice some of the most intelligent people I know. I hang out with them. I don’t hang out with people that are like me on the outside I hang out with people that are like me on the inside. That’s where it counts. You grow with people that are on the same level as you.

Several of the participants talked about negative interactions with a school staff member stating that teachers believed that they were cheating at one point or another or that acting intelligent upsets their teacher (Table 25). Based on this information it does not appear that this

portion of the hypothesis can be confirmed. Academically successful students have small peer groups or have developed different peer groups different from those that they might normally select for themselves. It is not that their interactions with their peers are negative as much as it is isolative. Interactions with teachers in some regards are positive, but also negative for students at each grade average range based on the responses of the participants. The social aspect of schooling for African American males appears to be one fraught with balancing one's notion of self and the stereotypical roles of African American males.

#### **5.1.4 Effort Based Attitude**

Another hypothesis was that African American males that would have an effort based attitude or strong work ethic toward school work and academic achievement. The participants in this study defined work ethic as doing everything you are asked to do in school, completing all assignments, staying focused and not being distracted. Table 17 shows that when talking about a successful male, participants most often described a key characteristic as hard work. This was consistent across the grade average ranges. Table 18 describes participants across grade average ranges as most often having an attitude of hard work and seriousness. Table 19 shows having a strong work ethic and completing assignments as the most defined characteristic of a successful attitude. Question 21 shows that the academic attitude most often helps participants across grade average ranges improve their academic performance and stay focused on their academics. Based on the participants' interviews a formula was created, Focus + drive (work ethic) = the amount of academic success (Figure 9). When participants began to focus on their academic success and allowed their drive for academic success to impact their work ethic, their academic success increased.





**Figure 9.** Academic Success Formula

There were students that have acceptable grade point averages and that did not perform to their potential. They lacked a strong work ethic. Students can have a work ethic that makes them want to complete projects assigned, or an ethic to just do enough to get by, or one that chooses to do nothing at all.

Don (17) talked about the influence his parents had on his grades:

I always got really decent grades ah um no Ds if I got a C I got in trouble. Like my house was really structured.

What the high success (HS) students had all along was focus. His parents made sure that his grades would not drop below a C in most instances, but he still reported that he was not working up to his potential. What his focus lacked was drive and work ethic.

Craig (17) defined buckling down and increasing his drive and work ethic:

I was focused on you know getting my name out there with all the girls and I, I started to get good at it but and at that time I was also still cursing so it just made me like the most funniest cutest boy that a senior girl has ever seen and I'm a freshman. So and then it gets into the aspect of me just really realizing that like this was almost it and I didn't hit

that, that didn't hit me till the beginning of or the end of my 10<sup>th</sup> grade year that I really need to buckle down and then I wish it would have hit me way earlier.

Students in each grade point range talked about a moment of realization that school was almost over and that they were not working up to their fullest potential during their 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade years of high school. Minimal success (MS) students appeared to not have focus, drive or a work ethic until they reached their junior or senior year. It was around the junior year when assessment scores, college applications, and graduation became an inevitable reality. This may have caused the increased focus on academics and the surge in effort to improve grades and assessment scores. Minimal success (MS) students were severely impacted by this late focus on academics and increased work ethic. Because their grade point average was so low, even if they did make the honor roll for successive report periods toward the end, this was often not enough of an improvement in their grade point average and knowledge base to prepare them for college. Students lose focus for many reasons, like not liking a particular subject or having difficulty in a particular subject.

Matt (18) explained when he began to lose focus, drive and decreased work ethic with school:

I know it, well when... It a, I probably middle school, my first year of middle school. When the words started getting like a little bigger. I stopped, I don't know. I just don't like reading out loud no more.

Matt (18) continued to talk about how his focus, drive and work ethic would have increased by only taking a course that he preferred over those he did not:

If I could just take trig, math classes, I think I'da been, been out of school. I don't like world history, I don't like history either. Even though it's my history. I should know. But it, it ain't. Well I figure the stuff that I'm getting taught, I really ain't interested in. If it

was more other history, like not just because of the white, but like black and I probably, probably, probably pay more attention but it just ain't, that history ain't floatin my boat. I don't like it.

Academically successful students were able to maintain focus, did just enough to get by even though they did not always like a topic.

Don (17, HS) explained his struggles with work ethic, focus and drive below:

I know there is different things that I could have done you know in the past and up to present that you know could further thrust me toward that goal but it comes to an application and a work ethic thing that you know it takes a lot of things. It's not one thing you can just (snap) snap and pick up and do you have to. You know practice and a work ethic actually sitting down reading a book rather than spark noting the whole thing. So it's a it's just a basic work ethic thing that most guys miss. African American males we miss so.

Participants realized that the amount that they did or did not work directly impacted how successful they would be in school. They were able to speak specifically to examples of what hard work looked like and what it did not. They were also able to explain actions and behaviors that were in conflict with a work ethic. They described focus and drive as contributors to a strong work ethic. Across the grade average ranges participants knew that academic success hinged on having work ethic. This would confirm an effort based attitude as a characteristic of positive academic performance.

### **5.1.5 Development of a Counter-Narrative**

Lastly it was hypothesized that students that attend schools with diverse populations would be better able to develop a counter-narrative that supports positive academic achievement (Lee, 1999; Love, 2004). A counter-narrative situates the minority voice perspective in the forefront. Some counter-narratives that surfaced in this study related to how African American males believed they were viewed by society. Participant counter-narratives emphasized an ability to “make it” despite what the world believed in them and not being a criminal or a thug as well as being an academic and going to college.

Examining this counter-narrative across schools felt more subjective but question 3, if success was different for white students than black students was used as a marker. Although Table 16 was useful in determining how the participants viewed schooling and race, this question was not aggregated by participants. However, fifty-eight percent of the responses believed that success was not different for white and black students. It was also split across grade average ranges about which students believed that academic success was different by race. This was captured in Table 32. Seven participants at integrated schools believed that success was different according to race and seven participants in integrated schools believed that success by race was not. However, in predominantly black schools, more participants believed that race did not impact academic success. Although only ten of the participants attend a predominantly African American School, there were still more participants of this group of ten that believed that race did not impact academic success.

**Table 32.** Race Difference by Participant/School

| Success different for white students than for Black? |          | Integrated school      | Predominantly Black     |
|--|----------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>   | 1.0-1.99 | Hal, Joe, Xavier       |                         |
|  | 2.0-2.49 |                        | Oran                    |
|  | 2.5-2.99 | Ed, Ian, Sam, Tom      |                         |
|  | 3.0-4.0  |                        | Leo, Nate               |
| <b>No</b>  | 1.0-1.99 |                        |                         |
|  | 2.0-2.49 | Greg                   | Kip, Matt, Quincy, Will |
|  | 2.5-2.99 | Fred, Umar             | Paul                    |
|  | 3.0-4.0  | Craig, Don, Ron, Vince | Art, Bob                |

From the participant responses stereotypes of White and African American students, their neighborhoods, wealth and work ethic were cited.

Xavier (18, MS) stated reasons for poor achievement:

Cause it's not that like Black African Americans don't want to learn, I think it's just by standing in the hallways, you know, like not being um, not having that discipline, your parents telling you, you know, it's really important to get your education, so I think like maybe white people's parents push them more harder than Black parents so.

This was an interesting quote because it came from a minimal success (MS) student. Although his grade point average was low he claimed that his parents supported his academic success and that he had a strong work ethic, although this work ethic was recently developed. It made one wonder if he speaking from his own experience or from that of what society says about African American males. Based on the amount of students that stated that race did not have an impact on academic success, there was still not enough information to make the determination of whether or not students in integrated schools were better able to develop a counter-narrative

voice than students that did not attend integrated schools. This hypothesis would need to be studied further so it was believed to be inconclusive.

### 5.1.6 Hypotheses Results

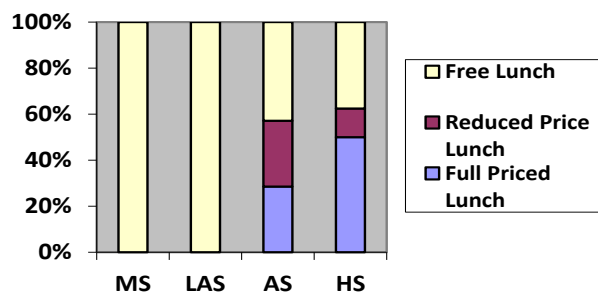
From this study, Table 33 shows that only two of the hypotheses were able to be confirmed: Strong family ties support academic achievement and students that are academically successful have an effort based attitude. Although strong family ties were a characteristic of academically successful students, other relationships also proved to be of value. Relationships with mentors and with some school personnel were beneficial to some participants. So although strong family ties were proven as a factor for success in the lives of this participant group, it appears that the influence of a positive adult would also be factor for academic success.

**Table 33.** Results of the Hypotheses

| Correlation to Research Questions | Hypotheses: It is hypothesized that Academically Successful African American Males will have. | Supported | Not Supported | Cannot draw a conclusion |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Question 3                        | Strong Family Ties  | X         |               |                          |
| Questions 1 and 2                 | Positive Attitudes  |           | X             |                          |
| Questions 1 and 2                 | Positive Communication  |           | X             |                          |
| Questions 1 and 2                 | Effort Based Attitude   | X         |               |                          |
| Questions 1 and 2                 | Development of a Counter-narrative to support positive academic achievement                   |           |               | X                        |

## 5.2 SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS INDICATOR

It was noted that there were six students that received full price lunch. Of these six students they were all average success (AS) and high success (HS) students. Full priced lunch students would not be considered economically disadvantaged according the Federal Income guidelines. There were three students that receive reduced priced lunch. These students were also average success (AS) and high success (HS) students. In total there were nine students that would not be considered economically disadvantaged. All of the minimal success (MS) and low-average success (LAS) students from this study met the Federal poverty guidelines (see Table 11). Due to the size of this study it should not be concluded that wealth or lack of is a determinant of academic success. Every low performing student could be considered one who lives in poverty. It is equally important to see that six of the thirteen (46%) of the average success (AS) and high success (HS) students also met the poverty guidelines. See Figure 10. It should not be assumed that the factor of wealth or lack of wealth is a determinant of academic success. Academic success should be examined by comparing students in similar socio-economic ranges and then examining where race factors into academic performance (Singleton, 2006).



**Figure 10.** Lunch Status

### 5.3 HYPOTHESES SUMMARY

To summarize the findings, revisiting the Success Case Methods approach would necessitate a comparison between the academically successful males and the non-academically successful males. In regard to attitude and race, non-academically successful males see race as a barrier to positive achievement. Academically successful males also viewed race as a barrier, but were better able to apply a counter-narrative spin to racial stereotypes and negative images. Academically successful males always possessed an academic focus whereas non-academically successful males did not. What both groups often lacked was a drive and work ethic. This drive and work ethic was sparked by the impending fact of graduation for both the academically successful and non-academically successful. However this may have been the first time that non-academically successful students focused on positive academic achievement. It is the focus on positive academic achievement that really stands out in this study of success. This focus on success appeared to hinge upon a social component of family support and school influence. Males that had the support of their parents to understand the “school rules” and “system” were more likely to be successful.



## **6.0 SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

This primary goal of this study was to look at the schooling and educational perspectives of twenty-four African American male student's perspective of academic success. From the participants it was hoped that research would determine what accounted for the success of a few African American males. It was also hoped that the attitudes and behaviors that consistently appeared in African American males who perform successfully in the urban school environment would be discovered. Do the attitudes and behaviors of successful African American males differ with grade point average and do academically successful African American males have family support systems that contribute to high academic achievement? In keeping with Critical Race Theory, it was important to quote the participants and use their voice and terminology as much as possible.

Chapter one provided an introduction to the plight of the academic performance of African American males. It addressed that fact that African American males are most likely to be suspended, end up in special education, be retained, and/or incarcerated. No Child Left Behind has been insufficient to address this issue. There is a large amount of research that focuses on the failure of school aged African American students but not much that focuses on those that have beaten the odds and became successful. Academically successful and non-successful students were selected to participate in this study to determine if there was a factor or factors that higher achieving students possess that lower performing students do not. Students were selected using a

Success Case Methods strategy that compares successful cases to non-successful cases. The theoretical framework for this study was Critical Race Theory and Resiliency Theory.

Chapter two provided the literature to support and further discuss the issues associated with the academic performance of African American males. This literature reviewed the various theories used to discuss African American males and academic success. The two theories that this study has leaned on heavily was Critical Race Theory and Resiliency Theory. Critical Race Theory focuses on the impact of race on academic success. It also sought to examine the pervasiveness of racism within systems and structures within the educational system. It calls out the importance of hearing the voices of the minority over the majority. Resiliency theory looked at a set of factors that support academic success in individuals. These factors include positive relationships, problem solving skills, autonomy, and sense of purpose and future.

Chapter three discussed that this study is a qualitative study that uses the lens of Critical Race Theory to examine academic success among African American males. The participant observation case study method was used to gather interviews from twenty four African American males. Success Case Methods was used to select the participants. Data was collected in the form of transcribed interviews, information about the student's age, grade, grade point averages, socio-economic status, and assessment score performance level. Once the interviews were collected, the data was analyzed used Applied Thematic Analysis.

Chapter Four presented the data of the twenty-four participants. Based on the interviews, the twenty-three questions asked of the participants were analyzed. Themes that surfaced from these questions were also analyzed. The desire of this analysis was to mine what factors lead to academic success for some African American males and not for others. While many of the conclusions drawn did not use statistical analysis, in keeping with Critical Race Theory, the

voices of the participants were used to draw conclusions and make recommendations. There were a few instances that themes surfaced that have importance. These themes may not have been thoroughly explored in this study, but other studies could be conducted to expand and expound on the current literature base regarding this important issues. The three research questions that guided this study set out to investigate the following questions:

1. In spite of the achievement gap that exists in urban schools/school systems between African American and white students, what currently accounts for the success of a few African American males? What are the attitudes and behaviors that appear in African American males who perform successfully in the urban school environment?
2. Do the attitudes and behaviors of successful African American males differ with grade point average?
3. Do academically successful African American males have support systems that contribute to high academic achievement?

Chapter Five reviewed the hypotheses that were made in this study. This study hypothesized that successful African American males would have strong family relationships, positive attitudes, and an ability to communicate positively with others (Hampson, et al., 1998; Jarret, 1997). It also hypothesized that academically successful African American males would also have an effort-based attitude toward school and see school as being important to their future success (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006). It was also hypothesized that African American males in racially integrated schools are more likely to be academically successful and were better able to develop a counter-narrative to support their academic success (Lee, 1999; Love, 2004). Only two of the hypotheses were able to be confirmed: Strong family ties support academic achievement and students that are academically successful have an effort based attitude.

## **6.1 DISCUSSION AND MAJOR FINDINGS**

Chapter five explains the major findings, recommendations to support African American males and conclusions of this study. It was hypothesized that academically successful African American males would have strong family ties, positive attitudes and an ability to communicate positively with others (Hampson, et al., 1998; Jarret, 1997). Further it was hypothesized that they would also have an effort based attitude toward school and see school as being important to their future success (K. Griffin & Allen, 2006). It was also hypothesized that African American males in integrated schools would be more likely to be academically successful and are better able to develop a counter-narrative to support their academic success (Lee, 1999; Love, 2004). This section will use the data collected from the interviews to compare Resiliency Theory characteristics, Critical Race Theory Tenets and the participants' voice/counter-narrative to summarize the findings. With each resiliency theory characteristic, a Critical Race Theory tenet will be crossed referenced along with quotes from a sampling of the participants.

### **6.1.1 Resiliency Characteristics and Critical Race Theory Tenets**

The researcher took the Resiliency Characteristics and Critical Race Theory Tenets and examined where these two Theories might have connected. Data was also examined to determine how students exhibited Resiliency Characteristics. Resiliency Characteristics are defined as (Krovetz, 1999):

- a. Social competence--the ability to elicit positive responses from others, thus establishing positive relationships with both adults and peers.

- b. Problem-solving skills--the ability to plan, based on seeing oneself in control and on being resourceful in seeking help from others.
- c. Autonomy--a sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently and exert some control over one's environment.
- d. Sense of purpose and future--having goals, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, and a sense of a bright future.

The Critical Race Theory Tenets (Carter, 2008; Singleton, 2006) are defined as:

1. The counter story- There is significance of experiential knowledge and the use of storytelling to analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render African Americans and other minorities one down.
2. The permanence of racism- Racism is normal in American society and CRT provides strategies for exposing racism in its various forms.
3. Whiteness as property- Critical Race Theory challenges traditional and dominant discourse and paradigms on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to affect people of color.
4. The critique of liberalism- Critical Race Theory challenges liberal society's claims to "colorblindness", neutrality of the law, and change in systems and institutions that make positive steps for minorities incremental. This tenet makes a commitment to social justice for people of color.
5. Interest convergence- As long as an institution or system can see the benefit or value of helping a minority it will.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to explain how a Critical Race Theory Tenet is connected to a Resiliency Theory characteristic. Although there are five Critical Race Theory Tenets only three of them were connected to the Resiliency Theory characteristics. The two Critical Race Theory Tenets that were not connected to a Resiliency Theory characteristic were: The critique of liberalism and interest convergence. Although all Critical Race Theory tenets can be examined from a majoritarian/minority perspective, critique of liberalism and interest conversion are less likely to be influenced by African American male students. Meaning systems and power structures are more likely to recognize the necessity of ensuring that African American students are successful due to mandates and regulations due to its interest in maintaining funding and possibly secondly ensuring that all students achieve. This would be an example of interest convergence. Administrators and teachers are more often to demonstrate a critique of liberalism by being color blind and/or taking on a social justice role for students of color. It is not as though African American males or students of color cannot make changes for themselves in the education system. As of yet they have not been empowered in mass numbers to do so. However, policies, mandates, systems, authorities and structures can impact a critique of liberalism with more influence than the students that they serve. Below Table 34 shows how the researcher connected Resiliency Theory and the Critical Race Theory Tenets.

**Table 34.** Resiliency Theory and Critical Race Theory Connections

| Resiliency theory  | Critical Race Theory  | Researchers connections  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Social competence--the ability to elicit positive responses from others, thus establishing positive relationships with both adults and peers.</p> | <p>Whiteness as property- Critical Race Theory challenges traditional and dominant discourse and paradigms on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to affect people of color.</p>   | <p>In order to connect with a predominantly white teaching staff and administration African American males have developed a social competence to build positive relationships with white staff members.</p> <p>In regard to same race peers, when successful African American males were able to recognize that peer pressure was a problem, they were smart enough to figure out that it existed and that they should do something healthy/positive about it and they were able to.</p> |
| <p>Problem-solving skills--the ability to plan, based on seeing oneself in control and on being resourceful in seeking help from others.</p>         | <p>The permanence of racism- Racism is normal in American society and CRT provides strategies for exposing racism in its various forms (Carter, 2008; Singleton, 2006).</p>   | <p>Racism is a continued problem/issue for people of color in general and more so for African American males. Successful African American males have been able to position racism neither as a barrier or negative emotional paralyzer. Successful African American males do not allow racism to hinder their academic pursuits or define their character. They develop strategies to work around racism.</p>  |
| <p>Autonomy--a sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently and exert some control over one's environment.</p>                    | <p>The counter story-There is significance of experiential knowledge and the use of storytelling to analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render African Americans and other minorities one down (Carter, 2008; Singleton, 2006).</p> | <p>Successful African American males are able to gain friends and supports outside of their racial groups and are comfortable doing so. They have developed a counter-narrative that positions them as more than their race.</p>   |
| <p>Sense of purpose and future--having goals, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, and a sense of a bright future.</p>                 | <p>Whiteness as Property, Permanence of Racism, and Counter-narrative</p>   | <p>Sense of Purpose and how one looks at the future is impacted by one's ability to positively navigate "whiteness" and the permanence of racism as well as their ability to develop a counter narrative. Successful African American males are able to positively navigate these tenets and clearly can articulate a bright and successful future.</p>  |

### **6.1.1.1 Social Competence and Whiteness as Property**

Average success (AS) and high success (HS) students are the first to talk about teachers and others liking you and having respect for the teachers, administrators, and other school staff. Teachers are seen as helpers, where with lower performing students teachers are not mentioned. There is also a balance with having friends but not being too social. Participants in this grade average range speak of having friends that they can relate to in class. There is also a tension between being popular and still doing well in school. Participants in this grade average may not have always gotten along with their teachers but they do appear to possess social competence/school social capital. They see themselves as insiders of a social network. For successful students, school is for them. Not just for white students.

Fred (19) added his view of this sentiment:

Basically, good attendance, straightforward attitude, all the teachers and higher you know- what's that word uh- people of importance here, like teachers, staff, even janitors and what not, be respectful of all of them. Attend class, a lot. You- doing like doing all your work even if it's the little things like if you get good grades, but you still have other work you feel like you shouldn't need to do because you already have a good grade, you just do those anyway because that's just that deceives you and if you have good grades and you don't do it, it goes down like really quickly, so if you miss anything that they're looking for. Do all of your stuff no matter what. Turn them in on time. Follow deadline and basically have a good GPA.



Paul (18) talked about following rules and procedures like this:

As in like follow the rules, like your school rules, follow the directions that the teachers give you, the work that the teachers give you, the homework the teachers give you, just like obey the staff and people around you inside the school.

Craig (15) completed the view of this sentiment in the way:

I mean initially the whole get good grades and um not focus on being social too social but still having friends that you can relate to in classes and that will help you through it. Friends who are there to also help you succeed and teachers who are willing to work with you also just being in a good environment and being successful in school like knowing that that school will shape you to have a future n know where you want to go so.

#### **6.1.1.2 Problem Solving Skills and the Permanence of Racism**

Being able to see oneself in control and on being resourceful in seeking help from others appeared to be a weakness in the responses of minimal success (MS) students. This was the group that was almost fatalistic and firmly believed that success was different for Black students than for whites. They also believed that white students had a family/neighborhood/financial leg up on life over Black students. Racism was a barrier for the minimal success (MS) students that was almost impossible for them to hurdle. There was a notion of these factors discharging this group from the responsibility for changing their circumstances. Below are three responses from this grade average range in regard to why African American students do not achieve.

Hal (18) talked about why he believed white students were better school achievers:

Yes because when you're younger, for a white student, they're they're getting raised some of them are getting raised up on like when they're younger do their homework. Um what else, they're just around a lot of success.

Hal (18) went on to talk about racial differences in this way:

Okay, for white students, usually their parents will be mad if their if their if their child got a C, C-. For a Black student, their mom will be proud for some of them if they had a D. Like a D, a D+, some just a passing grade, not an E.

Joe (18) talked about his perception of race and achievement in this way:

Yeah. /That/- yeah definitely. And there- yeah because like wh- when you look at it um the African American race is really like just we tend to need more help on with lessons, class work, and all that other type of stuff. With the um actual the um whites it's pretty easy because they sit there, pay attention, and we actually get a little distracted. African American students actually get distracted easier than the white students. Whether you're tapping on the desk or singing a song that's in your head, not paying attention, that's pretty much what happens.

From the minimal success (MS) students' perspective it almost appeared as though African American students had so many obstacles that white students did not have that keep African American students from achieving. Although the reasons for non-success may exist for some African American children, they do not exist for all and some of these reasons could also be found to exist within other racial groups. Students were also not able to combat some of these reasons for non-success. Whereas successful students mention stereotypes around race but talked about it in a more positive way. The successful student's attitude toward the stereotypes was one of recognition and one of doing, not defeat. This certainly appeared to be a problem solving disposition.

Sam (18) sorted through race and stereotypes fluidly:

Oh yeah. Success for Black students definitely is than for white students. It definitely is different because we have- we have something to prove. I mean we have something to make of ourselves. We were from people from Africa. We've been through- we've been put through all this force, all this years of white America oppression, so we go from slavery to Civil Rights Movement and now to I guess- I guess we're equals in certain cases but we're still not equal, so we're pushing the envelope. We're trying to get- we're trying to get there, so we have a lot of history. We have a lot of pride that goes into our success.

### **6.1.1.3 Autonomy and a Counter-Narrative**

Students in the average success (AS) and high success (HS) students appeared to have peer groups that were more supportive of them and their academic achievement than students that were low performing. These students developed a counter-narrative about themselves and the people they were linked to. They talked about having friends outside of their normal peer group. This grade average range seemed to be able to have their own identity, act independently of their normal peer group and exerted some control over the environment they placed themselves in. Friends for the average success (AS) and high success (HS) students were seen as positive and supportive. Below an average success (AS) student gushed about his friends and the support they provide him.

Tom (18) talked about the support his friends provide:

My friends too. They, my friends are great. Like they're there for me if I like need help or, and stuff like that. If I'm feeling down, like about school and stuff they're there to talk and I, I owe a lot to them.

Craig (15) student talked about the influence of his friends:

I have a lot of good friends I have been to middle school with 98% of the school (laugh) population they know me I joke a lot that we have a great learning environment but that still doesn't change the fact that I'm the only African (laugh) American male CAS student.

It appeared that this student made friends outside of his racial group, but they none the less were supportive of him.

Ed (18) talked about how his black friends put down the fact that he hung out with white friends:

Not really, well most of my friends are white, so whenever I see a group of Black people that I know, they'll like "oh you play in the snow" or "the only reason you get good grades, you hang with the white people and they do all your work."

These young men appeared to have gotten friends in all racial groups and were developing an identity that may not be typical to their racial group.

Don (17) framed it in this manner:

I have some bl African American male friends who don't dress nice some of the most intelligent people I know. I hang out with them. I don't hang out with people that are like me on the outside I hang out with people that are like me on the inside. That's where it counts. You grow with people that are on the same level as you. The people that you pull people and you grow around people that's higher than you and you know so it's like something that I've been taught at home.

Minimal success (MS) and low-average success (LAS) students had friends that were less supportive. They had not developed autonomy away from same race peers to achieve success. They also wrestled with developing a counter-narrative to the negativity of their peers. This is where positive parental support and influence became essential.

Oran (18) student talked about attempting to go to college and what his friends told him:

Because my 9th and 10th grade I did horrible. And it was for me- I went on a Black HBC college tour- went on that last year, my junior year, and that really- some people, some of my friends tell me it's too late for you, you ain't got the Pittsburgh Promise, you might as well stop looking at college. My mom told me different, but that really opened my eyes up. I went around- we went to about 8-10 colleges down South and up North, Philly.

Oran (18) went on to say:

My last report I had honor roll. 3.4. Close to high honor roll. This report I'm aiming for a 3.5, a 4.0 to be honest but at least I want a 3.5, but about the college tour, that really opened my eyes like and they like every college you went to they kept – each college was saying like to get in here you have to at least it was like a 2.6, like Morehouse, I really wanted to go there.

His friends did not encourage him to push further and this is something he said his mother told him to push ahead with. If he would have listened to his friends, he would have never attended the college tour. This was where parental and school support made a huge difference. Minimal success (MS) and low-average success (LAS) students were less likely to be autonomous and develop a counter-narrative and more likely to have friends who settled with mediocre grades with a focus to not completely fail.

Hal (18) hinted to the influence of social groups over the expectations of family and the impact this choice had on his grade point average:

Okay, for white students, usually their parents will be mad if their if their if their child got a C, C-. For a Black student, their mom will be proud for some of them if they had a D. Like a D, a D+, some just a passing grade, not an E. And their GPA, if their parents, or

when I was younger, my mom she never didn't really want nothing under a C and I really never got nothing under a C. When I got older, I tried to fit in and it just made me like my first couple years of high school, I tried to fit in and tried to be somebody that I'm not and then I look back at it, I've been looking back at it for the last couple weeks, and was like I wish I never did that, so my success, I didn't have a lot of success in high school, but if you go to a white student, and their success, they can have a little bit of fun, but they already know what they have to do. Like they know that they have to get 2.8, 3.0 GPA or higher through 4 years, but for African American, they're in the hallways. That's their success. They're in the hallways, cutting class, going to every lunch, skipping school, want to get suspended, want to get in-school.

African American participants in this study were more likely to see other African American students as not supportive of academic achievement. Higher performing participants exerted their autonomy that shaped their counter-narrative by selecting a different peer group to maintain a social connection that agrees with their decision to be academically successful. Lower performing students struggled to make this transition appeared to make attempts at success in spite of their social connections.

#### **6.1.1.4 Sense of Purpose, Whiteness as Property, Permanence of Racism, and Counter-narrative**

Participants across all grade average ranges demonstrated a sense of purpose and future--having some form of goals, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, and a sense of a future. This sense of purpose helped them to combat Whiteness as Property and the Permanence of Racism, while also developing a counter-narrative. Education was not racialized. There was also the notion that an education was the mechanism to reach these goals. Participants across the

grade average ranges were able to articulate a goal for their future whether it was the graduating high school, going to the military, attending college, or a trade school. Students set goals for themselves and set out to reach them. These goals included getting better grades, getting into a college, or graduating. Table 35 shows how students at each grade average range talked about academic focus in regard to setting goals.

**Table 35.** How Participants Discuss Goals

| How student talk about goals   | Grade Average Ranges | 1.0-1.99 MS | 2.0-2.49 LAS | 2.5-2.99 AS | 3.0-4.0 HS |
|--|----------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| Set and achieve goals to have a better life for myself and my own family                         |                      | X X         | X            | X           | XXX X      |
| Parents, Mentors, Teachers are helping me to set goals, prepare for the future and a better life |                      | X           | X            |             |            |
| Cannot get anywhere without an education   |                      | X           | XX           | XXX         |            |
| Moment of clarity- could have worked harder  |                      | XXX         | XX           | XX          | XXX        |
| I will be attending college  |                      |             |              | XXX         | XXXXX      |
| Goals other than college are ok  |                      |             |              | X           |            |
| Keeps me on track maintaining grades   |                      |             |              | X           |            |
| White students have higher goals or know their goals better                                      |                      |             |              | X           | X          |
| Goals to become someone that helps others  |                      |             |              |             | X          |
| Want to challenge myself with hard things  |                      |             |              |             | X          |

Students at all grade average ranges had this moment of clarity that they could have worked harder academically than they did during their high school years. They also set goals to have a better future for themselves and their family and believed that achieving academically would help them reach this goal. What was interesting was that average success (AS) and high success students set concrete goals to attend college. For minimal success (MS) and low-average success (LAS) students setting a goal to attend college was more generic or vague. Table 36 summarizes the resiliency characteristics and CRT tenets based on the quotes of each grade average group that participated in this study

**Table 36. Grade Average Characteristics**

| Resiliency Characteristics and Critical Race Theory Tenets |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Student Voice  | a. Social competence—Whiteness as Property   | b. Problem-solving skills—The Permanence of Racism  | c. Autonomy—Counter-narrative  | d. Sense of purpose and future—Whiteness as Property, The Permanence of Racism, and Counternarrative   |
| Minimal Success  | <p>Hal (18): So I mean like I got a friend- I, you've heard of him D B, I hung out with him all summer last year. It was the best time. He went to um events, talked to young ones, talking about don't have your pants down low, worry about guns and violence and all that because it's not cool.</p> <p>Joe (18): They've (teachers and administrators) sat down with me. Talked about just academics, just what I need to do to get out and actually be successful and I just went along with pretty much what they were saying.</p> | <p>Joe (18): Yeah. /That/- yeah definitely. And there- yeah because like wh- when you look at it um the African American race is really like just we tend to need more help on with lessons, class work, and all that other type of stuff. With the um actual the um whites it's pretty easy because they sit there, pay attention, and we actually get a little distracted. African American students actually get distracted easier than the white students. Whether you're tapping on the desk or singing a song that's in your head, not paying attention, that's pretty much what happens.</p> <p>Xavier (18): Just that maybe like how hard the teachers may say the test is so it's like you're over, you're thinking too hard, so you're like, I might I might fail, so I'm not even, I don't even want to take the test, like a lot of people, not saying I feel that way, but a lot of people, a lot of students I know might like I'm going to fail anyway so what's the point of taking the test. A lot of people are afraid.</p> | <p>Hal (18): Okay, for white students, usually their parents will be mad if their if their if their child got a C, C-. For a Black student, their mom will be proud for some of them if they had a D. Like a D, a D+, some just a passing grade, not an E.</p>   | <p>Xavier (18): What I'd like to say is just like I didn't notice how hard it was until like I said my junior year and now that I notice how important it is because I'm a senior year and it's close to getting to the real world, like how I grew up and how it's like I'm a man now so now it's time to get educated and become someone.</p> <p>Hal (18): Because. I didn't reach what I wanted to do. I didn't do what I had to do through high school and I wish I can just take it all back. I just look back on it. Things that I said, things that I did uh and it's cost me. I just I had something going down there, down south, but I can't go. Grades, my grades ain't what you know what they're looking for. So now I have to go to community college. I mean there's not nothing wrong with going to community college, but I wanted to go- I just wanted to have that experience, that four year experience at a college. A regular college, not a community college, but it's okay.</p> |
| Low-average Success  | <p>Greg (18): A successful student would be one who is punctual, um meticulous, pays very close attention to detail, um obedient, which is one thing I have learned over the years, regardless of how perilous or difficult a teacher may seem, major thing, respecting of authority, um just pretty much on top of things, and also having the proper outlook on school, and understanding its functionality in our society to each and every individual.</p>   | <p>Greg (18): the way it's accomplished is completely different. I can only, well I can't only speak from personal experience, but I can speak best from personal experience. And being as though I am an African American male, I realized there are a lot of obstacles I have to overcome that my Caucasian counterparts do not have to and I associate with myriad of different individuals, different cultural backgrounds, not to- /?/?/- but it is, there, it seems as if there are obstacles that are intentionally placed opposed to the assistance that a Caucasian student will receive usually, in a nation that fosters those students.</p> <p>Quincy (18): Overall, no. But I</p>  | <p>Ed (18) : Not really, well most of my friends are white, so whenever I see a group of Black people that I know, they'll like "oh you play in the snow" or "the only reason you get good grades, you hang with the white people and they do all your work.</p> <p>Oran (18): Because my 9th and 10th grade I did horrible. And it was for me- I went on a Black HBC college tour- went on that last year, my junior year, and that really- some people, some of my friends tell me it's too late for you, you ain't got the Pittsburgh Promise, you might as well stop looking at college. My mom told me different, but that really opened my eyes up. I went around- we went to about 8-10 colleges down South and up North, Philly.</p> | <p>Will (18): I would tell them that I am graduating and I'm going to college, simply.</p> <p>Quincy (18): Um just like I answered the other question. Like how my brother's in school, like telling you about college and stuff like that, like I don't know if that's sharing or whatever, but it sparked some type of inspiration for me to actually go so I mean him telling me what type of work they do in school, stuff like that. I mean it was like preparing me for going so to me I think that was like him sharing information, I mean he'll constantly talk about what's going on in school.</p> <p>Matt (18): Like where I come from. I don't know. You just. I don't think where I come from people were successful academically. That</p>  |



**Table 36 (continued)**

|                 |   | Resiliency Characteristics and Critical Race Theory Tenets  |   |  |
|-----------------|---|---|---|--|
| Student Voice   | a. Social competence—Whiteness as Property  | b. Problem-solving skills—The Permanence of Racism  | c. Autonomy—Counter-narrative   | d. Sense of purpose and future—Whiteness as Property, The Permanence of Racism, and Counternarrative   |
|                 |   | <p>feel like more Black people should try to achieve a little more harder than you know whites because we kind of have this general outlook that we couldn't do as much as you know, the white people, but we should be and we don't really show what we're capable of.</p> <p>Will (18): No. Success is just making it, to me. Making it your type of way that you want to be successful.</p>  |   | <p>I know of. I don't really know too many. I really don't. People don't talk about that. They talk about their dreams and whatever they did, like sports wise. People don't sit down and have conversations about their grades. Or some people do.</p>  |
| Average Success | <p>Fred (19): Basically, good attendance, straightforward attitude, all the teachers and higher you know- what's that word uh- people of importance here, like teachers, staff, even janitors and what not, be respectful of all of them. Attend class, a lot. You- doing like doing all your work even if it's the little things like if you get good grades, but you still have other work you feel like you shouldn't need to do because you already have a good grade, you just do those anyway because that's just that deceives you and if you have good grades and you don't do it, it goes down like really quickly, so if you miss anything that they're looking for. Do all of your stuff no matter what. Turn them in on time. Follow dead-line and basically have a good GPA.</p> <p>Paul (18): As in like follow the rules, like your school rules, follow the directions that the teachers give you, the work that the teachers give you, the homework the teachers give you, just like obey the staff and people around you inside the school.</p> | <p>Sam (18): Oh yeah. Success for Black students definitely is than for white students. It definitely is different because we have- we have something to prove. I mean we have something to make of ourselves. We were from people from Africa. We've been through- we've been put through all this force, all this years of white America oppression, so we go from slavery to Civil Rights Movement and now to I guess- I guess we're equals in certain cases but we're still not equal, so we're pushing the envelope. We're trying to get- we're trying to get there, so we have a lot of history. We have a lot of pride that goes into our success.</p> <p>Umar (18): Once again, I think it's the same, however I think Black kids definitely look at it differently. Um I think white kids, it's always been in their culture to you know- really high standard and Black people you know, it's just catching up to us. And often times /I don't know if/ we always have that person to push us academically, and sometime we don't – those of us most Black people around the community- there's not many people that have succeeded that well academically so sometimes it's not a – it's not too prominent to Black kids- but it's the same, whether or not you look at it different or not.</p> | <p>Tom (18) : My friends too. They, my friends are great. Like they're there for me if I like need help or, and stuff like that. If I'm feeling down, like about school and stuff they're there to talk and I, I owe a lot to them.</p> | <p>Paul (18): I developed this attitude around 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Like coming into high school really because I, back in middle school, I was kind of laid off to the side, I kind of got like I didn't really care for most of my work, but I just maintained some of my work, but like as I grew older and started to understand what colleges actually look at, I started to buckle down on my work.</p> <p>Sam (18): Um I mean it means a lot. I mean to know that I can /???/ considering how compared to every other high school, we do a lot more, I would say. I mean we're there all year. We get out later, so it feels like to me like if I know I can make it in this school, then like I'll be prepared for the future just work, just like /???/ amounts of work and just like being able to get through it. /If I can do it in high school/ than yeah, college will seem a lot easier. Life will seem a lot easier, so I mean that's truly what it is.</p> |

**Table 36 (continued)**

| Resiliency Characteristics and Critical Race Theory Tenets |   |  |  |   |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Student Voice  | a. Social competence—Whiteness as Property  | b. Problem-solving skills—The Permanence of Racism   | c. Autonomy—Counter-narrative  | d. Sense of purpose and future—Whiteness as Property, The Permanence of Racism, and Counternarrative  |
| High Success   | <p>Craig (15): I mean initially the whole get good grades and um not focus on being social too social but still having friends that you can relate to in classes and that will help you through it. Friends who are there to also help you succeed and teachers who are willing to work with you also just being in a good environment and being successful in school like knowing that that school will shape you to have a future n know where you want to go so.</p> | <p>Nate (18): well, not for all, but for like a majority. Like like the average white kid, they usually live in middle class, upper-middle class, so they might have like money to go to certain colleges, and they won't have to work as hard to do that. But for some, it might not be like that. And for a Black kid, like the average Black kid is living like in the ghetto or lower-middle class, like me, I, my mom, she makes what's 500 times 12?</p> <p>Vince (18): it (success) shouldn't be because intelligence in education isn't or rather doesn't discriminate by race or gender, but again society still attaches different views to people based on race and gender and their education level.</p> | <p>Craig (15): I have a lot of good friends I have been to middle school with 98% of the school (laugh) population they know me I joke a lot that we have a great learning environment but that still doesn't change the fact that I'm the only African (laugh) American male CAS student.</p> <p>Don (17): I have some bl African American male friends who don't dress nice some of the most intelligent people I know. I hang out with them. I don't hang out with people that are like me on the outside I hang out with people that are like me on the inside. That's where it counts. You grow with people that are on the same level as you. The people that you pull people and you grow around people that's higher than you and you know so it's like something that I've been taught at home.</p> | <p>Leo (18): Uh, Be sure that in the near future uhm I have a job. Uhm will be attending college. Uhm I think my family, my mom staying closely knit. Being about my education keeps me uh well rounded. Uhm (pause) hum, You know I think I just have a drive just to be academically successful. So after college I am not around none of my friends who play around.</p> <p>Ron (18): It shouldn't be, I guess. Because um I don't think it matters what race you are. Success is just being good overall and um just getting your work done and um trying to get good grades so you can um excel and go to college... And I just need to start doing my work because I know- I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do in college so I have to I had to start making sure my grades were up so I could be able to make a choice. Like I have more opportunities.</p> |

## **6.2 SUMMARY OF RESILIENCY CHARACTERISTICS AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY TENETS**

The quotes in Table 36 provide a representation of the students voices regarding the Resiliency Theory characteristics and Critical Race Theory Tenets listed above. Not every participant was quoted. Several searches using Nvivo and Microsoft Word Find option were used. Key word searches for future, goals, college, relationships, friends, teachers etc... were used to link quotes to the Resiliency Theory characteristics. The chart above was chosen because they were believed to be expressions that were repeated by or themes that reoccurred within a particular grade average range.

### **6.2.1 Minimal Success Students**

Socially they were surrounded by friends that were not academically successful. They were cooperative with teachers and administrators later in the high school experience, but not early enough to make a positive academic impact. These students would be considered late academic bloomers. They also wrestle with developing a counter-narrative of how they would define themselves. They were in the process of developing problem solving skills. One of their major problems was that their grade point average was low and bringing it up may seem difficult. They appeared to be in need of support to set and stick to goals. The graduation deadline forced minimal success students to be autonomous and begin to start challenging their counter-narrative. Their low grade average made goal setting and future plans iffy. They were not able to clearly articulate where they will be after graduation. White students were seen as better prepared to navigate school by this group.

### **6.2.2 Low-average Success Students**

Socially, low-average students did not have a large base of academically successful peers. They were able to talk about what makes a successful student but may not always have positive relationships with teachers and administrators. Race was seen as a barrier to success and they struggled to develop a counter-narrative to express a clear way to pass this barrier. They were fatalistic in their thinking about their academic success and appeared to use this thinking as a reason to not try. In order to have a supportive peer group students began to look at other racial groups where they believe that academic success was valued. Goal setting and future plans were not clearly defined, but there was the mention by a few of attending college.

### **6.2.3 Average Success Students**

These students realized that their interactions with teachers were important. They had an awareness of the school system and possessed some school social capital. Cooperating with teachers and administrators was vital to their academic success. School was not just for white students. Race was seen as a barrier to academic success but this group of students believed that a strong work ethic would support positive academic achievement. Their peer group was supportive of them and their goals. This group had future goals of pursuing schooling and/or training beyond high school.

#### **6.2.4 High Success Students**

This group of students understood the importance of the relationship between the student and the teacher. Their school social capital was high with teachers. They also talked about having friends that also understood the importance of being academically successful. School was something that they participate in and it was not just done to them. They were working with their teachers to be successful. Race was a factor but there was a comparison of financial resources and opportunities they have or may not have. They have several like-minded friends that comprise a supportive peer group. Going to college was mentioned by almost every member of this peer group. Keeping their grades up and working hard was what they believed would get them to college.

#### **6.2.5 Resiliency Characteristics and Critical Race Theory Summary**

This section provided a representation of the Resiliency Theory characteristics and Critical Race Theory tenets that the participants at each grade average range possessed. Although more quotes from the participants could have been used, the above were selected because similar themes surfaced with their grade average band participants. Below the hypotheses for this study will also be discussed. This discussion sought to find or not find evidence to support the hypotheses.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations for this study will be categorized with the Resiliency Theory characteristics and Critical Race Theory Tenets that helped to guide this study. At times Resiliency

Characteristics and Critical Race Theory Tenets will be linked together. In this section they were connected by their overlap to a recommendation, not relationship to students as done previously. The Resiliency Theory (Krovetz, 1999; Carter, 2008 ; Singleton, 2006) characteristics are listed here:

- a. Social competence--the ability to elicit positive responses from others, thus establishing positive relationships with both adults and peers.
- b. Problem-solving skills--the ability to plan, based on seeing oneself in control and on being resourceful in seeking help from others.
- c. Autonomy--a sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently and exert some control over one's environment.
- d. Sense of purpose and future--having goals, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, and a sense of a bright future.

The Critical Race Theory Tenets (Carter, 2008; Singleton, 2006) are defined as:

1. The counter story-There is significance of experiential knowledge and the use of storytelling to analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render African Americans and other minorities one down.
2. The permanence of racism- Racism is normal in American society and CRT provides strategies for exposing racism in its various forms.
3. Whiteness as property- Critical Race Theory challenges traditional and dominant discourse and paradigms on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to affect people of color.
4. The critique of liberalism- Critical Race Theory challenges liberal society's claims to "colorblindness", neutrality of the law, and change in systems and institutions that

make positive steps for minorities incremental. This tenet makes a commitment to social justice for people of color.

5. Interest convergence- As long as an institution or system can see the benefit or value of helping a minority it will.

### **6.3.1 Social Competence, Counter-Narrative**

African American males do not often see teachers and administrators that look like them. African American males are often seen in the media in a negative light. Building positive relationships with teachers early in their academic career will go along-way in being academically successful. If society and the media will not lift up positive minority role models, school districts would be wise to do so. School districts should launch their own campaigns to showcase positive minority role models who are celebrities nationally and locally. Help students develop a counter-narrative. School districts would also be wise to grow African American male teachers and leaders by recruiting the very students they have graduated to go into the education field. To boost their grade point average a special focus could be made regarding being “Promise Ready.” These young men can be guaranteed teaching positions if they fulfill the requirements of a teaching program upon their return to the school from which they have graduated. These males would be familiar with the communities and the school system and can provide younger minority students with insights and supports that an outsider may not be able to provide. The district that this study was conducted already offers a scholarship to all students who meet its requirements. All they have to do is put in place a plan that provides students with a pre-college teaching experience through tutoring and mentoring of younger students. This will help young men to decide if education is in fact the career for them.

Mentor early and often. Schools districts need to connect more with organizations like the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, the Boy Scouts, little league football and baseball teams, church groups and other organizations that support children. These organizations have access to positive role models and mentors that students are often better able to relate to. Many of these mentors live within the students communities and some do not. Mentors have the ability to relate to students on a social level as well as an academic level that allows them to help African American males to become more present in their school lives. These strategies will help males to build positive relationships that can make them feel more welcomed in the school setting.

### **6.3.2 Problem Solving Skills, the Permanence of Racism, and the Critique of Liberalism**

We have to do it now. We cannot be satisfied with incremental change for African American males. The longer we wait to find the right solution, the more males we lose to poor educational experiences, mediocrity, prisons, and death. Changes to school structures and instructional materials must occur. Helping African American males develop positive social skills starts with viewing their strengths. Schools must be able to celebrate more than assessment scores and proficiency levels. Sports cannot be the only arena in which African American males are allowed to succeed. African American males come to school with a set of problem solving skills for issues that they face in their neighborhoods and communities. Schools need to talk with males to determine what these skills are and if these problem solving skills are appropriate for use during the school day. Planning and setting goals with the African American male helps empower the student and affirm their power over their academic success. Simply put, talk with them about their academic performance. Not at them. Everyone appreciates someone who genuinely cares about their well- being.



The foundation of the United States was built upon the institution of slavery. It is a painful part of our past that cannot be ignored. Although we cannot change people's attitudes and beliefs we can begin to help students develop resiliency strategies to combat racism and other barriers to academic success when they reach one. Again having life-skills classes or lessons embedded into Social Studies and/or Literacy courses that teach Black history from a non-traditional perspective would help students to develop a counter-narrative that can combat racism. African Americans were more than slaves and made significant contributions above peanuts and stop-lights. African American children have a right to wrestle with this history and situate themselves inside of it

### **6.3.3 Autonomy**

The way that instruction is delivered is tough for males in general (Weiss, 2004). Due to the impact of No Child Left Behind, students spend almost half their school day in a reading course and almost a third of their day in Math. This can be difficult for male students who are often more physically active than females (Comer, et. al, 1999). The length and type of Reading and Math instruction must be considered when supporting African American male students. Reading instruction must become more intensive over a shorter portion of the school day so that African American males are not turned off by it. Reading instruction needs to incorporate more music for memorization of foundational skills and culturally relevant fiction pieces to help build Reading Comprehension during the early years. It is more difficult for early readers to read texts that they do not have background knowledge for or an interest in.

#### **6.3.4 Sense of Purpose and Future**

Schools should begin meeting and planning with African American males around their credits and courses toward graduation as early as 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Middle school is a very pivotal time for these males. Here is where males either develop or lose academic focus and drive which impacts their work ethic. In their middle school years, academically successful males gain some type of focus that helps them to keep their studies in the fore front. Non-academically successful males get this focus much later on in high school, when it is often too late to make a positive step toward college going and college acceptance. Most of the participants in this study stated that they really got focused and drive during their tenth and eleventh grades of high school. Time is of the essence. The earlier we can get African American males to focus the better. Parents, teachers, and mentors can help these males to develop drive, however drive is more intrinsic. Meeting and planning with African American males will take time and energy, but it is far more valuable and less expensive to meet and plan with them for success, than it is to remediate and incarcerate them later.

#### **6.3.5 Whiteness as Property**

Starting in pre-school, education systems must begin to address children of color academically. This begins with building positive relationships with parents that may have had negative relationships with the school system in the past. Addressing the issue of low-performance of African American males will mandate authorities and other power structures to remember and address the harmful impact of slavery and the history of education for Black people. What was once an under-taking for white people only is now extended to people of color. Building trust is

with Black families is essential. African American children must be able to see themselves as intellectuals and be recognized for the strengths that they bring to the classroom. These strengths must be utilized in the educational process.

### **6.3.6 Interest Conversion**

Helping our most struggling students by focusing on instructional strategies that meet their needs will help all students (Barringer, Pohlman, & Robinson, 2010). A good education must be seen as the right of all, not the right of some that can afford it. If we are to ever realize a United States where we are safe and productive, we must begin to provide every student with a quality education and opportunities to be productive citizens. We can no longer be motivated only by the loss of funding.

## **6.4 WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM THIS STUDY?**

This study should be read by educators at all levels. The voices of the males provide a clear call to action for the educational system. Politicians and community organizers could also benefit from reviewing this literature. When drafting policies and practices that impact communities of color, the voices of these males should be in the forefront. Teenage African American males may also benefit from hearing the struggles of their peers. Listening to how their peers have navigated schooling successfully or not so successfully will help them to make informed choices about how they will approach the same issues. The high school males in this study were at an age and point in their educational experience to articulate the pitfalls, hills, and valley's that they have had to

navigate. Their voices are poignant and educative for all adults who wish to improve public education.

## **6.5 FUTURE RESEARCH AND COLLABORATION**

This work would be deepened and advanced by a collaboration with other authors that student High School African American males through a Critical Race Theory and Resiliency Theory lens. Working with current researchers like Dr. Michael Quigley and Mr. Janard Pendleton would be a great starting place to further this work. Both of these researchers are practitioners that serve in the “We Promise” Program. “We Promise is a program designed to support African-American male students by providing the resources they need to ensure they are prepared and eligible to receive a scholarship from The Pittsburgh Promise®. African American 11<sup>th</sup> grade students with GPA’s ranging from 1.75 to 2.49 participated in the We Promise program. This research should be shared with these males as this program has had some success. The researcher of this paper was a part of the original planning and initial implementation of the “We Promise” program.

## **6.6 CONCLUSIONS**

To ensure that more African American males are academically successful by high school graduation the following strategies are recommended (These strategies are not exhaustive but offer a starting point to support positive academic achievement and success for more African

American males. Some schools may not be able to incorporate all the strategies listed below and should use the strategies that best fit their student population):

1. Monthly meeting time for males to discuss progress, issues, hopes, concerns as well as make recommendations. This is also an excellent opportunity to have a book study with the students (see bibliography below). It is also important to talk about time management, study skills, note taking, and goal setting.
2. 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.
3. Help students set goals for grades, attendance, and assessment scores. Students should review their progress towards their goals with their mentor weekly.
4. Monitor attendance, grades, disciplinary data, and assessment scores- including SATs for each student. Grades should be monitored bi-weekly and attendance weekly.
5. Monthly parent/family contact in the form of a personal call or meeting to update parents on student's progress.
6. Give males a leadership role in the school-
  - a. Helping a teacher with specific tasks.
  - b. Helping in the office with clerical tasks.
  - c. Helping in the cafeteria or with a custodian.
  - d. Mentoring underclassmen and/or providing tutoring support.

7. Recognition Ceremony at the end of each semester that recognizes multiple males for various achievements (Most improved, Most Consistent, Honor Roll, etc...)
8. Redesign curriculum so that courses like History and English are culturally relevant for students of color.
9. Incorporate African American Life skills courses that cover topics like stereotyping, racism, and relationships to help build resiliency skills with students that may not have them.

African American males can be helped to achieve academic success but it will take examining the current school system and challenging it where practices that stereotype and hinder academic success manifest. African American males have to be made to feel that schools are where they belong and can learn in. Teachers will need additional support and training to support this group of students. Academically successful males were able to be successful often without the support of their teachers, but it is clear that non-academically successful males will need the support of their teachers to navigate the difficulties of school. Schools must work diligently to squash stereotypes with its entire student population. This will take a comprehensive, systemic equity plan and policy that starts in the central office and flows down to the schools. Pre-school minority students need exposure to the foundational skills that will help them to be academically successful when they arrive at the school house.

Equal education for African American and other minority students must become a right. In Pennsylvania, property taxes fund the educational system. Parents can choose to have their child educated in any district that their money can afford. This creates a have and have nots system. Those that have the money get the best education that they can afford and those that have

not get the education that is left. Teachers also need resources to teach in areas where there are more academic and social challenges. Most importantly the community has to stand up and support its children and its schools. Schools are a reflection of the communities in which they reside. Communities must begin to also share in the responsibility for how successful their schools are. Districts need to realize the impact of their communities on the school houses and work closely with city government and human services to ensure that mental health and educational resources are readily accessible to everyone in the community, not just parents of school aged kids. A school is judged not by the way it treats its most successful learners, but by the way it takes care of its struggling learners.

**APPENDIX A**

**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**



**Table 37.** Interview Protocol

| Main Interview Questions  | Follow Up Questions  | Link to Research Questions  |
|---|--|---|
| 1. What does it mean to be successful in your school?                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Can you tell me about a successful student?</li> <li>e. Is success different for boys than for girls?</li> <li>f. Is success different for black students than for white?</li> </ul>   | Q#1-what factors currently account for the success of a few African American males? What are the attitudes and behaviors that consistently appear in African American males who perform successfully in the urban school environment? |
| 2. Think about a male that is academically successful. Please describe him to me. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. What does he do?</li> <li>g. How does he act?</li> <li>h. What do other students think of him?</li> <li>i. How does he interact with the teacher and other adults?</li> <li>j. Describe his social life?</li> </ul>                  | Q#2-Do the attitudes and behaviors of successful African American males differ with socio-economic status?  |
| 3. What is your attitude toward academic success?                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Please define attitude.</li> <li>f. When did you develop this attitude?</li> <li>g. How has this attitude helped you?</li> <li>h. Has anyone helped you develop this attitude?</li> </ul>  |   |
| 4. Is academic success something to be shared? Why or why not?                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Please provide an example of how success is shared?</li> <li>f. How should academic success be shared?</li> <li>g. Who should academic success be shared with?</li> <li>h. What do you get from sharing academic success?</li> </ul> | Q#3- Do academically successful African American males have family support systems that contribute to high academic achievement?  |

**Table 37 (continued)**

| Main Interview Questions  | Follow Up Questions  | Link to Research Questions |
|---|--|----------------------------|
| <p>5. What problems are there with being academically successful?</p>                                       | <p>d. Please give me one or two examples of a sacrifice academically successful students would have to make?</p> <p>e. Are there sacrifices that an African American male will have to make to be academically successful? Please say more.</p> <p>f. Who would successful African American males go to for support?</p> |                            |
| <p>6. Would you consider yourself academically successful?</p>  | <p>c. If someone asked you for evidence of this, what would you tell them?</p> <p>d. Who or what do you contribute your success to?</p>  |                            |
| <p>7. What advice do you have for younger African American males regarding school and academic success?</p> | <p>a. Why would this advice be important?</p>  |                            |

**APPENDIX B**

**CONSENT FORM**

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

### High School African American Male Academic Success

**Principal Investigator:** Virginia R. Hill  
Graduate Student, Doctoral Fellow  
University of Pittsburgh, Department of Education  
416 Cypress Hill Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15235

**Source of support:** None

**We are conducting a research study to help us understand** why some students are more academically successful than others. We are interested in speaking with students in the public school setting. We are especially interested in studying the academic success of African American males. We would like to find out the factors that contribute to the academic success of African American males. To do this, we need to evaluate 18 year old African American males, their PSSA scores, and grade point averages. We will compare students with high grade point averages and PSSA scores and students with low grade point averages and PSSA scores. We are asking you to participate in this research because it is believed that you are an 18 year old African American male with the grade point average and PSSA scores that we would like to use in this study. We will ask a total of ten African American males to take part in this study.

**In order to determine if you are eligible,** we will utilize the Pittsburgh Public Schools student data system to obtain your age, grade, grade point average, and PSSA scores.

**If you agree to participate, we will ask you to participate in a ½ hour to 1 hour interview.** This will involve me coming to your school, and participating in a conversation with you about school, how you feel about school, things you do in school, your role models/heroes, and people you look to for support. This will take approximately ½ hour to 1 hour to complete. I will collect the information making an audio recording of our conversation and taking some notes. After our conversation/interview, I will copy down the interview in writing and provide you with a paper copy. Feel free to make comments to me about the written copy of the interview. I want to make sure that I have captured your thoughts and sentiments exactly as you have meant to state them.

**This is a very low risk study, but you should be aware of risks.** The risks associated with this study include the potential for a breach of confidentiality. To reduce the risk of that happening, we will protect the confidentiality of this information. You may also feel some discomfort or embarrassment discussing personal matters. You may stop answering questions at any time if you are uncomfortable.

We will also inform you if we learn of any new significant study risks associated with this research.

**You will not receive any direct benefit from participating in this research.**

However, the information we obtain from you and others, may help us better understand how we can support African American students in school and develop policies and teaching strategies to help all students have a positive school experience

**Your participation in this research study will not cost you any money. You will be paid for your participation as follows:** You will receive a \$15 gift card for the completion of the interview.

**To protect your privacy**, only Virginia Hill, your principal and/or your school counselor will be aware of your participation in this research study. We will not link your name to any of the information we obtain, these will be identified only by a code or case number. The information linking these case numbers with your identity will be kept separate from the research records. Your identity will not be revealed in any description or publications of this research. Although we will do everything in our power to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your records, just as with the use of your medical information for health care purposes, we cannot guarantee the privacy of your research records. Authorized representatives from the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office may review your data for the purpose of monitoring the conduct of this study. Authorized representatives of the sponsor of this research study, will review and/or obtain identifiable information related to your participation in this research study for the purpose of monitoring the accuracy and completeness of the research data and for performing required scientific analyses of the research data. If these data are shared with other researchers, your identity will not be revealed to those researchers. In unusual cases, your research records may be released in response to an order from a court of law.

There is the possibility that you may be eligible for other research studies being conducted independently of this one. You may be contacted in person or by mail by members of our research team or their associates to determine your interest in those other studies, but you are never under any obligation to participate in those.

**Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary.** If you do not agree to participate in this research study, this decision will have no effect on your current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh, UPMC or its affiliated health care providers or health care insurance providers. **If you decide you no longer wish to participate** after you have signed the consent form, you should contact Virginia Hill (412-606-2484). Your decision to withdraw from this study will have no effect on your current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh or with UPMC or its affiliate health care and insurance operations.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **VOLUNTARY CONSENT**

The above information has been explained to me and all of my current questions have been answered. I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions about any aspect of this research study during the course of this study, and that such future questions will be answered by a qualified individual or by the investigator(s) listed on the first page of this consent document at the telephone number(s) given. I understand that I may always request that my questions, concerns or complaints be addressed by a listed investigator.

I understand that I may contact the Human Subjects Protection Advocate of the IRB Office, University of Pittsburgh (1-866-212-2668) to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; offer input; or discuss situations in the event that the research team is unavailable.

By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research study. A copy of this consent form will be given to me.

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## **CERTIFICATION of INFORMED CONSENT**

I certify that I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study to the above-named individual(s), and I have discussed the potential benefits and possible risks of study participation. Any questions the individual(s) have about this study have been answered, and we will always be available to address future questions as they arise. I further certify that no research component of this protocol was begun until after this consent form was signed.

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_

Role in Research Study

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

**APPENDIX C**

**APPROVAL LETTER**



**University of Pittsburgh**  
*Institutional Review Board*

3500 Fifth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
(412) 383-1480  
(412) 383-1508 (fax)  
<http://www.irb.pitt.edu>

**Memorandum**

To: Virginia Hill  
From: Christopher Ryan, PhD, Vice Chair  
Date: 7/25/2012  
IRB#: [PRO12060144](#)  
Subject: African American Male Success

---

The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section

45 CFR 46.101(b)(4)

Please note the following information:

- If any modifications are made to this project, use the "Send Comments to IRB Staff" process from the project workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.
- Upon completion of your project, be sure to finalize the project by submitting a "Study Completed" report from the project workspace.

Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.

**Figure 11.** Approval Letter



**APPENDIX D**

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**

**University of Pittsburgh**  
***Institutional Review Board***

3500 Fifth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
(412) 383-1480  
(412) 383-1508 (fax)  
<http://www.irb.pitt.edu>

**Memorandum**

To: Virginia Hill

From: Christopher Ryan PHD, Vice Chair

Date: 3/13/2012

IRB#: [PRO11110303](#)

Subject: African American High School Males and Academic Success

---

The University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the above referenced study by the expedited review procedure authorized under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. Your research study was approved under:

45 CFR 46.110.(5) clinical data

45 CFR 46.110.(6) data/research

45 CFR 46.110.(7) characteristics/behaviors

Approval Date: 3/13/2012

Expiration Date: 3/12/2013

For studies being conducted in UPMC facilities, no clinical activities can be undertaken by investigators until they have received approval from the UPMC Fiscal Review Office.

Please note that it is the investigator's responsibility to report to the IRB any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others [see 45 CFR 46.103(b) (5) and 21 CFR 56.108(b)]. Refer to the IRB Policy and Procedure Manual regarding the reporting requirements for unanticipated problems which

include, but are not limited to, adverse events. If you have any questions about this process, please contact the Adverse Events Coordinator at 412-383-1480.

The protocol and consent forms, along with a brief progress report must be resubmitted at least one month prior to the renewal date noted above as required by FWA00006790 (University of Pittsburgh), FWA00006735 (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center), FWA00000600 (Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh), FWA00003567 (Magee-Women's Health Corporation), FWA00003338 (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Cancer Institute).

**Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.**

**APPENDIX E**

**SCHOOL DISTRICT INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**



Pittsburgh Public Schools  
Linda S. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

**Tina Still**  
**Assessment and IRB Coordinator**  
*Office of Research, Assessment, and Accountability*

South Annex Administrative Center  
625 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Rm. 205  
Pittsburgh, PA 15203

Phone: (412) 325-1560 • Fax: (412) 325-1598  
E-mail: [tstill1@pghboe.net](mailto:tstill1@pghboe.net)

April 20, 2012

Virginia Hill  
416 Cypress Hill Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Dear Mrs. Hill:

The Internal Review Board of the Pittsburgh Public Schools has reviewed your request to conduct research in our high schools. Your study entitled, *African American Males and High School Success*, has been approved beginning April 20, 2012 through June 30, 2012.

Your study has been approved with the following provisions:

- Students and parents must sign the appropriate consent forms before students can participate.
- Students are made aware they can stop participation at any time.
- Research activities cannot interfere with students' instructional time.
- Only individuals with approved clearances on file with the Pittsburgh Public Schools will be allowed access to any school buildings or students.

Any major modifications to the research design, adjustments to the schools listed or approved timeline must be forwarded to the IRB office for separate approval. You are also required to keep any identifying information related to all human subjects confidential and safeguarded as outlined in your IRB submission. Approval by the Pittsburgh Public School's Internal Review Board does not guarantee participants for your research. Access to schools is under the control of the building administrator.

Thank you for your interest in working with the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Tina Still

C: All High School Principals  
Jeannine French, Chief of School Performance  
Deborah Friss, Assistant Director, Research, Assessment and Accountability  
Jerri Lippert, Chief Academic Officer  
Christiana Otuwa, Assistant Superintendent, 6-12 and High Schools  
Paulette Poncelet, Chief, Research, Assessment and Accountability



We are an equal rights and opportunity school district.

**Figure 12.** School District Internal Review Board Approval

**APPENDIX F**

**LETTER AND PHONE SCRIPTS**

Letter – My name is Virginia Hill and I am a doctoral student at the University of Pittsburgh pursuing an Ed.D. in Administration and Policy Studies in the School of Education. I am writing this letter to ask if you would be willing to participate in my study for my dissertation, focused on African American males and High School success. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project.

If you would be willing to help me by being interviewed, it would be greatly appreciated.

This study is being overseen by Dr. Maureen McClure, faculty at the University of Pittsburgh, and she would be able to answer any additional questions that you might have. Should you have any questions, my phone number is 412-606-2484 and my e-mail address is [vrh5@pitt.edu](mailto:vrh5@pitt.edu). Thank you so much, have a great day!

Telephone Script - My name is Virginia Hill and I am a doctoral student at the University of Pittsburgh pursuing an Ed.D. in Administration and Policy Studies in the School of Education. I am asking if you would be willing to participate in my study for my dissertation, focused on African American males and High School success. This interview will take 30 minutes to an hour to complete. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw from the interview at any time. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. You will be audio recorded and all responses will remain confidential. After the study has been completed, the audio recordings will be destroyed. This study is being overseen by Dr. Maureen McClure, faculty at the University of Pittsburgh, and she would be able to answer any additional questions that you might have. If you would be willing to help me by being interviewed, it would be greatly appreciated.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- American Civil Liberties Union (2011). <http://www.aclu.org/racial-justice/what-school-prisonpipeline>.
- Anyon, Jean. Social Class and School Knowledge. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1981. Curriculum Inquiry. 11 Jan. 2008  
<<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=03626784%28198121%2911%3A1%3C3%3ASCASK%E.0.CO%3B2-E>>.
- Abraham, H. (2012). Celebration Marks Start Of School Year At Perry High School. *KDKA*. Retrieved from <http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2012/09/04/celebration-marks-start-of-school-year-at-perry-high-school/>
- Adequate Yearly Progress. (2012). *NCLB Action Briefs* NCLB Sections 1111 and 1116. Retrieved September 25, 2012, 2012, from <http://www.ncpie.org/nclbaction/ayp.html>
- Battle, S. F. (2002). African American Males at a Crossroad. *Journal of Helath & Social Policy*, 15(2), 81-91.
- Barringer, M.-D., Pohlman, C., & Robinson, M. (2010). *School for All Kinds of Minds: Boosting Students Success by Embracing Learning Variation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Beamon, K., & Bell, P. A. (2006). Academics Versus Athletics: An Examination of the Effects of Background and Socialization on African American Male Student Athletes. *The Social Science Journal*, 43, 393-403.
- Bennett, B. J., Davis, R., Harris, A., Brown, K., Wood, P., Jones, D. R., et al. (2004). A Research Brief: A Novel Characteristic of Role Model Choice by Black Male College Students. *The Negro Educational Review*, 55(2-3), 143-145.
- Bonner II, F. A. (2001). Making Room for the Study of Gifted African American Males. *Black Issues in Higher Education*.
- Bonner II, F. A., Jennings, M. E., Marbley, A. F., & Brown, L.-A. (2008). Capitalizing on Leadership Capacity: Gifted African American Males in High School. *Roeper Review*, 30, 93-103.



- Booker-Baker, P. (2005). The Impact of Cultural Biases on African American Students' Education: A Review of Research Literature Regarding Race Based Schooling. *Education and Urban Society*, 37(3), 243-256.
- Brinkerhoff, R. O. (2005). The Success Case Method: A Strategic Evaluation Approach to Increasing the Value and Effect of Training. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7(86), 86-101.
- Brinkerhoff, R. O. (Ed.). (2003). *The Success Case Method*. San Francisco.
- Brown-Wright, L., & Tyler, K. M. (2010). The Effects of Home-School Dissonance on African American Male High School Students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 79(2), 125-136.
- Carbado, D. W. (2002). Afterword: (E) Raising Education. *Equity & Excellence*, 35(2), 181-194.
- Carter, D. J. (2008). Achievement as Resistance: The Development of a Critical Race Achievement Ideology Among Black Achievers. *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(3), 466-569.
- Chute, E. (2012, February 5, 2012). Pittsburgh Westinghouse 6-12 school regroups after single-gender plan is scrapped.
- Insufficient planning, discipline problems negate changes sought. *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. Retrieved from <http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/local/neighborhoods-city/pittsburgh-westinghouse-6-12-school-regroups-after-single-gender-plan-is-scrapped-214494/>
- Davis, J. E., & Jordan, W. J. (1994). The Effects of School Context, Structure, and Experiences on African American Males in Middle and High School. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 63(4), 570-587.
- Davis, K. (2007). Kiri Davis. *Appearance on the Oprah Winfrey Show: A Girl Like Me* Retrieved November 27, 2011, 2011, from [http://www.kiridavis.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=10&Itemid=88888904](http://www.kiridavis.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10&Itemid=88888904)
- Davis, L. E., Saunders, J., Johnson, S., Miller-Cribbs, J., Williams, T., & Wexler, S. (2003). Predicting Positive Academic Intention Among African American Males and Females. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 33(11), 2306-2326.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. Critical Race Theory, An Introduction. *New York University Press*.
- Di Domenico, M., & Phillips, N. (Eds.). (2009) *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Downey, M. (2011). Six Minutes of Segregation a day: Can It Help Black Students? *Get Schooled*, 1-5. Retrieved from <http://blogs.ajc.com/get-schooled-blog/2011/01/27/six-minutes-of-segregation-a-day-can-it>

- Dunbar, C. J., Rodriguez, D., & Parker, L. (2001). Race, Subjectivity, and the Interview Process. *Handbook of Interview Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Ltd.
- Duncan, G. A. (2002). Beyond Love: A Critical Race Ethnography of the Schooling of Adolescent Black Males. *Equity & Excellence*, 35(2), 131-145.
- Edwards, O. W., Mumford, V. E., Shillingford, M. A., & Serra-Roldan, R. (2007). Developmental Assets: A Prevention Framework for Students Considered at Risk. *Children & Schools*, 29(3), 145-153.
- Ensminger, M. E., Lamkin, R. P., & Jacobson, N. (1996). School Leaving: A Longitudinal Perspective Including Neighborhood Effects. *Child Development*, 67, 2400-2416.
- Fenning, P., & Rose, J. (2007). Overrepresentation of African American Students in Exclusionary Discipline: The Role of School Policy. *Urban Education*, 42(6), 536-559.
- Ferguson, R. F. (2003). Teachers' Perceptions and Expectations and the Black-White Test Score Gap. *Urban Education*, 38(4), 460-507.
- Fields-Smith, C. (2005). African American Parents Before and After Brown. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 20(2), 129-135.
- Frazier, G. B. (2009). *Voices of Success: African American Male School Leaders*. Unpublished Dissertation, Roosevelt University, Chicago, IL.
- Freire, P. (2001). There is No Teaching Without Learning *Pedagogy of Freedom*: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Freire, P. (Ed.). (1993). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum Books.
- Gay, G. (2000). Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Curriculum Content *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, & Practice* (pp. 111-146). New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Graham, A., & Anderson, K. A. (2008). "I have to be three steps ahead": Academically Gifted African American Male Students in an Urban High School and the Tension between Ethnic and Academic Identity. *Urban Review*, 40, 472-499.
- Greif, G. L., Hrabowski, F. A., & Maton, K. I. (1998). African American Fathers of High Achieving Sons: Using Outstanding Members of an At-Risk Population to Guide Interventions *Families and Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 79(1), 45-52.
- Griffin, J. P. J. (2005). The Building Resiliency and Vocational Excellence (BRAVE) Program: A Violence-Prevention and Role Model Program for Young, African American Males. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 16(4 Supplement B), 78-88.

- Griffin, K., & Allen, W. (2006). Mo' Money, Mo' Problems? High-Achieving Black High School Students' Experiences with Resource, Racial Climate, and Resilience. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 75(3), 478-494.
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gutierrez, K. D., Asato, J., Santos, M., & Gotanda, N. (2002). Backlash Pedagogy: Language and Culture and the Politics of Reform. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 24, 335-351.
- Gutowski, S. (2013). The Pittsburgh Public Schools. Retrieved May 9, 2013, 2013, from <http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/Domain/330>
- Hampson, J. E., Rahman, M. A., Brown, B. J., Taylor, M. E., & Donaldson, C. J. J. (1998). Project Self: Beyond Resilience. *Urban Education*, 33(6), 6-33.
- Hamrick, F. A., & Stage, F. K. (2004). College Predisposition at High-Minority Enrollment, Low-Income Schools. *Review of Higher Education*, 27(2), 151-168.
- Harris, C. (2012). 2012 Report to the Community. 2013, from <http://www.aplusschools.org/research-and-reports/report-to-the-community/>
- Hatch, A. (2002). *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Herrstein, R. J., & Murray, C. (1996). *The Bell Curve*. New York, New York: First Free Press
- Hill-Collins, P. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2nd ed.). New York, New York: Routledge.
- Holland, S. H. Positive Role Models for Primary- Grade Black Inner-City Males. *Equity & Excellence*, 25(1), 40-44.
- Holley-Bright, P. (2008). Black Male Achievement Gap Questioned By Experts. *Carolina Peacemaker*, XLII(33), 3A.
- Howard, T. C. (2008). Who Really Cares? The Disenfranchment of African American Males in PreK-12 Schools: A Critical Race Theory. *Teachers College Record*, 110(5), 954-985.
- Hughes, R. L. (2010). Engaging African American Males for Success. *Gifted Child Today*, 32(2), 55-60.
- I Will Be Heard!* Unpublished manuscript. (2002). Ithaca, New York.

- Irving, M. A., & Hudley, C. (2005). Cultural Mistrust, Academic Outcome Expectations, and Outcome Values Among African American Adolescent Men. *Urban Education*, 49(5), 476-496.
- Jarret, R. L. (1997). Resilience among Low-Income African American Youth: An Ethnographic Perspective. *Ethos*, 25(2), 218-229.
- Jeffry, K. (2005). Asking Students to Help Each Other Understand Ideas or Concepts. *The Stanford Center for Teaching and Learning: Tomorrow's Professor*. Retrieved from <http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/cgi-bin/tomprof/posting.php?ID=1106>
- Kaplan, A., & Maehar, M. L. (1999). Enhancing the Motivation of African American Students: An Achievement Goal Theory Perspective. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 68(1), 23-41.
- Krovetz, M. (1999). *Fostering Resiliency: Expecting All Students to use Their Minds and Hearts Wells*. . Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Landry, R. (2009). The Effect of Segregation on Public Education. *Associated Content from Yahoo!*
- Lee, F. R. (1999). COPING; Testing Gap: Black, White and Gray Matter. *The New York Times*.
- Leigh, P. R. (2003). Interest Convergence and Desegregation in the Ohio Valley. *Journal of Negro Education*, 72(3), 269-296.
- Lev Vygotsky. (2010, November 11) *Wikipedia*. retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lev\\_Vygotsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lev_Vygotsky)
- Lopez, G. R. (2003). The (Racially Neutral) Politics of Education: A Critical Race Theory Perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(1), 68-94.
- Love, B. (2004). Brown Plus 50 Counter- Storytelling: A Critical Race Theory Analysis of the "Majoritarian Achievement Gap" Story. *Equity & Excellence*, 37(3), 227-246.
- Lund, C. L. (2010). The Nature of White Privilege in the Teaching and Training of Adults. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 125, 15-25.
- Lynn, M., & Adams, M. (2002). Introductory Overview to the Special Issue Critical Race Theory and Education: Recent Developments in the Field. *Equity & Excellence*, 35(2), 87-92.
- Lynn, M., Bacon, J. N., Totten, T. L., Bridges III, T. L., & Jennings, M. E. (2010). Examining Teachers' Beliefs About African American Male Students in a Low-Performing High School in an African American School District. *Teachers College Record*, 112(1), 289-330.

- Maton, K. I., & Hrabowski, F. A. (1998). Preparing the Way: A Qualitative Study of High Achieving African American Males and the Role of the Family. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 26(4), 639-668.
- McIntosh, P. (1988). *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*. Richmond, VA: Wellesley College.
- McMillan, J. H., & Reed, D. F. (1994). At-Risk Students and Resiliency: Factors Contributing to Academic Success. *The Clearing House*, 67(3), 137-140.
- Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Intergrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods* ( 2nd Edition ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Moje, E. B. (2000). "To Be Part of the Story": The Literacy Practices of Gangsta Adolescents. *Teachers College Record*, 102(3), 651-690.
- Moore III, J. L., Henfield, M. S., & Owens, D. (2008). African American Males in Special Education: Their Attitudes and Perceptions Toward High School Counselors and School Counseling Services. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51(7), 907-927.
- Morrison, H. R., & Epps, B. D. (2002). Warehousing or Rehabilitation? Public Schooling in the Juvenile Justice System. *Journal of Negro Education*, 71(3), 218-232.
- MSNBC Teacher Town Hall. (2010) [Television]. United States of American.
- Muhammad, C. G., Smith, M. J., & Duncan, G. A. (2008). College Choice and College Experiences: Intersections of Race and Gender along the Secondary to Post-Secondary Education Continuum. *The Negro Educational Review*, 59(3-4), 141-146.
- National Centers for Education Statistics. (2012). *Institute for Education Science*, Fast Facts: Teacher Trends.
- Noguera, P. A. (2002). The Trouble with Black Boys: The Role and Influence of Environmental and Cultural Factors on the Academic Performance of African American Males. *Urban Education*, 38(4), 431-459.
- Noguera, P. A. (2003). The Trouble with Black Boys: The Role and Influence of Environment and Cultural Factors on the Academic Performance of African American Males. [Journal Article]. *Urban Education*, 38(4), 431-459.
- Obiakor, F. E., & Beachum, F. D. (2005). Developing Self-Empowerment in African American Students Using the Comprehensive Support Model. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 74(1), 18-29.

- Ochs, E., & Shchieffelin, B. B. (1979). Transcription as Theory *Developmental Pragmatics* (pp. 43-72). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Oyserman, D., Grant, L., & Ager, J. (1995). A Socially Contextualized Model of African American Identity: Possible Selves and School Persistence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(6), 1216-1232.
- The Pennsylvania School Code: Academic Standards and Planning* (2014).
- Perry, T. (2011). *What is the Counter-Narrative*. Unpublished manuscript, Boston, MA.
- Perry, T., Steele, C., & Hilliard, A. (2003) *Young Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement Among African American Students* (pp. 3-19): Beacon Press.
- Polite, V. C. (1994). The Method in the Madness: African American Males, Avoidance Schooling, and Chaos Theory. *Journal of Negro Education*, 63(4), 588-601.
- The Principles of Learning for Effort Based Education. (2003) *Saint Paul Public Schools*. retrieved from <http://www.thecenter.spps.org/sites/1137e325-a981-4515-9273-14618ab0dec0/uploads/polv3-1.pdf>
- Putnam, R. (2001). Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences. *Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, 2(Spring), 41-51.
- Registration and Enrollment in PPS. (2013). 2014, from <http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/site/default.aspx?DomainID=23>
- Resnick, L., & Williams-Hall, M. (2003). The Principles of Learning for Effort Based Education. *Saint Paul Public Schools*.
- Resnick, L. B., & Nelson- Le Gall, S. (1997). Socializing Intelligence. *Research Development Center*, 1-24.
- Rollison, P. (Ed.) (2010) *Encyclopedia of Geography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Rosenthal, L. (2011, August 21, 2011). Academy at Westinghouse faculty pitches school in area of 'broken' promises  
*Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. Retrieved from <http://www.postgazette.com/stories/local/neighborhoods-city/academy-at-westinghouse-faculty-pitches-school-in-area-of-broken-promises-311096/>
- Salem, D. A., Zimmerman, M. A., & Notaro, P. C. (1998). Effects of Family Structure, Family Process, and Father Involvement on Psychosocial Outcomes Among African American Adolescents. *Family Relations*, 47(4), 331-341.

- Saunders, J., Davis, L., Williams, T., & Williams, J. H. (2004). Gender Differences in Self-Perceptions and Academic Outcomes: A Study of African American High School Students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 33(1), 81-90.
- Scott, L. D. (2003). The Relation of Racial Identity and Racial Socialization to Coping with Discrimination Among African American Adolescents. *Journal of Black Studies*, 33(4), 520-538.
- Serpell, Z., Hayling, C. C., Stevenson, H., & Kern, L. (2009). Cultural Considerations in the Development of School-Based Interventions for African American Adolescent Boys with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 78(3), 321-332.
- Singer, J. N. (2005). Understanding Racism Through the Eyes of African American Male Student-Athletes. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(4), 365-386.
- Singleton, G. E. (2006). *Courageous Conversations About Race*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Socializing Intelligence. (1997). *Research and Development Center*, 1-24.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). A Critical Race Counterstory of Race, Racism, and Affirmative Action. *Equity & Excellence*, 35(2), 155-168.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2010). Critical Race Methodology: Counterstorytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23-44.
- Sostek, A. (2011). The last class of Schenley represents bittersweet chapter in a proud history. *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. Retrieved from <http://www.postgazette.com/stories/local/neighborhoods-city/the-last-class-of-schenley-represents-bittersweet-chapter-in-a-proud-history-299832/#ixzz2TzDGoFFj>
- Stinson, D. W. (2006). African American Male Adolescents, Schooling (and Mathematics): Deficiency, Rejection, and Achievement. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(4), 477-506.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2010). When Race and Gender Collide: Social and Cultural Capital's Influence on the Academic Achievement of African American and Latino Males. *The Review of Higher Education*, 33(3), 307-332.
- Tatum, A. W. (2006). Engaging African American Males in Reading. *Educational Leadership*.
- Thompson, A. (2001). Summary of Whiteness Theory. University of Utah <http://pauhtun.org/Whiteness-Summary-1.html> October 4, 2014.
- Thompson, G. L. (2003). Predicting African American Parents' and Guardians' Satisfaction With Teachers and Public Schools. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 96(5), 277-285.

- Thompson, L. R., & Lewis, B. F. (2005). Shooting for the Stars: A Case Study of the Mathematics Achievement and Career Attainment of an African American Male High School Student. *The High School Journal*(April/May ).
- Tierney, W. G., & Dilley, P. (2001). *Handbook of Interview Research: Chapter 22 Interviewing in Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Toldson, I. A. (2011). *Breaking Barriers 2: Plotting the Path Away from Juvenile Detention and Toward Academic Success for School-age African American Males*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.
- Toma, J. D. (2011). *Sage Handbook for Research in Education: Engaging Ideas and Enriching Inquiry, Chapter 23 Approaching Rigor in Applied Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tomlinson, C. A., Gould, H., Schroth, S., & Jarvis, J. (2006). *Multiple Case Studies of Teachers and Classrooms Successful in Supporting Academic Success of High Potential Low Economic Students of Color*. Storrs, CT: University of Virginia.
- Trask-Tate, A. J., & Cunningham, M. (2010). Planning Ahead: The Relationship Among School Support, Parental Involvement, and Future Academic Expectations in African American Adolescents. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 79(2), 137-150.
- Trochim, W. M. K. (October 20, 2006). Structure of Research. *Research Methods: Knowledge Base*. Retrieved from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/>
- Vaught, S. E. (2008). The Color of Money: School Funding and the Commodification of Black Children. *Urban Education*, 44(5), 545-570.
- Vygotsky, L. (2010). Lev Vygotsky. *Wikipedia*.
- Warde, B. (2008). Staying the Course: Narratives of African American Males Who Have Completed a Baccalaureate Degree. *Journal of African American Studies*, 12, 59-72.
- Watkins, A. P. (2006). The Pedagogy of African American Parents: Learning From Educational Excellence in the African American Community. *Current Issues In Education*, 9(7).
- Weatherspoon, F. D. (2006). Racial Justice and Equity for African-American Males in the American Educational System: A Dream Deferred. *North Carolina Law Journal*, 29(1), 1-41.
- Weis, L. (2004). *Class Reunion: The Remaking of the American White Working Class*. New York, NY: Routledge.



- Wiggan, G. (2008). From Opposition to Engagement: Lessons from High Achieving African American Students. *The Urban Review*, 40(4), 317-349.
- Wilson-Jones, L., & Cain Caston, M. Cooperative Learning on Academic Achievement in Elementary African American Males. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 31(4), 280-283.
- Wing Sue, D., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., et al. (2007). Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271-286.
- Wong, C. A., Eccles, J. S., & Sameroff, A. (2003). The Influence of Ethnic Discrimination and Ethnic Identification on African American Adolescents' School and Socioemotional Adjustment. *Journal of Personality*, 71(6), 1197-1232.
- Woodland, M. H., Martin, J. F., Hill, R. L., & Worrell, F. C. (2009). The Most Blessed Room in the City: The Influence of a Youth Development Program on Three Young Black Males. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 78(3), 223-245.
- Wyatt, S. (2009). The Brotherhood: Empowering Adolescent African-American Males Toward Excellence. *Professional School of Counseling*, 12(6), 463-470.
- Yan, W. (1999). Successful African American Students: The Role of Parental Involvement. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 68(1), 5-22.