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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

STRATEGIES AIMED AT HELPING AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS  
SUCCEED IN UNITED STATES SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A METASYNTHESIS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy  
by

Chibuzo N. Azinge-Walton

July, 2020

Latrissa Lee Neiworth, Ed.D. – Doctoral Committee Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to many remarkable people: To my brilliant, wonderful, and very well accomplished father, Dr. Japhet Bialichi (JB) Azinge. I miss you dearly. You are my hero, role model BW, and Guardian Angel. You live forever in my heart. My moxie is from you

To my very exemplary, and loving mother, Mrs. Marcellina Ogugua “OG” Azinge. You persevered and shaped our characters. I am forever grateful to God for you. I miss you, too

To my loving, capable, diverse, and inspirational children Chinye, Ngozi, Chidimma, and Onyedika and my enterprising son-in-law, Izeal. Chinye, you are my rock, and you always rock

To my sister Mezia, and brothers Jide, Chidi, and Eloka, for being there for me always, constantly cheering me on, and never giving up on my sometimes obstinate, but caring stance

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To all my Azinge, Nwokolo, Odogwu, Allanah, Okonkwo, Dodo M’Fashi, Bowman, O’Brien, Awogu, Ilo, Walton, Crosslin aunties, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, in-laws, etc

To my friends Queen, Mau, Lenny, Fidelia, Umy, Moukhtari, Tyann, Reina, Imoke, Oyiba, Sandra, Chioma, Ngozi (x2), Laurie B, Dayo, Peggy, Atty Moses, Joyce, Sunday, & Ada

To my grandson, Zyere Arinze Bowman. You are my breath of fresh air, the wind beneath my wings, and a great source of joy. Grandma loves you, future NBA player and owner

To my granddaughter, Zacari Amara Bowman, precious angel. Grandma loves you too

To my first husband/confidant, Lamido Dodo, and my second, Gary “humorous” Walton

To my stepmother and half siblings, whose presence and daily “activities” are a constant reminder of why this study needed to be completed, and the ultimate goal achieved, regardless...

To Nigeria, the United States, and the U.S. Army, for the platform to showcase my abilities, pride, strength, courage, dedication, loyalty, sense of service, and love of country

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To my motivating supporters Tochukwu Ogbachalu MOTL, Ihuoma, Paulette, Chris, Omar, Nawaf, Celso, Annetex, Judith, Nkiru, Godlove, Victor, Emma, Bala, Atty Emeka, Charles, Ukariah, Loveth, Jane (x2), Linda (x2), Asele, Uyi, Obasi, Ndy, Uju, Nnogo, Ofunne (x2), Elizabeth, Chuka, Henry, Chudy, Janet, Joseph, Rita, Shade, Tinuke, Nduka, Solomon, Wendy, Jo Ann, Anthonia, Kofo, John, Uchenna, Mildred, Unsinkable, Obi, Delores, Cece, Tina, Christie (x2), Amoge, Abdul and other very dear friends, who indirectly played a role in the completion of my doctoral dissertation and the realization of my quest for a Doctorate Degree in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy (ELAP). God bless and endow you all.

## VITA

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- National Defense Svc Medal, 2<sup>nd</sup> Award (NDSM) and Global War on Terrorism Svc Medal (GWOTSM)
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## ABSTRACT

The persistent disparity in graduation rates between Black and White male students in U.S. secondary schools (the achievement gap) despite repeated efforts to even it out, is a thorn in the flesh of educators, the country over. The elimination of this continuous disparity through viable solutions, is the focus of this study. A problem is ninety percent solved when it is thoroughly understood, with its comprehension necessitating a large investment of thought, time, and resources (Einstein, 1879-1955). To fully grasp the inner pinning of the achievement gap dilemma, this researcher selected, read, and reviewed 50 subject matter-related archived articles/studies obtained from Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses web sites through Pepperdine University's Databases and E-Journals. From a thorough thematically-based qualitative metasynthesis of the selection, through the lenses of three research questions and the backbone of four related theories, emerged two overarching themes that put a spotlight on: (a) the urgency to stop disregarding the positive efforts made by African American male students and laud/report on them, and (b) the need to celebrate the lives and lived experiences of Black boys. The two emergent themes of this study could, indeed, be the achievement gap gamechanger. They amplify the importance of using the positive approach when interacting with Black high school boys in particular who hitherto have experienced adversities like racism, stereotyping, discrimination, and the marginalization of the positive events in their lives. Great benefits abound from using positive approach strategies to educate all high school students, however, positivizing the lived experiences of Black high school boys is monumental.

*Keywords:* African American males, success, socio-economic background, achievement gap, cultural response, inalienable right, empowerment, effective strategies, U.S. secondary schools, academic disidentification, Black high school boys, stereotyping, discrimination

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background

Despite the best efforts of educators to do right by Black male students, the same sad statistics of low academic performance are reported time after time (Whitaker, 2010). Casserly (2012, as cited in Lewis, Casserly, Simon, Uzzell & Palacios, 2012) was appalled by the dismal rate of the overall academic performance of Black males not only in the cities and suburbs, but also in the country, as a whole. Every year, according to Casserly (2012, as cited in Lewis et al., 2012), all 50 states in the Union report a wide academic performance gap between African American male secondary school students and their White counterparts.

The core and passion of this study are aptly captured by some famous quotes from notable authors, activists, scholars, lawyers, and heads of state. Here are three very cogent ones:

Those who complain that the Negro problem is always with us and apparently insoluble must not forget that under this vague and general designation are gathered many social problems and many phases of the same problem; that these problems and phases have passed through a great evolutionary circle; and that to-day especially, one may clearly see a repetition vaster but similar of the great cycle of the past. (DuBois, 1909, p. 142)

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek” (Obama, 2008, para. 34).

We should emphasize not Negro History, but Negro in history. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race, hate, and religious prejudice. There should be no indulgence in undue eulogy of the Negro. The case of the Negro is well taken care of when it is shown how he has far influenced the development of civilization. (Woodson, 1927, p. 105)

## The Black-White achievement score gap in mathematics for public school students at grade 8, by state or jurisdiction: 2007

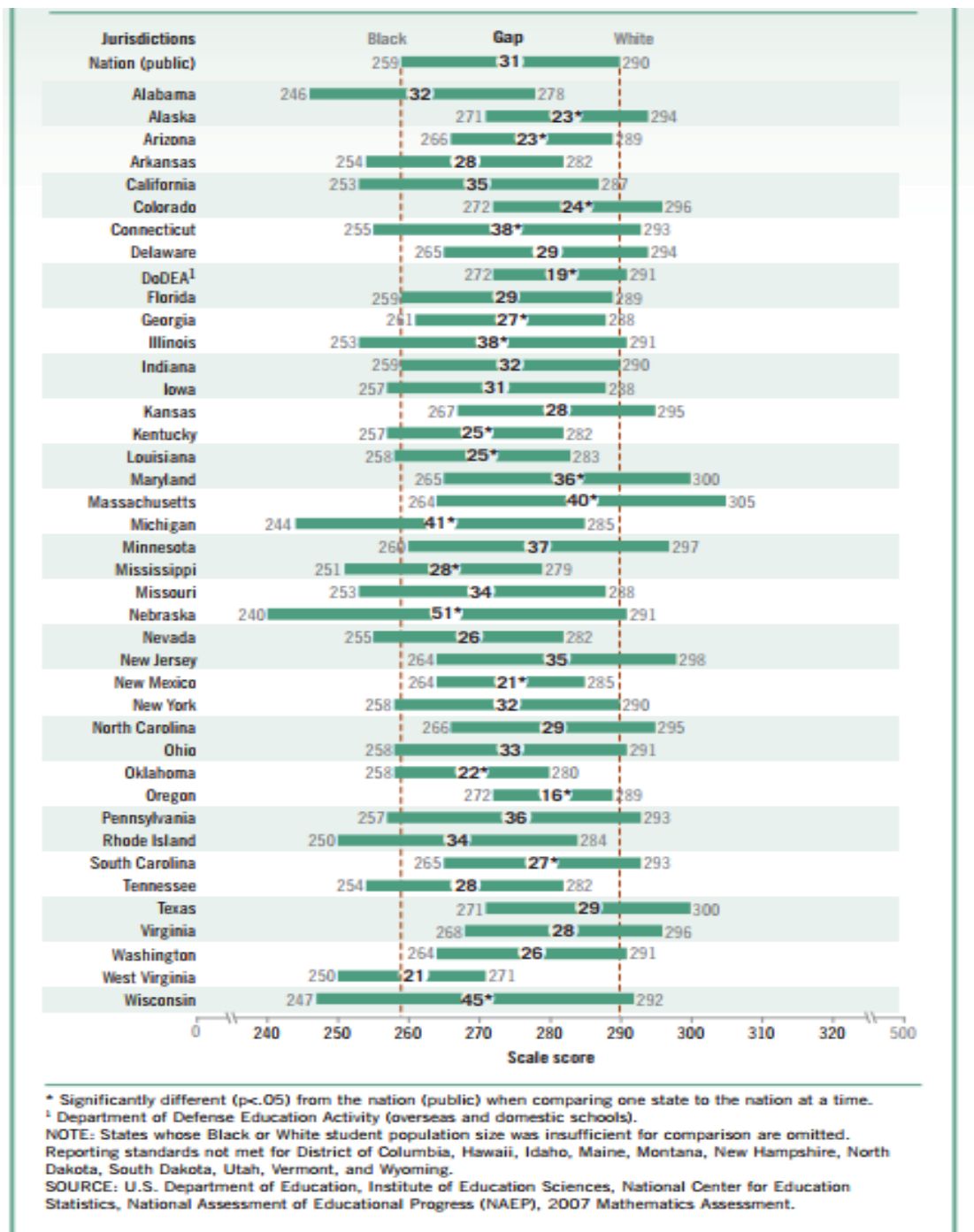


Figure 1. Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 mathematics assessment. (Reprinted with the permission of the U.S. Department of Education.)



**The Black-White achievement score gap in reading for public school students at grade 8, by state or surisdiction: 2007**

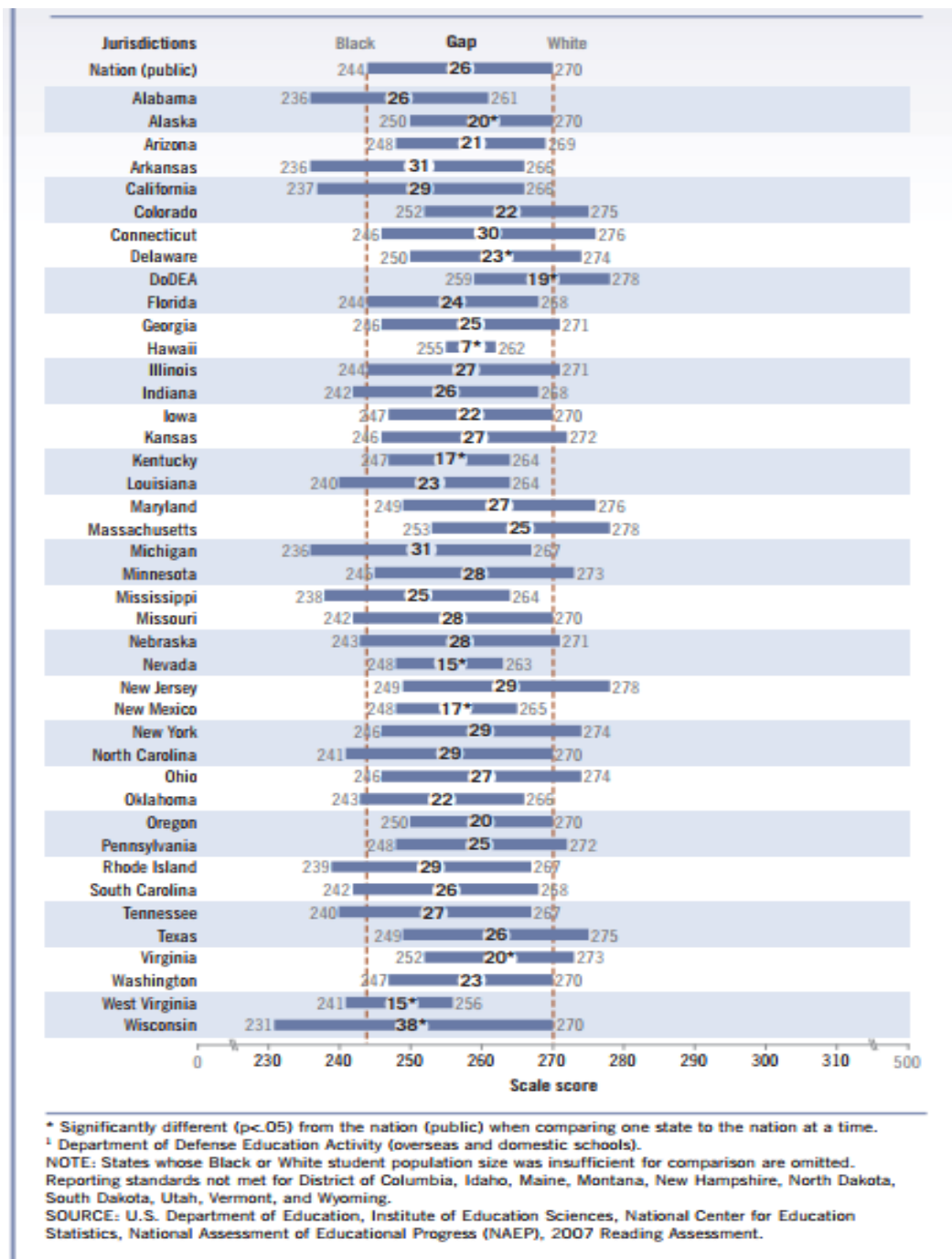


Figure 2. Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 reading assessment. (Reprinted with the permission of the U.S. Department of Education.)

According to Green, White, and Green (2012) in a paper presented at the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Conference of the Council of the Great City Schools (2012), by Grade 4, only 12% of African American male students could read at grade level or above, as compared to 38% of White males. This 12% reading performance of the Black male students was expected to decrease further to 9% by the time they got to Grade 8 (Green et al., 2012). African American male students dropped out of school at two times the rate of White males and in the big metropolitan cities in the U.S., that dropout rate was as high as 50% (Green et al., 2012). Furthermore, Green et al. (2012) reported that more Black male students of secondary school age were arrested than did graduate from high school, a situation that was particularly true of young Black males living in neighborhoods in south Los Angeles, California (Green et al., 2012).

Facing very grim African American male student academic performance statistics, the Council of Great City Schools (2012) had to devise a plan for “improving the performance of all students” (p. 15). With “closing the achievement gap as one of its most important priorities” (p. 15), the Council of Great City Schools (2012), at its 55<sup>th</sup> annual fall conference, “conducted numerous presentations to national organizations, community groups, state and federal legislators and business leaders on Council efforts to improve student achievement” (p. 16).

The study report of the 54<sup>th</sup> annual fall conference of the Council of the Great City Schools (2011) stated that 5% of college entrants and 36% of prison inmates nationwide were Black males. According to the report, those were very grim Black male performance numbers and a poor reflection of the way African American males were regarded and treated in the U.S. For educational researchers all over the country, this dire performance of Black males was not only an African American crisis, but also a U.S. crisis as most high school and college dropouts ended up on public assistance programs that put an \$8 billion annual dent in the pockets of

taxpayers (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010). On average, it cost way less (about \$14,000) annually to educate a person in a community college than it cost (\$25,000) to imprison him/her (Lewis et al., 2010). One would think that this cost absurdity would stir educational policies and decisions in the right direction, instead, immense youth potential and talent are regularly squandered at the feet of apathy with a nonchalant attitude towards the true realities (Lewis et al., 2010). This study's findings ended up as a call to action for researchers, educational personnel, and educational establishments around the country to sincerely evaluate the crisis of continuous low academic performance of African American youth, and find a lasting solution (Lewis et al., 2010).

### Gaps in average mathematics scores between Black and White public school students at grade 8, by gender: various years, 1990–2007

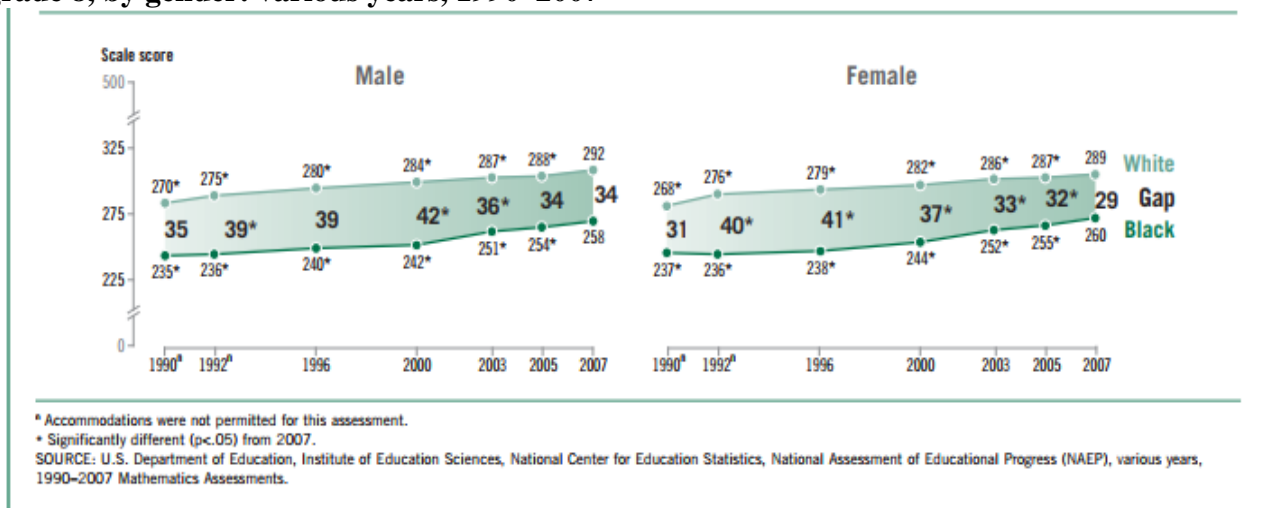


Figure 3. Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 mathematics assessment. (Reprinted with the permission of the U.S. Department of Education.)

### Gaps in average reading scores between Black and White public school students at grade 8, by gender: various years, 1990–2007

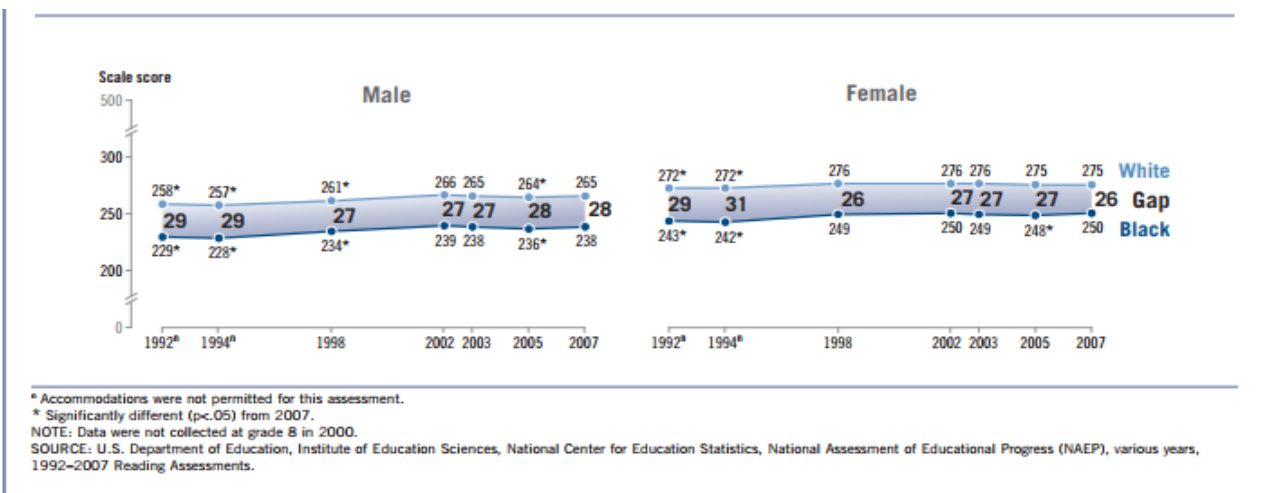


Figure 4. Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 reading assessment. (Reprinted with the permission of the U.S. Department of Education.)

In helping us better understand the four NAEP data-oriented figures above that show Black-White public school students' achievement score gaps in reading and mathematics nationwide and by gender, Vanneman, Hamilton, Anderson, and Rahman (2009) told us the following:

NAEP results are provided for groups of students defined by shared characteristics—race/ethnicity, eligibility for free/reduced-price school lunch, and gender. In all main NAEP assessments, data about student race/ethnicity are collected from two sources: school records and student self-reports. In this report, the race/ethnicity variable has been based on the race reported by the school for all assessment years. In the rare cases where school recorded information is missing, student-reported data are used to determine race/ethnicity. (p.55)

In sharp contrast to the dismal nature of the academic performance of the Black male secondary school student is the success of certain other Black male students who find ways to succeed despite the challenges they face. Surely, there are lessons that can be learned from their resilience and successes which can be useful towards rescuing those that are struggling academically or outright failing.

Could stemming the tide of stereotype threat which negatively impacts the social identity and self-esteem of African American male students help to solve that part of the achievement gap that is not elucidated by their past academic performances or their demographics (Borman & Grigg, 2013)? Could the success of the few be used as a positive mantra towards understanding the failure of the many?

Much of the research on Black male achievement present troublesome statistics, and often negative stories, about their chances of academic success. The plethora of negative findings is alarming and often neglects the insight of students themselves and the potential solutions for these obstacles. (Scott, Taylor, and Palmer, 2013, p. 288)

Could the solution to the bridging of the academic achievement gap that exists between Black and White male students lie in the building of counter narratives to suppress the barrage of negative perceptions of the academic ability of the African American male student? These were some of the questions behind this metasynthesis study that gave this researcher the legitimacy to examine the ways male students of African American provenance were being schooled, and to see whether or not the mitigative strategies being applied were effective. One cannot keep doing things the same way expecting different results.

The continued negative student achievement outcome of the Black male student has been a thorn in the flesh of everyone that has had anything to do with educating American youth

(Madyun, 2011). What he referred to as student achievement outcome is today termed the achievement gap:

Closely related to learning gap and opportunity gap, the term achievement gap refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students, such as white students and minorities, for example, or students from higher-income and lower-income households. (Great Schools Partnership, 2014, p. 1)

Some of the reasons behind this crucial study, therefore, have been to find out why the academic achievement of male high school students of African American descent was under par and why this trend has continued to cause grave concern despite immense measures taken to improve it. Another reason was to examine the alleviation strategies that have been used so far for their viability. According to Madyun (2011), the achievement gap persists and continues to widen in spite of the academic, social, economic, and moral strategies that have been applied throughout history to solve the problem, some of which have worked and some of which have not (Madyun, 2011). The uplifting part of the problem is that solution efforts have continued as society has refused to give up on these young men who are very essential parts of American life and society. Whether or not the economic strife, the type and caliber of teachers and school administrators, the make-up of one's family, the level of self-efficacy, and the atmosphere of the school are to blame for the achievement gap remains in constant debate (Madyun, 2011).

Educators, researchers, and policy makers have continued to seek for and design intervention strategies aimed at making Black male students fair better in the academic arena hoping that their efforts would eventually close the achievement gap (Horowitz & Samuels, 2017). One of such intervention strategies was the one designed and implemented by Travis and

Ausbrooks (2012). The intervention program, EMPOWERMENTODAY, sought to improve the school performance of the African American male secondary school student by using the familiar hip-hop culture to pique his interest in the pursuit and completion of high school, junior college, and university education (Travis & Ausbrooks, 2012). EMPOWERMENTODAY helped African American boys persist through high school challenges and move towards graduation and beyond by having them set achievable goals and action steps. (Travis & Ausbrooks, 2012). Unfortunately, despite the trial of multifaceted strategies, the recalcitrant achievement gap has never been bridged since 1954 when all U.S. schools were integrated and Black and White students were held to the same performance standards by the famous Brown v. Board of Education U.S. Supreme Court decision (Chubb & Loveless, 2002). Regrettably, the gap has widened because there are other hidden factors outside the school campus that are not easily identified or linked to the problems that are hindering progress of Black male academic performance (Chubb & Loveless, 2002). Regardless, it was particularly important for researchers to find, unmask, know, and understand those hidden factors, especially when studying populations of color and the multiple problems therein.

Some education researchers have turned to social disorganization theory for answers to the achievement gap problem. Social disorganization theory was first developed by Shaw and McKay (1942) (as cited in Kubrin, 2010, and later revitalized by Kornhauser (1978). In explanation of the hidden factors that impeded the academic achievement of African American male students, Kornhauser (1978) espoused, that as people and lives undergo a series of progressive changes of upward and downward shifts, so do society and social order. When different sections of society are in harmony, there exists social order and a well-structured

environment that bring about success as opposed to the social disorganization and chaos from societal maladjustments and disequilibrium that lead to failure (Kornhauser, 1978).

The importance of social disorganization theory in the quest for a justifiable explanation of the continued academic underperformance of male students of African American descent cannot not be overemphasized because it can easily knock an otherwise thriving society out of alignment (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). There cannot not be a better understanding of social disorganization without the study of social order (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). Social order maintenance is problematic and has been so for generations because it is a difficult task, especially for young or budding societies that are testing the waters and trying to find their footing and direction (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). Since social order, in of itself, is positive and can only be understood alongside its opposite, social disorganization, order maintenance therefore, is a pre-condition of the proper functioning of human society (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). One must understand order, to fully comprehend disorder, and social order to fully grasp the concept of social disorder or social disorganization, as in this case. Therefore, social disorganization is considered social order gone awry (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010).

When a society is extremely poor, it becomes susceptible to societal ills as its citizens struggle to make ends meet (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). In the process, they divest from positive means of making money and resort to faster, more dubious means like robbery, extortion, and drug dealing (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). High crime rates are often attributed to the dysfunction of society and that dysfunction often emerges from the destitution and desperation that are prevalent in inner cities (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). Most inner cities in the U.S. have a high concentration of poor minority



ethnicities that often lack the wherewithal to pull themselves out of the jaws of economic decline (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). Among those poor minority ethnicities are African Americans who have struggled with racial discrimination and profiling, high levels of unemployment, and shortage of decent amenities that make life livable for generations. In light of the above, it becomes a tall order to expect an African American male student coming from these dire societal circumstances to fare well in school.

When the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision to desegregate schools that were separating students based on their race brought with it social disorganization and serious issues that were not immediately obvious, professionals in the education arena had to rethink the way they did business and figure out ways to carry the African American students along (Pruitt, 2018). School teachers, school principals, local district administrators, state operatives, and federal government education agencies all had to re-examine their handling of student affairs and student development. They had to work together to find ways to accommodate students from various backgrounds. Teachers and school administrators had to tackle, head on, the challenges that came with the cultural differences of their students.

Since the desegregation of schools occurred in America, White students have continuously outperformed Black students in the academic achievement and educational success arenas (Pruitt, 2018). Black students in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade are performing at levels equivalent to that of White 8<sup>th</sup> grade students (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). In attempts to explain why this achievement gap exists, people concerned have cast blame on causal factors like parental negligence, the deterioration of family values, the poor quality of schools, inadequate teachers, poor pedagogy especially one that is not tailored to the background of Black male students (Brown, 2009), lack of academic drive, and an individual's flawed psychological make-up

(Pruitt, 2018). However, the mounds of generating elements that pile have up against the achievement gap issue has only gone towards increasing the multiplicity of the problem. It is as much an educational problem as it is a social one, and more so now, a political one. In spite of the law banning the segregation of schools in 1954 (Chubb & Loveless, 2002), segregation still exists in a masked form because of the zoning laws that exclude working class and low-socioeconomic people, who are mostly African-American, from certain neighborhoods thereby limiting their access to better quality schools and education (Pruitt, 2018). For there to be improvement, the problem must be tackled at all levels of causality. Current literature on the issue focus more on the negative educational and social aspects creating a missed opportunity to hit at the heart of the problem (Floyd, 1996; Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 2015; Harper, 2015; Lewis et al., 2010). Until educational authorities start changing their negative views of the ability and potential of the African American male student, until there are more than enough counter-narratives to neutralize the adverse articles that are already in existence, and until the authorities stop treating the achievement gap problem in isolation as an African American problem, they will continue to do a dis-service to that section of the educational population that most needs them and that is least able to pull itself out of the quagmire because of the societal racial and discriminatory odds stacked up against it (Floyd, 1996; Graham et al., 2015; Harper, 2015; Lewis et al., 2010).

William Julius Wilson (1987) elaborated on the social side of the achievement gap he termed the black-white test score gap problem, with its myriads of multiplicity. According to Wilson (1987), the African Americans that were well off and referred to as the middle-class Blacks, by their actions, unintentionally created another class of Blacks that were poorer and not so sophisticated. They accomplished this higher economic status by requiring better

opportunities for themselves and their children and ensuring that they got them (Wilson, 1987). When the middle class blacks refused to settle for less by asking for the same services and amenities as their White counterparts and relocated, in most instances, to harness those higher class opportunities, they left behind those who were too poor and unable to afford making the same move for a better life (Wilson, 1987). When the more affluent African Americans left their homes and communities in pursuit of bigger and better things, they left behind social disorganization without really meaning to (Wilson, 1987). The future generation they left behind did not see any avenue to a brighter future and succumbed to their fate (Patton, Woolley, & Hong, 2012). Rather than be motivated by the exigency to rise above poverty for their betterment, the African American males in these poor communities turned to quick fixes and fast money from narcotics trading, essentially turning to a life of crime (Patton et al., 2012). An unemployed mouth needs to be fed and, in desperation, will most likely go the wrong way especially when help, redirection, and the right role models are missing from that community (Patton et al., 2012).

One cannot, in all fairness, blame poverty alone for the diminished circumstances of those in the lowest socio-economic status (SES) since being poor is not a permanent debilitating condition. What are to blame, however, are the lack of motivation for improvement and the lack of access to the higher end products and services in education that come with affluence (Wilson, 1987). As a key community-level component in explaining the achievement gap that hit the communities of color the hardest particularly in the 1990s, it becomes pertinent to conduct a deeper analysis and have a better understanding of the role of poverty in education (Wilson, 1987). Many children of African American descent were either from poor families or very susceptible to the negative effects of poverty and more so between 1994 and 1996 where a mere

39 out of every 100 African American children born were born into wealth compared to 90 of every 100 White children (Wilson, 1987). One can easily see from this piece of data, that African American children are set up for failure from birth. Poverty is not a good thing, however concentrated poverty, where more than 40 out of every 100 people in a particular community are living in abject poverty, is dire (Wilson, 1987).

From the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (1950) to near the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1990), concentrated poverty was of grave concern, and more especially so for people of African American descent (Wilson, 1987). It definitely had a negative effect on the educational success rate of the African American children of that time and the fact that this same group of children is still underperforming in U.S. schools today is very troubling to governments and civilians alike (Wilson, 1987). There is no doubt that there is a correlation between concentrated poverty and the academic performance of children in concentrated poverty situations (Wilson, 1987). More studies in this area are needed but it would be more helpful if those studies are done from a perspective that does not demean African American students especially male students who are the ones facing the most educational challenges.

In order to be deemed a productive member of society, one must be able to contribute in a very meaningful way, uplift oneself, and enlighten everyone around them. Having exposure to basic education is a big step towards people being meaningfully productive in society. That is why everyone must have an opportunity to be educated. In accordance with this view, the United Nations, of which the U.S. is a member, recognizes education as a basic human right, one that is deeply embedded in, and well protected by the U.S. Bill of Rights (Lee, 2013). At the least, Americans should be able to read, write, and calculate. Everyone should also have equal access to exceptional education. Equal opportunity in all aspects of education should also be

afforded to all Americans. All high school students, for example, should have equal opportunity to participate in Advanced Placement (AP) classes as opposed to the way it is now where White students are favored over African American students and other minorities (Moore & Slate 2008). Just as education opens doors to higher paying wages, better economic conditions, and an elevated social status, people feel empowered and have higher self-esteem and self-efficacy when they are knowledgeable, well-educated, and well-informed (Markham, 2014).

The destructive aftermath of the unavailability, inequality, marginalization, and sometimes outright denial of basic education to certain groups of people in U.S. society, especially poor people of color, is catastrophic (Harper). Its persistence, and the urgency to reverse this unfortunate trend, is the reason for this study. When people are facing unfortunate circumstances, the worst thing they can do is highlight their situation, play the blame game, persecute others for the situation, and then do nothing to help alleviate it (Harper, 2015). Harper (2015) made it known that he was unhappy with the fact that much of the literature written to address the poor academic performance of people of color in high schools and urban areas is adverse and unfavorable. If the literature, he added, was not talking about mayhem and the disintegration of the family unit in the black communities, it was pointing out the shortcomings and inability of the black communities to deliver on various undertakings – the achievement gap blame game. If the articles were not focusing on the crime rate in urban cities, they were highlighting the vulnerability of the young men to the perils of their society brought on by poverty (Harper, 2015). In the urban elementary schools, high schools, junior colleges, or universities, the literature is singing the same tune of doom and gloom about the educational opportunities and academic capabilities of African American males (Harper, 2015). Not only do Black male students encounter negative criticism of their academic performance in elementary,

middle, and high school, the negative criticism and reporting follow them to institutions of higher learning, each time, questioning their ability to perform in an educational capacity or whether it was even possible for them to ever experience success (Harper, 2015).

For years, the K-12 education system has been held accountable for the lack of achievement of the African American male student but not the community college institutions of higher learning (Bush & Bush, 2004). Since “research shows that community colleges remain the predominant entry point for postsecondary instruction among students of color and particularly among African American students” (Perrakis, 2008, p. 16), it becomes more crucial than ever to hold them accountable in an effort to bridge the achievement gap. This is more so when community college student graduation rates history, especially that of their African American male student population, looks like this:

According to U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2005) data, black men have earned 5 percent fewer baccalaureate degrees since 1990. The same data set reveals that black men have earned 5 percent fewer associate degrees in the past seventeen years. Yet 3 percent more African American men today remain enrolled in community colleges after five years from the date of first matriculation. Given that the average time to transfer for an entering fulltime community college student is three years, a student who remains on a community college campus after five years is statistically less likely to transfer. (Perrakis, 2008, p. 18)

Pope (2006) affirms the lack of transfer evidenced by black students, noting that in 2002, African American students earned only 10.7 percent of all associate degrees awarded, even though they represented 12 percent of the total community college student enrollment.

In light of the above dismal African American community college student academic performance record, Bush and Bush (2004), in one of their most recent articles, “Beware of False Promises”, challenged community colleges to self-examine and improve the way they handled the issues of institutional racism and very low Black student achievement that was rampant in their educational system. Nevertheless, in all the applicable articles, inner city schools and higher-learning institutions collectively have been given a black eye and portrayed as prodigal institutions facing social disorganization. They have been called to order to address their problems and return their academic institutions to the fold of social order (Bush & Bush, 2004).

Harper (2015) vividly described what he called the deficit narratives of the educational possibility of the students in dysfunctional inner-city schools, going as far as to describe their school environments in extremely negative terms. The inner city schools were often huge, dull, and unsafe institutions where not much teaching and acquisition of knowledge went on and where the educators that worked in them described their work places as displeasing and unattractive to potential employees and quality teachers (Harper, 2015). There was a heavy reliance on teachers with emergency certification because these schools had a difficult time hiring fully credentialed teachers and when they were fortunate enough to higher quality educators, those teachers would leave after one or two years to seek better working conditions elsewhere (Harper, 2015). Not only were these highly qualified teachers fed up with students who did not seem enthused by school or care about academic advancement, they were also frustrated by the lack of adequate resources, poor leadership, unsafe workplace, and an unstable environment (Harper, 2015). They often became envious of their colleagues working at more affluent high performing schools where students got everything they needed to be successful,

including current textbooks, updated technology, fully involved parents, and a personal motivation to succeed (Harper, 2015).

Furthermore, Harper (2015) reiterated that schools are reflective of their neighborhoods and when neighborhoods are unkempt, riddled with dangerous drugs, and full of crime, so are their schools and educational environments. He also alluded to the alarming nature of the apathy among residents of these impetuous communities and the fact that parents seemed oblivious to the ills of their society that were negatively impacting the academic performance of their children, especially their college-going culture. It was no wonder therefore, that schools in troubled environments got obliterated by reformers of education and politicians looking to make a name for themselves as these schools became unsalvageable (Harper, 2015). Success did not thrive in dysfunctional places, so people got rid of such places because they did not see any hope of improvement. To sum it all up in Harper (2015)'s words, "this is the master narrative about urban high schools in the U.S. They are the worst. They are found at the very bottom of just about every statistical metric of educational progress" (p.646).

Harper (2015) went on to say that apathetic students who were often absent, nonchalant, and disrespectful to their teachers were particularly challenging to teach while their uniform of choice seemed to be the sagging pants with slightly exposed undershorts. He said their sneakers were more important than their education; school was not their priority; they often did poorly on tests; their suspension and expulsion rates were high; they had an intimidating presence that scared away teachers especially White female teachers, a stance that was very detrimental because White female teachers comprised a large percentage of the teaching workforce; they ruined the learning environment for everyone else; most of them wanted to be rappers and athletes thereby wanting nothing to do with intellect; they often ended up as high school drop



outs with no hope of continuing on to college; and the ones that eventually made it to college failed to graduate at rates higher than those of their peers. This master narrative that was rendered about Black and Latino male students was what Harper (2015) reiterated needed to change as it did nothing to forward the academic prowess of African American students severally, and African American male students particularly.

However, there was no doubt, according to Wilson (1987) that high school graduation and its culminating diploma open doors, foster opportunity for educational accomplishments, and offer better life options for young Americans. He said that African American males continue to fall short of walking through those open doors and sometimes have the doors shut in their faces when they try. This failure to walk through the doors of educational opportunity, Wilson (1987) reiterated, has been a major concern of his. His more recent insight into this problem came from his examination of American traditional beliefs, historical stances, and existing data. He revealed that there was a time in American history when big metropolitan cities went through economic decline; obsolete factories closed down causing the disappearance of jobs and financial hardships; climate changes resulted in the disappearance of climate-related jobs; and those once working class communities became riddled with joblessness and, ultimately, crime. He added that since the schools in those communities could not be insulated from the social disorganization in their communities, they became mirrors of the societal ills, comprised mainly of students from very poor backgrounds whose parents were economically disadvantaged due to the denial of greater opportunities because of their race or skin color. Some of these parents, he said, were also unable to get decent paying jobs in their communities because they were undocumented/illegal, which rendered them unable to get pertinent work permits and which, in

turn, denied them the financial ability to move to better neighborhoods and leave behind the decrepit state of their immediate circumstances.

Despite intervention measures in impacted schools across the country, the ghost of the academic achievement gap continued to loom large. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 passed during the George W. Bush presidency uncovered the imbalance in the educational goods and services that White students in the more affluent neighborhoods and communities received as opposed to those made available to students of African American descent in the poorer communities (Donnor & Shockley, 2010). Despite decades of efforts concentrated every day of the school year on closing the achievement gap, African American and Caucasian students continue to experience hugely different treatment and get very divergent test results in their schools (Donnor & Shockley, 2010). Academic performance of Black and White students in the U.S., whether measured by differing parameters and through various avenues like drop-out rates, grades earned from teacher-made tests, portfolio performance scores, school test scores obtained from standardized assessments, or the rates at which students finish from junior college and universities, continues to be alarmingly different with Black students performing at the lowest end of the totem pole (Donnor & Shockley, 2010).

Encouraging and teaching self-efficacy early to African American boys is widely believed to be the one unique intellectual element that could make the difference in their academic pursuits (Donnor & Shockley, 2010). Self-efficacy fosters a rare sense of superiority, self- confidence, and self-acceptance that help one connect to other humans anywhere in the world with the drive to succeed (Donnor & Shockley, 2010). Self-efficacy is a sure banker in the quest to turn around the poor academic performance of the African American male student (Uwah, McMahon, & Furlow, 2008). Armed with enthusiasm, elevated participation urges, high

educational aspirations, and academic self-efficacy, the sky will be their limit (Uwah et al., 2008).

Researchers such as Reardon, Valentino, Kalogrides, Shores, and Greenberg (2013) have spent a great amount of time on the achievement gap issue and the result has been this great big push to narrow it down, at least, and to shut it down, at best. Their focus, however, has been mostly on male performance, be it that of African American males, Latino males, Native American males, Caucasian males, or Asian males, and albeit to the detriment of female academic performance. However, academic performance issues are not, and should not be treated as gender or race-specific issues since they permeate every gender, racial group, and aspect of society. To this end, the U.S. Department of Education (2006) shed more light on academic achievement across the board, to include African American female students.

The U.S. Department of Education (2006) told us that despite added efforts made by Black students in the last ten years to close the achievement gap, it has actually widened, putting the African American student dropout rate at nearly 15% while that of their White counterparts was half as much at 7.5%. The report revealed that low income and ethnic minority students who attended dysfunctional schools with inadequate course offerings and who were taught by unqualified teachers had very limited to no access to a rigorous curriculum and as such could not be expected to fare well academically. In the report, most educators harped on the lack of achievement of African American male students making people believe that they were incapable of meeting high expectations and closing the achievement gap data that often portrayed them in negative light as being three grade levels behind their White counterparts especially in mathematics and English. Interestingly enough, this underachievement view of Black male students was contrary to traditional academic stereotypes and average ability attributions that

avored Black boys in math and Black girls in English (Swinton, Kurtz-Costes, Rowley, & Okeke-Adeyanju, 2011). Termed success ability attributions by gender/stereotype endorsement, it highlighted what some researchers have known for some time but had not been inclined to report which is that African American male students do succeed in math and thereby trigger other successes (Swinton et al., 2011). When African American students associate their academic successes with their ability to deliver, it has a positive impact on their classroom involvement and academic attainment (Swinton et al., 2011).

The U.S. Department of Education (2006) report also said that while some researchers harped on the structural hindrances to Black male academic success caused by their misplacement in special education programs, placement in low academic track classes, and underrepresentation in Advanced Placement (AP) and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs, others stressed on the fact that many black students who are qualified to take AP classes are not afforded the opportunity. These imperfections in the U.S. system, the report said, made it exceedingly difficult for African American male students to successfully compete with their White counterparts, ultimately causing them irreparable damage well into their adult lives.

Placement in special education claims to be based on objective referral, unbiased assessment, rigorous evaluation, accurate eligibility determination, appropriate placement for rendering services, and a plan for students to exit the system when services are no longer required (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). “However, the process has failed to work in the way it was intended for many whose experiences are still burdened by biased judgment and inequitable treatment that continually thwart their academic, intellectual, and economic potential” (Wright, Crawford, & Counsell, 2016, p. 39).

What makes the culture of special education problematic in general (and for African Americans in particular) is that it over-emphasizes the “medical (deficit) model,” which conflates racial identity with deficit thinking that, in turn, negatively impacts African American males with disabilities as incapable of learning and achieving at high levels (Wright et al., 2016, p. 39).

Nevertheless: “In spite of the aforementioned attitudinal barriers, academic success is possible when African American males are taught within culturally responsive and nurturing school settings” (Wright et al., 2016, p. 39).

In addition to the inequalities in achievement levels between Black and White male students as was shown by the disaggregated data, was the underperformance of African American males relative to African American females (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The report stated that the greatest gender gap of any student demographic group was the one that existed between black male students and their female counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). According to the report, the college graduation rate of African American male students at 34.2%, was a very low number when paired up against that of their African American female counterparts at 44.7% and was the lowest rate of any race or gender. Additionally, the performance gap that existed between African American males and their female counterparts was largest during the transitional period from middle to high school (Roderick, 2003). That the African American male high school freshmen were not highly regarded by their teachers, did not help matters (Roderick, 2003). To compound it all, by graduation time, twice as many Black females (80%) as Black males (40%) graduated (Roderick, 2003). By examining over a certain period the lived school experience of every African American male student in his study, Roderick (2003) hoped to learn the correlation, if any, between academic performance and

middle/high school adolescence. The grave graduation rate and the inadequate education of Black males have very dire consequences to include the discouragement of this most underemployed, unemployed, and incarcerated of any other student population from attending and completing college (Roderick, 2003).

On the other spectrum of this whole educational inequality debate are the well-funded, well-equipped, and adequately staffed schools attended by the affluent, mostly White, students who, with quality pedagogy and better school environments, are expected to perform very well (Roderick, 2003). It is almost impossible therefore, not to expect an achievement gap, given the high levels of educational disparities that exist.

The latest research studies and news from U.S. media all report the unevenness in the way Black students are treated in U.S. schools all over the country (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). The conditions in the schools they attend do not enable them to do well; they graduate from high school at rates lower than that of White students; they can only afford to attend their local high schools that are often ill-equipped and poorly staffed because they are in the inner cities where poverty and crime run rampant; they rarely complete high school because they become distracted by the urge to make quick money to support their economically disadvantaged parents (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Even when it comes to discipline in schools, African American male students are still disproportionately disciplined as compared to their counterparts (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Small wonder then that there is disparity in academic outcomes for students who are constantly discriminated against and who the society at large shows a lack of confidence in their abilities to perform. When one is stereotyped, it dampens the spirit and the will to rise above one's known potential. Stereotyping is a morale crusher and an ability killer as people who stereotype interact with

others with a preconceived notion of who those people really are. They fail to see the real potential, the authenticity of the stereotyped, and the truth of the matter which is that Black male students are lagging when it comes to academic success and need encouragement.

Rather than being shown sympathy and understanding for the challenges they face, Black male students are often met with ridicule, blame, and marginalization (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Some people have even accused them of showing a deliberate nonchalant attitude towards education in protest and retaliation against the way they have been mistreated (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). The negative effects of stereotyping include the lowering of one's affective filter and level of self-efficacy resulting in anxiety, poor academic performance, and ultimately, a resentment of the system that allowed it to happen (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Black students are susceptible to the social-psychological menace of being stereotyped as "never do wells" by people who feel the need to put down others for their own very selfish reasons. The 2004 graduation rate for Black male students at 45% compared to that of Whites at 70% and the 2013 graduation rate for Black male students at 62% compared to that of their White counterparts at 82% (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015) are evidence of the continued underperformance of African American male students. Although the rise in the performance percentage of African American males from 2004 to 2013 was significant, it was not enough to close or eliminate the achievement gap because their White counterparts outperformed them, each time, raising the bar higher (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015).

In articulation of the purpose of this study, educational advocates have tried to explain why Black male students persistently perform way below their Caucasian classmates while proponents have sought to explain the low academic performance and challenges faced by

African American students from all economic and social backgrounds with psychosocial, cultural, and ecological reasons, in a concerted effort to hit at the root cause and eliminate the problem (Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013). “Identifying challenges that Black males face could serve as a catalyst for developing support structures that deter high school departure (dropouts) and encourage college attendance” (Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013, p. 288). Other educational advocates like Harris, Hines, Kelly, Williams, and Bagley (2014) examined the achievement problem from the standpoint of Black male student athletes in order to determine the role of sports in academic engagement. The cultural misgivings, social contradictions, underperformance from low expectations, meager allocation of funds to poorer students mostly of color, and child parenting ways that clash with those of traditional schools have all been promulgated as elements that have led to the underperformance of Black boys (Harris et al., 2014). The combination of racial and gender discrimination that students of African American descent encounter is a double jeopardy that further poses roadblocks to their academic success. They are letting their schools get away with breeding a habit of not serving students who need the educational assistance the most and consequently, African American males are becoming non-learners, school dropouts in record numbers, and victims of the collective low expectations of schools (Harris et al., 2014). Under-served students, who are mostly African American, should start holding their schools and communities accountable for not fulfilling their obligations towards them. This researcher’s study recognizes that it is only when these barricades to success are pinpointed and undertaken, that inner city schools can begin to boast of serving the underserved students in their neighborhoods and leading them on the road to success.

One of the goals of this study is to examine the numerous initiatives formed and efforts directed towards improving the academic performance of Black male students as well as other



students at risk of failing. One of such initiatives was the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), a legislation that mainly focused on the use of high-stakes assessments as a means towards closing the achievement gap (McMillian, 2003). Contrary to its founding reason, the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) ended up neglecting the intimate, personal, social, and intellectual elements that spelled success and made people want to be on the right side of learning. For all good intentions and purposes, it is doubtful that the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) did much to improve the academic achievement of at-risk students (McMillian, 2003).

Nevertheless, it is more productive to take the positive approach to problem solving, especially those that greatly affect society. This positive approach avoids presenting things from the doom and gloom side and focuses on highlighting the positive aspects of African American male performance. There is great need today for more positive-minded research (McGee, 2013).

### **Problem Statement**

Despite rigorous feats by the U.S. federal, state, local authorities, and school districts to make readily available rigorous core instruction to Black male students in a concerted effort to improve their academic performance and thereby bridge the academic achievement gap, Black male students have continued to perform way below their white counterparts, sometimes going as far as dropping out of school and falling through the cracks (Donnor & Shockley, 2010). That there are still too many African Americans students who do not realize their full potential in the U.S. is, perhaps, one of the most annoying educational challenges of our time (McWayne, 2012). Regrettably, African American male students, to this day, continue to fall way short of mastering the academic standards set forth by the country's educational organizations and the numbers are staggering in urban school districts where students encounter the elements of social disorganization on a daily basis (Patton et al., 2012). Overwhelming empirical evidence exists

that shows that, when compared to their White counterparts, African American male students are not performing as well as their peers in U.S. schools (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). The grim statistics, the persistence of the problem, and the sheer unacceptability of the fact that this problem has festered for too long have made the academic performance of African American male students the spotlight of this study.

The odds always seem to be stacked up against African American male students. When they have to deal with society's ills, dire family situations, and unrealistically high expectations, all while navigating their way through the educational maze, it is no wonder that they struggle and are often unsuccessful. One critical element in looking at the academic performance of males of African American descent exists within the family. Mothers, be they married or single, play an especially important role in bringing up their children. A huge number of African American males are presently being brought up by single mothers (Persaud, Gray, & Hunt, 1999). Black single mothers, today, are challenged with making ends meet while trying to raise a family by themselves (Persaud, Gray, & Hunt, 1999). This situation is particularly challenging for single mothers raising African American young boys as their frustrations often manifest in the behavioral and academic aspects of their sons' lives thereby directly affecting their educational outcomes (Persaud, Gray, & Hunt, 1999). Fully comprehending these dynamics, would have important implications, and go a long way towards shining light onto how best to address the poor academic performance of African American male scholars (Persaud, Gray, & Hunt, 1999). It cannot hurt but help to have a better understanding of the positive views that single Black mothers hold as they struggle immensely to promote and advocate for the academic success of their sons.

Media discussions centered on the academic challenges of Black males have gained a captive audience that is comprised mostly of political and educational heavy weights (Barnett & Flynn, 2014). Although the persistent overall dismal academic performance of males of African American descent has enticed and seriously engaged the social and intellectual imagination of so many concerned citizens of this nation, not much is known about the real root of the problem and very little is understood about the steps that should be promulgated and followed in redirecting the educational paths of these very important section of the U.S. population (Barnett & Flynn, 2014).

In spite of the fact that initiatives such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) – that required Title I funded states to test all students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade in reading and mathematics yearly and report the results of those tests by student poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and English proficiency categories to their state governments – totally missed the mark with regards to bettering the academic success rate of African American male students, they were, nonetheless, small steps in the right direction, serving as achievement gap wake-up calls. The No Child Left Behind Act's (2001) method of testing trained national attention on how subgroups of students who were demarcated especially by ethnicity performed on the accountability measures but failed to bridge the achievement gap.

Consequently, being African American, male, and a student in U.S. schools still leaves one statistically at high risk for school failure which, in 2019, is totally unfair and unacceptable. Therefore, the quest for academic success for the African American male student, mostly through social justice, persists as his under-attainment and poor achievement on performance tests persist.

**Purpose of the Study**

The figurative definition of insanity is when one keeps doing things the same way repeatedly and expecting contrasting results. Despite all the educational efforts, strategies, and support given to African American male students, they have continued to perform below their counterparts with very dire graduation rates to show for them. Strategies applied thus far are clearly not working. Therefore, this study planned to examine some of the strategies already being applied to improve the academic performance of black boys, determine the ones that are actually working, retain them, and either get rid of or improve upon the strategies that are not working by recommending further research/study on the same issue.

**Importance of the Study**

The African American adult male (the father), as with any other adult male, plays an especially important role in his family, his community, and society (Ransaw, 2014). From once being the strong resilient kid in school who had to overcome immense odds to succeed, to becoming the father, mentor, pillar of strength in the home, community volunteer, role model and philanthropist, that African American adult male is invaluable to his family (Ransaw, 2014). To be a good role model to a younger sibling, son or daughter, the Black father cannot be inadequate, uneducated, minimized, or beaten down (Ransaw, 2014). In homes where the father is absent, the children often struggle with identity crisis, lack of direction, and lapse in behavior (Ransaw, 2014). That is why fathers cannot be marginalized. A good education will make them hold their head up high, command respect, get a good paying job, raise a good family, and ultimately give back to society.

On the other end of this father/son spectrum is the African American boy. The positive effect of the presence of an accomplished and positively involved father in the home for a Black

boy is priceless (Kevorkian, 2010). African American boys have a special closeness to their fathers, their absences of which would cause irreparable harm fraught with psychological problems that could last them a lifetime (Kevorkian, 2010). With father presence and engagement come social, emotional, behavioral, and academic stability since clear expectations and boundaries are set, confidence, self-pride, and self-esteem are instilled, overall happiness abound, and footprints and marks of exemplary levels of excellence are left (Kevorkian, 2010).

It is about time the African American male student began to experience academic success like his White peers. This study is aimed at adding to current efforts to improve the academic success level of the Black male student and ultimately, in the not too distant future, obliterate the achievement gap.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Achievement gap.** This is the difference in performance, be it academic or otherwise, that occurs from the unequal distribution of resources be it educational or otherwise, to various performance bands of students predetermined by race or ethnicity, gender, and SES (Schott Foundation for Public Education Report, 2015). Today, the Achievement Gap mostly refers to the difference between the percentage of Black students that graduate from high school and the percentage of their White counterparts (Schott Foundation for Public Education Report, 2015).

**African Americans.** Historically also referred to as Negroes and Blacks, African American are distinct because of their dark skin and coarse hair (Cohen, 1993). They are a group of diverse North Americans with different ethnic backgrounds that tapped from African and Caribbean culture and from the American Black experience with ties to slavery (Cohen, 1993). They are a race of people who identify themselves as African Americans because they have genes that are deeply rooted in, and traceable to, the African continent (Cohen, 1993). As

used in the 2010 census, African American or Black “refers to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who indicated their race(s) as Black, African Am., or Negro or reported entries such as African American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian” (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011, p. 3).

**Desegregation.** When one puts an end to the deliberate separation or the keeping apart of one group of people from another (Pruitt, 2018). It is what the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) achieved when they fought for many years for an end to the separation of people, especially Blacks, by their race, culture, or religious affiliation in a certain place or institution (Pruitt, 2018). It is what occurred in the Brown versus Board of Education U.S. Supreme Court ruling that made it unconstitutional to separate Blacks from Whites in educational institutions, a major goal of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pruitt, 2018).

**Hispanic.** People who are brown complexioned with genetic make-ups from South and Central American and Mexico are said to be Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Additionally, anyone that comes from Cuba, Puerto Rico, or a country with a Spanish culture is classified as Hispanic (Humes et al., 2011). The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) report “refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race” as Hispanic (Humes et al., 2011, p. 2).

**Socioeconomic status (SES).** This is a classification that defines where a person stands in society relative to others (Liu & Ali as cited in Ali, McWhirter, & Chronister, 2005). One’s socioeconomic status or that of one’s family is a determinant of that person’s income, education, and occupation (Liu & Ali as cited in Ali et al., 2005). According to Liu and Ali’s manuscript (as cited in Ali et al., 2005), research has shown that a combination of one’s level of education,

type of occupation, and amount of income goes a long way in determining one's position in society. There is not a strong congregation of people on the side of the measurement method of SES in the career development arena, however research has put the common denominators of SES determination as income, education, and occupation (Liu & Ali as cited in Ali et al., 2005). These three elements, therefore, determine whether one is stratified into the low, middle, or upper socioeconomic group which, in turn, influence access to educational and vocational resources and individual perceptions of opportunity (Liu & Ali as cited in Ali et al., 2005).

**Whites.** Whites also known as Caucasians are a racial group of light-skinned people of European, Northern African, Western and Southern Asian descent (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). If you are light-complexioned and can trace your genetic make-up to the continents of Europe and Asia, you are said to be White (Humes et al., 2011). As used in the U.S. Census Bureau (2011) report, White “refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who indicated their race as “White” or reported entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian” (Humes et al., 2011, p. 3).

### **Research Questions**

African American male students have, since the desegregation of U.S. schools in 1954, continuously underperformed academically, especially in high school (Pruitt, 2018). Not only are they unsuccessful in school, their graduation rate is persistently lower than that of their White counterparts, year after year (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). The difference between the graduation rate of the African American male student and that of his white peer has come to be known as the Academic Achievement Gap. Why is this happening? Why the gap, and why is it not being bridged?

Furthermore, U.S. federal, state, and local governments including local education authorities like school districts make constant efforts to provide rigorous, challenging, and meaningful education for African American male students with the aim of improving their academic performance, but all to no avail (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). How can this be? What are they doing wrong? Why is what they are doing not working? Well, Moller and Stearns (2012) seem to have some of the answers. They tell us that tracking is partly responsible:

Students are placed on tracks, in principle, to maximize achievement by grouping students based on ability and college orientation. College preparatory tracks are designed for college-oriented students, and they include a larger number of college preparatory courses including English and mathematics. General tracks offer less challenging courses, and vocational tracks offer technical, specialized classes in addition to general courses. Thus, not all high school educations are equal—even within the same school—because students experience different courses of study. (p.2)

Furthermore, “many students of color feel that the social climate in more rigorous academic courses excludes and devalues their input, such that students of color with academic potential may seek to avoid those courses” (Moller & Stearns (2012), p. 23).

Finally, if efforts to bridge the academic achievement gap are not working, it could be because the big picture is not being looked at and the surrounding problems not being addressed. The low level of academic performance of the Black male student goes beyond his school environment to include his home, and his community at large. The Black male student’s failures are heralded over his successes causing an unnecessary burden and creating a need for a more positive approach to the research literature on the issue. Could a counter narrative to the mostly



negative views that currently proliferate the literature on Black male student academic achievement be the key to a resolution of the academic achievement gap? The line of thought above led this researcher to the following questions:

1. What, according to the 50 articles and studies examined for this study, are the five most effective academic strategies being used to help African American male students succeed in high school?
2. Why, according to the results of the examined articles/studies, does the achievement gap between African American male high school students and their White counterparts persist in spite of these strategies?
3. What is a new strategy model that emerges from this study as a solution to the poor academic performance of African American male students in U.S. high schools?

### **Limitations of the Study**

Of the over 3,000 articles searched, there were fewer than 55 articles that directly addressed effective strategies towards making African American male students successful. There were no articles on the failure of existing strategies to improve their academic performance and achievement gap, either. Rather, more of the articles were repetitive in the information given with no new thoughts or concepts. Majority of the 50 articles and studies (see Authors and Date section of Appendix A) examined for purpose of this study stressed on the failures of African Americans males in schools, colleges, and in society.

A thematic synthesis study done prior on the effective strategies towards the academic success of African American males was difficult to find. That made it difficult to draw on any past lessons learned for the benefit of areas of future study.

There was also study bias, as it was conducted by an African American with African American sons. Furthermore, this study was influenced by the fact that this researcher is an educator, school administrator, and student advocate who worked mostly in schools in low socio-economic areas.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The period covered by this study did not go beyond 1954 when the epic landmark decision made by the U.S. Supreme Court made it unconstitutional for schools to be segregated in terms of race (Pruitt, 2018). That was a period when the country started paying closer attention to the academic and economic plight of African American children (Pruitt, 2018).

This study did not review any literature that went beyond 1954 because it would not have covered recent information on recent developments as well as current data on the academic performance of and assistance rendered to African American male students.

This study did not have a population sample because the nature of it only required a review of existing, recorded, and well-documented information.

This study was a metasynthesis of already existing information and data. As such, it was not necessary to have surveys conducted, interviews held, or statistical data analyzed.

### **Assumptions**

In designing this study, it was assumed that since the academic underperformance of African American male students and the persistence of the achievement gap were old problems, there would be many articles readily available that extensively addressed the issue.

It was also assumed that there would be a lot of positive new ideas, suggestions, and strategies addressing the age-old Black male student performance and achievement gap problems in the high schools. Surprisingly, this was not the case as most of the articles read by this

researcher leaned heavily towards the negative narration of the African American male student experience and the continuance of the blame game.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is comprised of five chapters along with figures, tables, dedication, acknowledgements, vita, abstract, references, and appendices. The appendices contain literature analysis coding tables, dissertation study-related articles and studies read (in pictures), summary of the main issues addressed by each article/study, authorization to use NAEP data charts, and IRB approval/exemption letter.

Chapter 1 is the introduction, where the reader learns, laconically, all about the study. The introduction is sub-divided into background statement, problem statement, purpose of the study, importance of the study, definition of terms, research questions, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, assumptions, organization of the study, and chapter summary.

Chapter 2 contains the literature review where the reader gets to know what other people did on, thought of, and want done further about, the study. This section is sub-divided into theoretical frameworks and themes, and chapter summary. The frameworks and themes section is further sub-divided into social disorganization theory, self-efficacy theory, phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory, attribution theory, the positive reporting of life narratives/lived experiences of African American male students and the celebration of the academic successes and accomplishments of African American male students.

Chapter 3 is on the methodology of the study. It is further broken up into the restatement of the problem, restatement of the purpose, restatement of the research questions, research design, methodology, human subjects considerations, population, sample, bias, research instrument validity and reliability, data collection and analysis, and chapter summary.

Chapter 4 is on the findings of the study which is further delineated into the results of the study and the summary of findings.

Chapter 5 comprises of the discussions around three research questions, the linking of findings to the theoretical frameworks, the conclusions, the recommendations made on policy and practice, the further research that could be conducted on the topic, and the chapter summary.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter covered in detail the topic background statement, problem statement, purpose, importance, definition of terms, theoretical framework, research questions, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, the organization of the study, and a summary of the chapter content.

The chapter established that African American males have always academically performed, and continue to academically perform, at levels far below that of their white counterparts. As a contribution towards a possible solution to the persistence of this problem, a thematic analysis of the current academic strategies was conducted. What had been done in the past and what was being done currently to help African American male students bridge the achievement gap that existed and continues to exist were not working and therefore needed further study. From the findings, it became clear which strategies were effective and worthy of continuance and which ones were ineffective and needed to be discarded or changed to inadvertently produce the desired results.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

### Theoretical Frameworks and Themes

**Social disorganization theory.** Espoused by sociologists Shaw and McKay (1942), (as cited in Kubrin, 2010), social disorganization theory helps communities facing the problems of a deteriorating society caused by social ills like criminal activity and drug use, understand the problems they have in order to develop a strategy to bounce back from it (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). Social disorganization theory predicts, analyzes, and detects tumultuous and unlawful activities in a dysfunctional community to enable that community combat the specified ills and turn things around before they become too overwhelming (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). According to Shaw and McKay (1942), (as cited in Kubrin, 2010), disorganized communities rife with poverty, comprised of people from several heterogeneous ethnic backgrounds, and plagued by residential mobility, destroy the stability of society and interfere with the ability of members of society to work closely together (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). They claim that how relatable people are to one other in their communities and their combined endeavors to move their communities forward in a positive way, go a long way towards keeping in containment any quandary or future obstacles that may plague their societies (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). The larger a number of the members of a society that can come together to create a great level of neighborliness, the easier and more natural it will be for them to monitor events in their communities, supervise their youth and shape the values, interests, and psychological orientation of their children.

Strong social relationships, neighborly protective measures, healthy family interrelationships, and consistent parental involvement, all go a long way towards stemming the

tide of social disorganization, providing peace and stability, instilling confidence in communities, and ultimately increasing school engagement (Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2006). When community problems surface, community members pool resources together and resolve them. A close-knit community can easily come together to identify a problem, make suggestions towards resolving it, and devise a collective strategy towards a comprehensive, agreed-upon solution. This way, the community members establish communal trust that helps to reduce the affective filter of the whole community to where the degree of future mayhem is also reduced, and the agents of social disorganization neutralized. From the above, one can comfortably say that youth delinquency, upheaval, and complacency that are prevalent in communities of low socio-economic status are characteristics of social disorganization (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010). The theoretical framework of social disorganization theory, therefore, helps one comprehend how the community environment of an African American male can positively or negatively affect his life (Kornhauser, 1978). The correlation between family cohesion, parental monitoring, community involvement, and school engagement for African American males is remarkably high (Annunziata et al., 2006).

The aftermath of the desegregation of schools that was brought about by the 1954 *Brown versus Board of Education* landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court can be described as social disorganization (Pruitt, 2018). According to Bell (1987),

the dire consequences of desegregation for many African American children began as a counter-narrative with the notion of African American children having simply vanished on the implementation day for the new desegregation plan. *Brown v. Board of Education* did not significantly improve the lives of African American children. Instead it made them even more invisible. It could be argued, then, that the problems identified helped to

explain the current crisis facing many African American children in U.S. schools today. Critical race theorists in education have used this foundation form to argue that African American schoolchildren were systematically marginalized and mis-educated in an educational system that sought only to highlight what they lacked, thereby, disregarding the wealth of culture that they brought to the table. Parents, students, and school officials, including teachers and administrators each had a hand in the persistent underachievement of African American male high school students. The role of teachers and counselors – who many students perceived as uncaring – was central to the formation of Black male high school students' noncommittal attitude toward school. Although there is a strong positive relationship between high-quality teaching and minority student achievement, teacher efficacy also matters. Not only do African American children have teachers who tend to be the least experienced or the least qualified, but they also have teachers who have a low sense of self-efficacy or lack the cultural competence to adequately teach them. In other words, even when teachers of African American children are considered highly qualified, they do not always believe they can successfully teach African American students. It is imperative then that teachers have positive perceptions of their students. Teachers who have progressive views of their students' ability to be successful tend to have students who invest more effort in completing homework. African American male students are heavily influenced by their teachers' perception of their ability to be successful. (p. 348-382)

The U.S. Department of Education (2003) envisaged that non-White students would make up 40% or more of the U.S. entire school population by the end of the year 2003, with large metropolitan cities in states like New York, Michigan, Texas, and California withstanding the

worst of it. These cities were predicted to have as much as 70% of their student population made up of nothing but students of color, making it pertinent that everyone in the school education business become conversant with how to support students of color, academically and otherwise (U.S. Department of Education (2003). African American male students value support above all else and thrive when that support is coming from their parents, teachers, and peers (Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008).

Poverty eventually begets the dropping out of school by students who have no coping mechanisms, and who society did not offer reasonable alternatives, thus proving that a correlation exists, as shown earlier by Shaw and McKay (1942), (as cited in Kubrin, 2010). Amid this large majority of students from poor economic backgrounds, are African American males, the same group of students who are stereotyped, as never do wells. How can African American males do well when the odds of social disorganization are stacked up against them? The dismal situations these students are tossed into by their parents, a situation that most of them were born into, has indirectly caused their poor performance in school.

Other characteristics of social disorganization like joblessness, resulting from the closing down of factories or from drug and alcohol addiction, and racism, resulting from the disapproval of the color of one's skin, do nothing to help the African American male student succeed in any aspect of life, let alone in education (Kornhauser, 1978). Children from impoverished backgrounds have too difficult a time trying to get through the basic problems of the day like feeding, housing, transportation to school, and school absenteeism to be able to take care of a sibling at home because of a working single parent (McGee, 2013). Where do they find the time, energy, and motivation to dream big? It is unfortunate when this happens in a land of opportunity like the U.S. where thousands of people migrate to every year in order to dream big.



The destitute conditions some Black male students face both at home and at school result in their failure to make a connection between putting forth a good educational performance now and having a great career in their adult life later (Baber, 2014).

Furthermore, African American parents know that they are stereotyped daily because of the color of their skin, an unfortunate circumstance their children also know about and experience daily (Cokley, 2003). The fact that African American boys' names are entered in the failing column before they even make an effort, greatly reduces their affective filter and their will to succeed (Cokley, 2003). They develop a nonchalant attitude towards the body or group of people that are causing them harm and discomfort (Cokley, 2003).

An honest effort to close the achievement gap and restore the sense of self-pride and accomplishment to the Black male student must include a study of the yesteryears of children of African American descent. Student success is embedded in certain external elements that comprise of societal, neighborhood, and monetary conditions that a student is exposed to earlier on in life (Gallagher, 1988, as cited in Haskins & MacRae, 1988). It is understood, therefore, that one has to fully understand those elements and incorporate them into any research that attempts to comprehend the gap's existence with the aim of eliminating it (Gallagher, 1988, as cited in Haskins & MacRae, 1988). It is not about waving a magic wand and hoping the problem will disappear, but about knowing what makes the African American male student tick, making those opportunities available, and creating the motivational circumstances (Gallagher, 1988, as cited in Haskins & MacRae, 1988).

The inward and outward views held by society about the character, drive, and overall performance of the Black male student also must change. Stereotyping Black male students as lazy, not wanting to put in the academic effort to get to the next level, as well as apt to take the

short cuts to making quick money and reaching their perception of wealth as a mark of success sheds more light on the perception problem (Land, Mixon, Butcher, & Harris, 2014). If a school respects the cultural diversity of its students and creates an environment that is welcoming of all students regardless of their race, creed, social exposure, financial status, and in some cases, political affiliations, that school is more likely to boast of the academic success of all its students, having favored none more than the other (Powell & Marshall, 2011). When students, young and old, do not feel welcome in any type of environment, they will leave and if they cannot leave, they will act out, becoming disengaged and disruptive (Dawson-Threat, 1997).

For African American male high school students who need and cherish aspirational support, a school climate that is collegial, considerate, nurturing, respectful, valuable, academically challenging, and inclusive, is a magnet for success (Tucker, Dixon, & Griddine, 2010). In their study of “A critical component of school climate, the feeling of mattering to others, was suggested by Tucker et al. (2010) as the building block for the participants’ desire to productively engage in school. Unfortunately, schools of this nature do not exist in dysfunctional communities (Williams, Davis, Miller-Cribbs, Saunders, & Williams, 2002). Why is it that schools of this nature are often found in affluent neighborhoods? Does it mean that less endowed people are less motivated to do the right thing for students as a whole? Does it mean that educators must have a perfect set of circumstances to teach students? Whatever happened to education being daubed the noble profession where teachers worked their hearts out and went above the call of duty despite meager salaries and minimum raw materials (Boucher, 2016)? These are some of the questions that this researcher attempted to answer in the course of this study.

Williams et al.'s (2002) article entitled "Friends, family, and neighborhood: Understanding academic outcomes of African American youth," tells us, in detail, the type of life and behavior that await urban children most especially Black boys who end up in the streets from lack of supervision by their parents who are spending so much time working 2-3 jobs to make ends meet. Such children end up going down the same path as their parents as a lack of quality education soon lands them in mediocre low-paying jobs or in jobless situations (Williams et al., 2002). Having low paying jobs or being jobless, they soon become intolerant and inconsiderate of others and end up living a life of crime in order to save face or gain the respect of their peers (Williams et al., 2002). Nevertheless, these jobless and out of control African American boys can still be salvaged through great interventional and supportive programs that will keep them off the streets and steer them towards a more constructive path (Williams et al., 2002). The youth in America should be taught at an early age how to handle life's challenges so that they do not cower in the face of adversity. Rather they should be equipped to channel their way through difficult times and be empowered to make the right choices when and where it matters most.

According to Lerner and Galambos (1998), older men and women who have substitute-parented and helped out in schools in the past have told of how they were respected, and listened to by the youth, meaning that age and experience mattered. Diminishing opportunities and economic hardships, however, have inverted things, making the youth more resistant to advice from anyone (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). As the pull of life on the streets without accountability becomes more attractive to young people, their academic achievement drives hit the downward slope and success goes on the downward spiral or becomes inconsequential (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). Educational research and academic interventions are slow to nip the cancer in the bud and save the children from poor backgrounds. Apathy, ineptitude, school

inequities, limited opportunities thus engulf youth from poor neighborhoods most of whom are of Black American descent, creating the achievement gap and negative school ethics stereotypes (Davis & Jordan, 1994).

Lerner and Galambos (1998), still have faith in science as the solution to the problems of the African American male student. Science, they believe, can help unmask the cocktail of remedies that can change the academic course of the Black male student to a successful and meaningful one. Science-based educational research, they feel, can provide the counter-narrative that will accentuate the positive accomplishments of male high school students of African of descent, reduce their affective filter, and reduce the allure of risky behavior that only lead to disastrous outcomes.

Despite all the negativity and a lack of confidence by society in the ability of Black boys in urban cities to succeed academically, there is some light at the end of the tunnel. It is a light that shines brightly, bringing hope in the face of adversity and telling the struggling student that there is room for improvement. This ray of hope comes from the fact that there is belief in the proper functioning of the local amenities and community resources already in existence (Land, Mixon, Butcher, & Harris, 2014). There are institutions set up to help struggling families and their children (Ehrenreich, Reeves, Corley, & Orpinas, 2012). It is no longer enough to use the regular indicators of success like high-standardized test scores, self-efficacy, and drive to tell how Black youth will perform (Ehrenreich et al., 2012). Other often forgotten performance indicators like environmental, societal, economic, and financial conditions underlying the student's upbringing are now being brought forward in achievement gap conversations (Ehrenreich et al., 2012).

Despite much ado about the downturn of urban communities and its negative impact on children, some good still comes from the intervention systems set up to help poor families survive and fashion out a brighter path for their children (Farmer & Hope, 2015). In more affluent neighborhoods, the citizens and children fair better because there are more resources per child and better organized support systems and amenities, enough to keep the youth occupied and off the streets (Farmer & Hope, 2015). Summertime, when school is out for a little over two months at one time, is a very trying time for parents who frantically search for activities and organized events to keep their children engaged and free from the jaws of complacency (Farmer & Hope, 2015). Black boys have more to gain when they reside in non-dysfunctional neighborhoods with their biggest advantages coming from when they are in a community where they can attend schools that are well-quipped with rigorous curricula and standards, and with teachers that enhance diversity, have great instructional strategies, and find pleasure in bringing out the best in their students (Farmer & Hope, 2015). Rather than always criticizing African American male students in high school for poor academic achievement, it will do far more good to find their strengths and work from there (Floyd,1996). People will excel when they come from a position of strength and an environment that lifts them up and has confidence in their ability to perform (Floyd,1996). The narrative on Black boys needs to move away from negativity if it is to improve.

In order to counter social disorganization, groups of people must come together for that common purpose (Gallagher, 1988). As much as there are naturally formed groups in any society, there are those groups that have to be put together deliberately for the good of the order (Kafele, 2012). Organizations that put together youth programs recognize the need to form mutually exclusive groups (Kafele, 2012). In putting these groups together, organizations must

take into consideration the fact that youths already have their own support mechanisms and networks (Kafele, 2012). Young people, particularly African American boys have their elder family members, their places of worship, their schools, and their communities looking out and rooting for them, hoping that they will use their backing to form new and meaningful associations (Floyd, 1996). Was a young man or woman to go astray, his or her parents, members of the extended family, church pastor, or community members were there to set him or her back on the right path (Douglas & Arnold, 2016). These sources of support are the natural checks and balances and the societal and moral conscience of young people and to ignore them would be catastrophic leaving young people like sheep without a shepherd and loose cannons without a target (Douglas & Arnold, 2016). Heath and McLaughlin (1994) could not have stated it better by saying:

The role of community-based youth organizations as partners for schools to help engage young people in activities that support academic skills in alternative learning environments cannot be overemphasized...such youth organizations can provide a bridge that engages students when they feel schools are inattentive to their needs...particularly true in neighborhoods where there are few choices of places to be that are safe, organized, and academically stimulating. (p. 68)

Research exists that takes to task the people who work in urban cities, urging them to set up more advantageous areas of influence and events that would counter the negative, harmful and misleading ones (Heath & McLaughlin, 1994). The philosophy behind such research is that if young people, especially the ones impacted the most by negative environments and upbringing, are surrounded by positivity and social order, their lives will take on a more positive stance because they can see a better way out of their dilemma. Unfortunately, this could be a

tall order for current organizations charged with the task of creating positive environments for youth in crisis as they may be overwhelmed (Rubin, Billingsley, & Caldwell, 1994). Rubin et al. (1994) are not pleased with the fact that African American houses of faith are not pulling their weight thereby causing the youth in their communities to fall through the cracks. According to them, only 28 % of Black churches have any type of neighborhood outreach that is best suited to the needs of the Black youth in the inner cities. These outreach programs, though insufficient, are a step in the right directions and even though they are like a widow's mite, they go a long way towards reversing the negative trends and dismal performance rates of African American children especially Black boys (Rubin et al., 1994). When social disorganization is tackled from all angles, it makes for better communities where the less fortunate can have opportunity and access to a good education and a better chance at making meaningful contribution to society.

**Self-efficacy theory.** Bandura's (1994) theory of self-efficacy is delineated as a theoretical framework where self-efficacy is assigned the part of interpreting changes that come from fearful and evasive behavior. The principle assumption on which his theory is based is that psychological procedures, serve as an avenue for making and empowering personal efficacy. Bandura's (1994) theory distinguishes between expectations of efficacy and response-outcome expectancies and refers to a person's belief in his or her capacity to enact behaviors that are pertinent to the manifestation of specific performance attainments. A person with strong self-efficacy exudes the ability to control his/her motivation, behavior, social surroundings, and every aspect of human endeavors and, self-efficacy theory permeates the areas of education, research, and clinical practice (Bandura, 1994).

When one has self-efficacy, that person is in full control of his or her actions (Bandura, 1994). Elaborating further, Bandura claims that there exists in a person with self-efficacy, an

extremely high level of competitiveness, drive, ambition, and a strong will to succeed in every aspect of life. With self-efficacy, he proclaims, comes a renewed person that is self-assured, proud, motivated, and driven. With a great deal of self-determination and a high sense of self-efficacy, he adds, the sky is the limit for Black boys. Imagine the possibilities when they approach life from a vantage point as opposed to a point of disdain (Bandura, 1994). It is not out of the ordinary to find self-efficacy as a common denominator for educational instruction, research, and practice (Bandura, 1994).

It stands to reason, therefore, that when one has ultimate confidence in one's potential, can perform exceptionally well at varying levels of competence so as to produce life altering events, and believes that he/she can control his/her outcomes through a larger sense of direction, drive, and purpose, such a person is said to have high self-efficacy. People with strong convictions about their accomplishments, unshakable confidence about things they are able to do, and endless pride in the fact that they are able to effect change and exert influence over life-changing events are said to have perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). This perceived self-efficacy pretty much dictates their overall behavior regarding how they process things, how they move others to positive action, and how they are affected by events around them (Bandura, 1994). They are often cognitively endowed, motivationally poised, unapologetically selective, and possess extremely low affective filters (Bandura, 1994). This is the level African American male students in U.S. secondary schools should be operating at if they are to succeed overall and wipe out their deficits right along with the achievement gap fallacy.

From Bandura (1994), one garners the following: the extent to which a high level of self-efficacy raises the spirit of people to where they feel they can accomplish whatever they set out to do and the extent to which it makes them feel very good about themselves, cannot be



overemphasized; when people feel a great sense of invaluable accomplishment, the sky is the limit; well accomplished people feel like taking on the challenges of the world rather than shying away from them; they are ready to play the role of superheroes and do what they had previously felt was impossible; this type of human puissance creates a deep desire for service to humanity and an enthrallment with getting things done; people with a high sense of self-efficacy establish very demanding goals, and objectives and stay true to those goals even when they are experiencing immense challenges; they do not let challenges overtake or derail them but adjust and readjust as often as is needed in the face of defeat, and forge a way.

In the end, rather than blame others for their failures or deficiencies, people with high self-efficacy look inwards and self-examine efforts made at achieving success (Bandura, 1994). They self-check to see if they knew enough about the task and whether they had the level of experience required to execute it effectively (Bandura, 1994). They move forward with the results of their self-check, more assured than ever that they can rectify things and proceed with heightened belief that they can extinguish any threats to reaching their goals (Bandura, 1994). Imagine the realm of possibilities if the above was the outlook of and the expectations for the African American male high school student. This is a sure way to go about improving Black male student academic performance and ultimately eliminating the achievement gap. The black male student, armed with a positive view of himself, can confidently take on tasks and successfully complete them. He can hold his head up high at his accomplishments without the stress and melancholy that accompany failure.

Self-efficaciously confident is how society, at large, and the educational community, in particular, should strive for the African American male student to be. Imagine the limitless possibilities for Black male students who have a high sense of self-efficacy as described above.

Noble's (2011) "Mathematics Self-Efficacy and African American Male Students: An Examination of Models of Success" journal article gave an insight into how self-efficacy helped the African American male students in his study succeed in mathematics. Noble (2011) said that their intimate renditions of success in mathematics showed how they believed in their own abilities, fueled by the support they received from their family members, friends, and the community. They were elated, he said, and propelled to the next level by their success in mathematics and rather than feel the embarrassment and shame that came with failure, they felt ecstatic, with their self-efficacy levels enjoying a significant boost. A full examination of the results of their interviews and stories about their lives showed that their success in math raised their self-esteem and confidence levels (Noble, 2011). According to Stinson (2008), African American male students who are successful in mathematics develop an added level of confidence he called acquired robust mathematics identity where there is a rise in self-efficacy, an added feeling of invincibility towards failure, and a genuine desire for success.

The success of the lived-through experiences of the Black male students in Noble's (2011) study had a greater impact on their lives and self-efficacy than the opportunity to participate in the study. The fact that the results of Noble's (2011) study revealed that the Black male students that participated in the study were more positively impacted by their math success than by their actual study participation, shows that the celebration of their successes, the eschew of negativity, and the projection of a counter-narrative (reporting of a positive African American male student performance story) from their experiences are the ways forward if one is to elevate the academic performance level of the African American male student and therefrom bridge/eliminate the achievement gap that exists between him and his white counterpart. This is

not to say that one has found the magic wand solution to the achievement gap dilemma, but it is a big step in the right direction.

The socio-economic problems that Black males face in the modern world today are numerous, real, and deep-rooted, so the solutions must abound and be on-going. Educational research resources have to be reallocated more in the favor of the African American male student since they are more likely to experience ridicule, encounter obstacles, face societal and stereotypical setbacks, meet naysayers, witness inequalities, and feel frustrated more so than their counterparts from other parts of the country and cultural backgrounds (Dynarski & Kainz, 2015). It goes without saying, therefore, that any group of students that is academically challenged, in danger of failing or dropping out of school, and needs help to get over the huddle, should be allocated more of the academic funding and research dollars (Dynarski & Kainz, 2015). Those additional dollars should go towards positive solutions to the problem of Black male student underperformance and the negative stereotyping that follows black men around. Any group of people that has been repeatedly beaten down and denigrated, has its guard up ready to fiercely defend itself and, if that group is somehow treated differently and begins to experience success, its self-esteem improves, and its collective self-efficacy becomes strengthened over time (Dynarski & Kainz, 2015). This sounds like a viable way to go about solving the achievement gap problem.

Noble (2011), in support of the above notion pointed out that there is beginning to emanate educational research that examines and highlights the success of Black boys in an educational setting. This type of research, he said, should be promulgated more than the ones that paid more attention to the shortcomings of the African American male student. Positive image research on African American male students should trump research results that report out

from a negative perspective and Black male successes should be heightened while Black male failures are downplayed (Noble, 2011). In emulating Noble's example of positivity towards the reporting of Black student academic performance, some intellectuals (Berry, 2008; Stinson, 2006; Thompson & Lewis, 2005; Walker, 2006) have joined him in demanding more of the good coverage of African American male student successes. One major advocate, Stinson (2006), in support of a counter narrative on Black male student achievement said the following:

It is time education researchers begin to inquire about those African American male (and female) students who embrace academic achievement (and mathematics) to provide helpful suggestions to school administrators and teachers (and family and community members) regarding the education of African American children. (p. 498)

In tow with other positive reporting advocates, Parson and Kritsonis (2006) contended that research that legitimized Black male students was critically needed. Research scholars with a positive outlook on the academic performances of African American male students, they contend, are hoping for a paradigm shift in the conversations concerning Black males that would uplift and empower them. This positive outlook, they indicated, has commenced in the academic arena of mathematics and needs to permeate to other subject areas.

Noble (2011), like Harper (2015), is of the opinion that reports should focus more on highlighting the achievements of African American males and other marginalized men of color than on pinpointing their failures. Therefore, the theoretical framework that Noble (2011) adopted in his article dwelled amongst those of academic achievement motivation and was supported by that part of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory that stressed that,

people are neither driven by inner forces nor automatically shaped and controlled by external stimuli. Rather, human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic

reciprocity in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events, operate as interacting determinants of each other. (p. 18)

In Land, Mixon, Butcher, and Harris' (2014) "Stories of Six Successful African American Male High School Students: A Qualitative Study", one got to pleasantly experience and enjoy the chronicling of the exposure of African American male high school students, six in number, to ultimate success. Six Black male high school students endured and conquered the inherent home-grown obstacles they faced that were presented by their having come up from a low-socio economic community rife with adverse peers, abdicated fathers, obstreperous relationships, disruptive communities, and incompetent schools (Land et al., 2014). The six successful African America male high school students, despite their crippling baggage, found success through piety and had a strong inclination to honor their families (Land et al., 2014). They had a high sense of self-efficacy, an urge to impress school personnel that included their teachers, and an incessant need to make themselves proud (Land et al., 2014). In order to positivize the conversation around the academic performance of Black male students, one must encourage the type of personal characteristics including self-efficacy, astute piety, high self-esteem, and focal drive that the six students in Land et al.'s (2014) study displayed. Encouraging black male success and bringing that success to the limelight can only help, not hurt, by stamping out pre-existing stereotypes.

Land et al. (2014) also recognized the need for a counter-narrative on the issue of Black male academic underperformance. They rose above the negative narratives surrounding the performance of African American male students in high school, and brought to their discourse, an empowering account of a small group of academically successful black males at the high school level in a field of study (mathematics) that the students were stereotyped as not having the

ability to prevail in. Their six participants beat all the odds as they displayed a yearning to produce more, acquire more, travail further, be greater, and be better than their predecessors, peers, and their future generation. Land et al.'s (2014) study participants watched their single mothers and grandmothers work long hours and spend many sleepless nights breaking their backs to provide for them and through that experience, resolved to pay them back with success. In wanting to reward the hard work of their mothers and grandmothers, they saw education as the way forward and as such, did not turn to a life of crime fraught with swift aggrandizement and quick fixes (Land et al., 2014).

Thorough examination, deep soul searching, and strong religious convictions led the six successful African America male high school students in Land et al.'s (2014) study down the right path, served to convert the adverse situations in their up-bringing into beneficial ones, and willed them to success thereby changing the unfavorable commonplace view held by society about them (Land et al., 2014). They became role models for their young ones wanting them to tow the same line of success (Land et al., 2014). Empathetic of the strife of their mothers and exasperated by the sight of misery, they opted to do something about it by contributing in a meaningful way, the most important of which was to react appropriately to life's stressors (Land et al., 2014). Yes, their home situations were critical, but they wanted permanent morally sound paths to a solution; and where they did not have the ever-so-important parental involvement in their educational journey, they were still inspired enough to seek out other individuals in their school environment to act as tutors, mentors, counsellors, and overall role models (Land et al., 2014).

Where the six motivated students took steps to find help for themselves in the absence of any, alternatively, the underperforming student would have waited for someone to find him/her

that help, by the time of which they would have strayed or been tempted to follow the oftentimes baseless quick fix path (Land et al., 2014). From Land et al.'s (2014) study, it becomes apparent that the differences in approaches to education between the high academic performer and the low achiever lie in self-efficacy and the personal resolve to rise above the negativity, and shine.

Kafele's (2012) article also gave one an insight into his buy-in of a positive approach towards Black male student challenges and the achievement gap solution. He put it this way:

Of all the challenges faced in education today, I could not think of none greater than the challenge of motivating, educating, and empowering black male learners...the fact that this group of students is in crisis is evident on multiple levels, starting with graduation rates...the crisis begins before they even enter school... as they move through the grades, black male students as a group have low achievement levels, excessively high suspension and expulsion rates, and a disproportionate number of special education referrals. (p. 25)

One of the effective strategies for the success of African American male students tried and proven by dedicated educators like Baruti K. Kafele (2012), was empowerment. Mr. Kafele (2012) created the Young Men's Empowerment Program to teach maturity skills to Black male students thereby giving them a strong sense of purpose for achieving in school. Therefore, every Monday, all students reported to his program in business professional attire and participated in formal presentations and discussions led by staff and community members. Kafele's (2012) program was later expanded to include: small group sessions to bolster self-confidence; one-to-one mentoring moments to fill up academic gaps; college campus visits to learn about colleges and what they had to offer; student interaction with successful black men in order to experience reality; visit exchanges with black men in positions of political leadership in order to envision

the possibilities; dressing for success so that they were prepared; and after-school male study groups so that they interacted with and learned from one another. Another mentoring program towards improving Black male student achievement was that founded by Wyatt (2009) as an after-school male counseling/mentoring group which he called the Brotherhood. It was created as a possible solution to the achievement gap dilemma by attending early to the developmental and manhood challenges of African American male students (Wyatt, 2009). Wyatt (2009) harmonized American School Counselors Association (ASCA)'s national model principles (foundation, management, delivery, and accountability), empowerment theory (life mastery and control), and Kwanzaa's Nguzo Saba principles (unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith) in the functionality of the Brotherhood to provide a formidable one-vision, one-voice approach to counseling Black boys.

Owens, Lacey, Rawls, and Holbert-Quince's (2010) article on "First Generation African American Male College Students: Implications for Career Counselors" brought a different perspective to the discourse. The article reiterated that race and class played a big role in the academic success of Black male students. It further stated that school counselors and student affairs administrators needed to understand the roles that race and class played and why they were very formidable elements in the shaping of the lives of African American young men and women. School career counselors were encouraged to base their student advice offerings on the interests, capabilities, goals, aspirations, and worldview of Black male students (Owens et al., 2010). Schellenberg and Grothaus (2009) came up with a culturally-relevant and responsive system of counseling for Black male students that would do just that. Termed standards blending, school counselors will attempt to find out, very early in the process, the career interests, aspirations, and academic abilities of their African American students and then blend



them together into a positive outcome-based mix (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009). In further explanation, Schellenberg and Grothaus (2009) said:

Standards blending can be a system of support and a responsive service mechanism. It is a systems-focused, integrative, standards-based, and student-centered cross walking strategy that aligns school counseling programs with academic achievement while addressing an aspect of the achievement gap. (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009, p. 440)

Since African American young men were negatively affected by racial discrimination, the topic could not be excluded from the school counselor's frame of reference. School counselors and career professionals could no longer operate outside of the realm of the effects of racism on the lives of Black young men (Owens et al., 2010). When counseling or advising students, race relations as well as efforts to bring everyone together and eschew racism had to be factored in (Owens et al., 2010).

Counselors had to be trained to better handle the advisement of African American male students and eschew institutionalized racism. Hughes (2010) proposed a more modern, equitable, positive results-oriented, student-centered, and anticipatory advisement program that would use,

a framework for advising that anticipates and expects educational success. Whereas the intrusive model of advising suggests an action-orientated stance toward advising, anticipatory advising moves beyond this model and assumes that all students will need assistance. It is framed around elements of genuine care, fictive kinship, and reciprocity. Supporting students in college requires that not only the Human-Resources-designated advisors assist in the academic preparation of the student, but faculty members, administrators, and advisors take an aggressive approach in supporting students.

Supporting means that faculty and administrators do not wait for students to contact them, but they approach all the students the minute they arrive on campus. Supporting means that they neither wait for students to get into difficulty nor do they watch while they are going through some crisis; instead, they jump right in as a support team – again, the day they arrive on campus. (p. 59)

Armed with the appropriate knowledge and the pertinent skills that go along with it, those that work with America's youth will be better equipped to move the lives of the young people they are charged with in the right direction. Not only do the people on the receiving end of the perils of racism have to be prepared and buffered to deal with it, but the perpetrators have to be better educated and informed of its very negative effects on fellow humans so that they become considerate and more tolerant of people who are different from them (Owens et al., 2010).

In concluding, having strong self-efficacy on the part of African American male students can greatly help in propelling them through all the obstacles they face in their bid for academic excellence. That, however, does not excuse other crucial players. All hands must be on deck and all stops pulled in order to solve the achievement gap problem. Owens et al. (2010) aptly put it this way:

African American male college students will require learning, support, and a sincere desire to understand their unique life experiences. Sue and Sue (2013) opined that it may also be wise to have more counselors of color on college campuses who are equipped to capably administer culturally-sensitive counseling strategies. Even after implementing all of these approaches, it is still left up to the career counselors to be willing to advocate for their clients and actively integrate their clients' community and life experiences into the career development process. (p. 298)

**Phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory (PVEST).** Spencer (2011) developed PVEST theory as a fabric for examining the levels of tenacity and buoyancy that exist in pubescents during their formative years when they are trying to find themselves and figure out the caliber of their personalities. The phenomenological part of PVEST pertains to a person's perception of the world around them and how well they understand its inner workings (Spencer, 2011). By comprehending a person's view of the world, one can perceptively walk in that person's shoes and correctly predict how that person will act under varying circumstances (Spencer, 2011). Phenomenology is the basis for and core principle of behavioral and academic counseling as it exudes empathy (Spencer, 2011). The variant part of PVEST deals with the fact that different people are going to have varying views of the world and their discernments of worldly affairs and events will divaricate, meaning that their phenomenology will vary from one person to another (Spencer, 2011). The ecological component of PVEST epitomizes how one is often a product of his or her environment, lays out the myriads of sets of relationships that exist between people and their surroundings, and explains how these relationships shape their development (Spencer, 2011). The systems portion of PVEST is a convergence of concepts, principles, facts, doctrines, and tenets that vary from one person to another in a precise field of knowledge or thought (Spencer, 2011). In the context of this study, systems mean educational establishments, local communities, neighborhood churches, family units, and cultural enclaves.

Consequently, Spencer (2011) tells us that by merging phenomenological variant (varying world views of people) with ecological systems dogma (environment effect on people), you get PVEST, which is a juxtaposition of people's worldviews with the impact that world environmental (societal, cultural, and historical) factors like school climate have on their personal development. Other proponents of the importance of phenomenology (transcendental)

juxtaposed with environment (school climate) to create mattering experiences especially for Black male students are Tucker, Dixon, and Griddine (2010). Transcendental phenomenology, they claim, examines how interpersonal mattering influences academically achieving urban Black high school boys. This is a success-celebrating and positive approach to the reporting of the African American male lived experience.

So, how does the PVEST theoretical framework help solve the problem of academic under-achievement of the African American male high school student? PVEST offers a way to assess the degree of resilience in young people during their formative years since it advocates that people's lives are affected by what they believe about themselves. So, young people that are going awry can be turned around by the right support systems that tell them they matter and help them have a more positive view of themselves (Tucker et al., 2010). According to Spencer (2011), PVEST enabled certain people with a positive world view, great situational awareness, and meaningful support from various ecological systems flourish in circumstances where others would have failed. To positivize the accomplishments of African American boys, PVEST became the theoretical framework model by which the coping mechanisms of Black boys in poor communities and ill-equipped urban schools were explained (Spencer, 2011). PVEST assumes that every human being is vulnerable to daily worldly challenges and so must be ready to tackle uncertainties by putting in place safeguards to protect themselves from the disappointing mishaps resulting from man's imperfections (Spencer, 2011).

So, it is apparent then that African American male students do exist who can, and often do resist succumbing under the pressure of racism and stereotyping, while they remain strong when confronted with challenges and opposition. They are unwavering in their determination to do well believing that they can make a positive impact. They are self-determined to succeed,

self-motivated to take on difficult tasks, and self-assured in their ability to deliver results. This aspect of African American student resilience needs more study and research (Spencer, 2011). This is where the rubber meets the road and academic researchers need to pull back on the negative reporting and embark on changing the narrative on Black male student academic performance. They cannot continue to ignore the fact that there are young Black boys who do things right while utilizing efficient coping mechanisms to address obstacles and reach a fruitful end. The barrage of reports that misrepresent their lived experiences need to stop if one is to adequately and fairly address the achievement gap dilemma. This is where PVEST comes in handy because it objectively examines how individuals see existing risks relative to the protection formats that exist after taking into consideration their lived experiences with their peers, in their homes, at their schools and within their communities (Tucker et al., 2010).

Grimmett (2010)'s article, "Brothers in Excellence: An Empowerment Model for the Career Development of African America Boys", developed a conception model of PVEST which Grimmett (2010) called Brothers in Excellence (BE) conceptual model. He formulated this model of PVEST to help people better understand the academic quagmire of African American boys and to help guide them along the path to success. His article was marked in its intentness and reaction to the unparalleled social challenges African American males face in the U.S., the deep-rooted impediments to success that they often encounter, and the possibilities and prospects that could emerge from their development and empowerment.

At the core of success for all Black boys are three domains namely social development, career development, and identity development, none of which can be considered in isolation (Grimmett, 2010). Social development indicates how an African American male student thrives in society, at large, and how much he is shaped by the community he grew up in; career

development shows how he navigates the educational system using it for his own academic benefit and life path advancement, whether or not it is on a school campus or work environment; and identity development, the most intimate and more encompassing of all three, represents how the family background and up-bringing of the African American boy are key to the man that he will become and the success he will experience (Grimmett, 2010).

Furthermore, according to Grimmett (2010), what is central to the success of Black boys is their possession of an identity and a sense of self-worth that is empowering and uplifting. When people feel good about themselves, he asserts, their self-efficacy becomes higher and so does their resolve to succeed as they do not confuse the fake identity that comes with commercializing their accomplishments especially in the field of competitive sports with their real identity as authentic, down-to-earth people (Grimmett, 2010). Mal/misguided identity should not be the order of the day and paraprofessionals within the school system as well as community affiliates should not encourage Black boys to dwell on their commercial images and bask in the limelight of sports accolades that do not stand the test of time (Grimmett, 2010) . Societal fan worship does not help matters either and society's view of African American youth is not encouraging as they are seen as disruptive, violent, and impulsive rather than cool, calm, and collected (Grimmett, 2010). When it comes to sports and athleticism, the Black boy is seen as having the potential to be a great sportsman while his academic ability is downplayed; his entertainment interests become center-stage instead of his interest in science, technology, engineering, and math; and his actions are perceived as having criminal intent rather than noble qualities and tendencies (Grimmett, 2010). The African American male student, Grimmett (2010) adds, is quick to be seen as rude, brash, mean, and disrespectful rather than kind, courteous, and reverent. The Black boy is envisioned more as a sportsman than an academic

scholar, a broad-based view Grimmett (2010) countered by saying that when academic professionals become knowledgeable about the culture/cultural background of Black boys, it would make them more appreciative, empathetic, and respectful of the global views, principles, moral/ethical values, beliefs, and expectations of the African American male students they encounter. He also said that these academic professionals are thereby better able to notice analogous and non-analogous elements within context that have affected their view of themselves and their Black male students, how they relate to each other, and how they perceive their surroundings. They are then able to see that the challenges that Black boys face are not unique to them, not of them, and not from them (Grimmett, 2010).

Consequently, for growing children, the social development domain, rife with interpersonal capabilities and the need to communicate with others, young and old, becomes vital for accomplishing goals. Processing things in a cogent manner and utilizing analytical reasoning leads to greater accomplishments for Black boys as they can make more precise discernments and reach the desired conclusions within their socio-economic sphere of influence. Black boys who can communicate and collaborate freely with people are regarded as adept, skilled and proficient by all educational professionals that work with them to include teachers, academic counselors, career counselors, tutors, and intervention specialists. On the other hand, Black boys who are not well-versed in the art of communicating with people will struggle to fit in socially and may not be able to adequately convey their side of issues or advocate for themselves when a challenge emanates. When Black boys can knowingly employ certain behavior traits at the right time along with the appropriate people skills, then you know they are armed with the right apparatus for success.

It is understood, therefore, that African American male students must be taught and must learn perceptive and collaborative skills in order to positively enhance their social development. Society will ultimately judge them on how they comport themselves especially in very trying situations (Grimmett, 2010). The manner in which they network with their peers and others, the manner in which they tackle obstacles, the manner in which they handle discriminatory or unfair situations, the manner in which they react when in a particular predicament, in other words, their overall demeanor under pressure, all count toward the grade or score that they will be given by society. Therefore, it is imperative for African American male students to fully comprehend the price they will pay for misjudged racial perceptions and their subsequent actions. They should not let their sprouting social knowledge hamper the full development of their personal identity. Instead, they should work towards using their levity from strong personal identity and social development to boost their efficiency in interpersonal relationships, enhance their social collaborative skills, and solidify their public seal of approval.

With regard to the third domain, career development, Grimmett (2010) says that Black boys who encounter dysfunctional relationships do not have a genuine chance at positive life experiences outside of their immediate neighborhoods and social arenas that will make them more successful. They are rarely exposed to modern technology and social media either because they cannot afford it, or because they attend community schools with antiquated technology and non-rigorous academic curriculums and programs (Grimmett, 2010). Meaningful career development for African American boys will only come from their steadfast and robust adaptive relationships with adults and their peers/schoolmates (Grimmett, 2010).

McGee (2013), in her article “Threatened and Placed at Risk: High Achieving African American Males in Urban High School” sought to find out elements responsible for the increase



in the resilience, self-efficacy, and motivation of the African American males that experienced success in mathematics in high school. She also used phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory (PVEST) as her research guide. PVEST helped her hypothesize on how Black boys rationalized their lived experiences in the face of the trials and tribulations they encountered growing up in the inner cities where African Americans make up a large percentage of the population. McGee's (2013) research results led her to conclude that despite their being under hazards of academic and physical nature that stretched farther than their educational environment, the high achieving African American males in her study were focused, academically prepared, and able to rise above the challenges in their urban high schools. They figured out ways of safeguarding themselves from the plethora of threats, aptly shielding their persons from the fallout and harm therefrom (McGee, 2013).

Honora's (2002) "The Relationship of Gender and Achievement to Future Outlook Among African American Adolescents" study addressed the same issue of the underperformance of Black youngsters that is of great worry to all educators in the U.S. of America. Much of the worry is because Black youth are most susceptible to school suspensions, academic program failures, academic tracking, cultural mistrust, and watered-down curriculum (Honora, 2002). They are the ones that are often misplaced and minimized by being put in special education classes, given remedial instructional programs, and denied opportunity to be in advanced placement classes (Honora, 2002). They are at the highest risk of dropping out of school, being given limited teacher support, and being dis-identified from the academic culture of the school (Honora, 2002). Their deficiency in academic success gives an insight into their PVEST, self-efficacy level, their cognitive assessment of themselves later in life and how this assessment ultimately dictates how they go on to perform academically (Honora, 2002). Honora (2002) did

a qualitative study that looked into the correlation between future perceptions and academic success of Black adolescents from urban cities with low socio-economic status. He wanted to see how student self-impressions and future beliefs are fused into and revealed by their school pursuits. He emerged from his study with the fact that an affirmative or adverse intellectual revelation of the future does affect present behavior and can be an inspirational element.

Nurmi (1991), another researcher in the educational arena, agrees with Honora (2002) stating that when one can relate present academic success to his or her impending targets and aspirations, that person has a premonition into the way he or she will develop in the future. That optimistic view into the future yields academic success because it encourages one to plan ahead by setting long term goals and persevering until all goals are accomplished (Nurmi, 1991). Students, African American or otherwise, who have a positive outlook about what is forthcoming are more inspired toward bigger and better things than those who have failed to plan ahead and are unsure of their capabilities and opportunities (Nurmi, 1991).

The PVEST-type academic research study done by Anderman, Anderman, and Griesinger, (1999) investigated the relationship between present self, future projected self, and grade point average (GPA) of adolescents. They discovered that a correlation existed between GPA and a prediction into the future of a positive self-image. Those African American male students who had a more hopeful and progressive outlook about themselves fared better than those who had adverse perceptions about themselves (Anderman et al., 1999). White-Hood (1994) summed up the achievement gap problem in a nutshell when she said that most teachers were dismissive of African American male students because they saw them as lacking motivation, interest, and goal-setting abilities in a system that was already selling them short in terms of the opportunities and support needed to break through barriers. She added that Black

male students trying to navigate their sea of future options for success in a society and academic field that greatly undermines their self-esteem and beliefs in their realms of possibilities, is an exercise in futility. Therein, according to White-Hood (1994), lies the problem.

**Attribution theory.** Attribution theory was first espoused by Heider (1958) as the psychological theory of attribution. Attribution theory works of the presupposition that people are inquisitive about the comportment of others and what leads them to act in the manner they do (Heider, 1958). People also attempt to have an insight into how others view happenings and how those events shape their thinking and actions (Heider, 1958). When a person behaves a certain way, humans want to rationalize it and attribute grounds for that behavior thus leading to a constant celebration of good behavior and an excusal of bad acts (Heider, 1958). This theoretical framework will help to explain why African American males behave in a certain way, make certain choices, or choose certain life paths (Heider, 1958). Attribution theory presupposes that a person trying to comprehend the actions of another will attribute causes to the behavior after thoroughly observing the other person's actions believing them to be deliberate (Heider, 1958). If the behavior is forced, the reason for the action becomes situational, if the behavior is not forced, the reason for the behavior is then solely attributed to the person himself/herself (Heider, 1958).

The reason why there are high performers and low performers, Heider (1958) says, is embedded in attribution theory where high performers take on projects or missions rather than shy away from them, believing that they possess the knowledge necessary to perform the task and the confidence in their ability to deliver. He claims that high performers see failure as something that is detached from their efforts or input and rather than see failure as something caused by them and dwell on it, they shrug it off, attribute it to hard luck or poor materials, and

move on. They do not blame themselves for failures but see themselves as part of an end to the means where rather than for failure to knock them down or incapacitate them, they get past it and look for ways to convert it to success (Heider, 1958). Low performers, on the other hand, do not take on jobs that they can be successful in because they lack self-confidence in their ability to perform and surmise that to achieve success, they have to be fortunate or know the right people in the right places who will help them wangle their way to the top (Heider, 1958). Low achievers also believe that success is something foreign or something that is not within their reach and, even when they experience some measure of success, they are neither excited about it nor do they take ownership of it (Heider, 1958). Since low achievers were not at the helm of the accomplished event, they are of the opinion that they did nothing towards broadening their pride and confidence and as such marginalize themselves (Heider, 1958).

Graham, Taylor, and Hudley's (2014) article "A Motivational Intervention for African American Boys Labeled as Aggressive" brought forth the results of a study of an afterschool academic intervention program that was designed to improve the communicative, social, and academic skills of young African American boys of elementary school age who were considered to be very combative. Their 12-week, 32-lesson program, called Best Foot Forward comprised 16 lessons on skills related to academic motivation and 16 social skills lessons that were taught every weekday for 12 weeks straight as an investigative research project built around the concept of creating inspirational change. By reducing the urge to be combative and increasing the will to accomplish defined goals, the architects of Best Foot Forward, Graham et al. (2014), hoped to elevate to the next level the avenue towards socio-academic success for Black boys.

Furthermore, Graham et al. (2014) article revealed how their Best Foot Forward experimental motivational intervention program was rooted in attribution theory with their theme

organized and shaped around the perceived responsibility causal construct. Among the things they considered during the experimental program was whether or not the African American young boys in the program blamed their peers for their shortcomings in which case their aggression would be directed towards their peers. Considered as well in their study, was the extent to which each Black boy saw himself as bearing the sole responsibility for the results of his academic pursuits in which case there would be a reduction in his urge to be combative against those peers and, in turn, raise his desire to work towards success. All the African American young participants in their experimental intervention program were schooled in the art of account recognition, the comprehension of the various types of account constituents, and their tie to the taking of personal responsibility for their actions. Graham et al. (2014) expected their young male participants to own their personal mistakes and failures, respect the achievements of others, and show greater tolerance and acceptance of those who are penitent of their misdeeds. Through their study and its four areas of importance, they discovered that young people showed more self-accountability and pride when they handled projects that were more challenging, when they set short achievable goals as opposed to long complicated goals, when they were more focused on skill mastery than on performance, and when they associated success with factors within human control like hard work instead of superstitious elements like luck.

To articulate it nicely, Graham et al.'s (2014) study operated under the main assumption that when one was confronted with the decision to choose where to apportion blame for one's failure to achieve, that one would look within one's self rather than towards an outside uncontrollable force for which one was not responsible. It is the expectation, according to Graham et al. (2014), that a failing student be self-responsible enough to attribute his/her academic failure to his/her lack of performance, insufficient expended effort, lack of mastery

focus, and inadequate persistence through challenge. Even though attribution theory was not promulgated especially for Black youth, it provided the right context within which the Graham et al. (2014) experimental intervention program was carried out. Attribution theory, in this instance, attempted to: (a) point out the way people parceled blame for failure, (b) state how they adapted to the results of that blame, and (c) provide guidance on channeling the negative position of blame apportionment for failure towards the more positive stance of taking responsibility for the failure while looking at it as a learning experience for better planning and future success. In other words, when there is failure or a lack of success in a project or task, people should see themselves, not others, as being at fault, learn from it, push the reset button, and plan for a more successful future. Graham et al. (2014)'s application of attribution theory in their study was rooted in the day-to-day lived experiences of militant African American male students who encountered failures both at the social and academic levels. By making discerned culpability the focal point of their experimental intervention program, Graham et al. (2014) aimed at swaying the causal thoughts and feelings of the experiences of the African American boys who participated in the program away from the maladaptive towards the empowering.

**Positive reporting of life narratives /lived experiences of African American male students.** As discerned from the literature review, almost every account of the academic performance of African American males especially the ones in the high schools in the U.S. of America is negative, derogatory, and counter-productive. The academic failures of Black boys receive more print attention than their successes. The staggering amount of the negative narratives has sparked the call for a counter-narrative of African American male academic performance. Harper's (2012) study article, "Success in These Schools? Visual Counter-narratives of Young Men of Color and Urban High Schools" chronicled how a large number of

published materials that are around today concentrate more on how unstable, inadequate, violent, unmotivated, and deficient young men of color are. Consequently, in all educational contexts across the country, article after article on young Black men continue to be derogatory and dismissive of their academic prowess and the realms of their possibilities (Harper, 2012). Aggregately, the picture painted of African American and Hispanic male students in urban city schools across the nation is one of doomed young men who have no hope of a bright future given the grim educational environment that they are products of (Harper, 2012).

By utilizing picturesque data gathered from studying 325 eleventh and twelfth grade students headed to college from 40 New York City public schools, Harper (2012) was able to present the other side of the issue of a counter-balanced report on the misrepresentation of young men of color. He was determined to change the narrative about African American male students which was always negative into a positive one in order to improve their chances of success. In particular, he found that at the heart of the perpetuation of negative stories about Black boys and their urban educational lived experiences were the concepts of critical race methodologies and visual sociology.

Having grown tired of the fact that there were too many reports on African American young men that focused on their shortcomings instead of on their successes, Harper (2012) decided to do something about it. As his contribution towards creating a counter-narrative to defeat the detrimental accounts of lived experiences that were in circulation about Black boys, he used his Anti-Deficit Achievement concept as the theoretical framework for his study. He examined thirty years of various angles of theory and literary works in the areas of knowledge development, mental make-up, human gender studies, and behavioral science and flipped the negative research questions as such: Negatively stated question, Why do two-thirds of Black

undergraduate men who start at public universities fail to graduate? became positively stated question, How and why are one-third of African American undergraduate men who start at public universities able to graduate? By so doing, Harper (2012) was able to showcase the successful students, shining light on their person, the establishments that helped them prosper, and the elements that gave them the presence of mind and wherewithal to persevere until they had their bachelor's degrees in the palms of their hands. His counter-narrative approach to reporting would motivate even the most reluctant of African American youth towards degree attainment and ultimate success.

Harper's (2012) anti-deficit achievement framework, therefore, steered one towards philosophically believing that, in spite of the negative stories on Black male students that dominated the news through peer-reviewed journals, reports on research, and news media coverages, there were many African American male students who excelled. They then went on to attend institutions of higher learning, being highly academically prepared, motivated to succeed, and backed by their families and communities (Harper, 2012). By their successes, these high performing Black male students raked up academic and social capital which they traded in later for professional gains and personal betterment as they went on to graduate and become leaders and advocates for change on their campuses and beyond. Therefore, Harper's (2012) anti-deficit achievement framework, in his own words, "is intended to identify policies, practices, and structures, as well as individual, familial, cultural, and communal resources that help Black men succeed educationally" (p. 45).

Boucher's (2016) article "More Than an Ally: A Successful White Teacher Who Builds Solidarity with His African American Students" was a qualitative case study that also aimed at providing the counter-narrative of White teachers who were able to gain the confidence of their



African American students enough to stir them towards success and thereby bridge the achievement gap, in that circumstance. Boucher (2016) changed, in a harmonious way, the significance of the consensus, unanimity, and solidarity that existed between Black students and their White teachers who channeled them towards success. In his study, he chose his words very tactfully, replacing the word effective with successful. He stayed away from using the word effective in his study because he believed it to be an overused word especially in the educational arena when evaluating teachers and/or when holding teachers accountable for the academic performance of their students

Boucher (2016) studied a particular African American student named Deshawn and his White teacher who was triumphant with his Black male students because they experienced all-round success that transcended test scores. Deshawn was the poster child for everything that was wrong with the education system to include the enormous achievement gap and chance hole that persisted between African American and Caucasian students (Boucher, 2016). Deshawn, a Black boy raised by his single mother and who hailed from a family with a history of poverty, was of good comportment and was making good grades in the initial stages of his education, until the eighth grade where he started falling off the academic wagon (Boucher, 2016). He became truant and soon lagged behind his peers in the core subject areas with the upkeep of himself, his brothers, and sisters falling squarely on his shoulders, and the lure of money that he badly needed to take care of his family taking him away from school despite knowing that education was the key to a better future (Boucher, 2016).

Deshawn's need for huge sums of money and the urge to get it quickly to help his family led him to a life of crime and illegal activities that eventually led him to the door of no return where he was sucked into the school-to-prison pipeline, a pipeline that only had jail time, misery,

and quite possibly, death to offer (Boucher, 2016). Unfortunately, this is the road frequently travelled by way too many Black male students. Many students of color especially African American male high school students are railroaded and delivered, at a very young age, straight into the hands of the criminal justice system and its correctional facilities by educational establishments that are supposed to lead them in the opposite direction. Deshawn was left by himself, with no parental or community guidance, to steer him through a high school configuration that was supposedly set up to soften the blows from academic challenges and shepherd him in the direction of high school graduation and diploma (Boucher, 2016). Rather, his high school ended up being poorly equipped, inadequately staffed, badly under-funded, and thus, unable to redirect him away from life in the criminal justice system at a time when Deshawn most needed a counter-narrative to prevent him from ending up as a negative academic statistic (Boucher, 2016).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 brought to the forefront the fact that even when White and Black students were products of the same school, White students still fared better on performance tests than Black students, and despite efforts expended by several educational institutions for more than ten years now to solve this problem, African American and Caucasian students have continued to mark themselves present in the same classrooms that churn out remarkable results for White students and disparaging results for Black students. The inequity in academic performance results despite what seems like equal treatment, is baffling. The achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students is prevalent and extensive where White students continue to outperform their Black counterparts in the academic arena day after day, month after month, and year after year (Boucher, 2016). It continues to be a problem for educational establishments all over the country wherever there are students from diverse

cultural, social, and economic backgrounds (Boucher, 2016). There are many academicians and others in the field of education today, some of whose articles were made a part of this study, who are concerned about the inequity in test results but not dedicated enough to take the problem head on and reverse the trend (Boucher, 2016). Sick and tired of the negativity surrounding African American males in almost every facet of life and horrified by the disparity, more people are honestly and courageously coming forward wanting to change the narrative (Boucher, 2016). More people are reporting on the academic performance of Black boys from the nicer, more understanding, more tolerant, more respectful, and less damaging perspective, with ever more research articles highlighting their efforts, celebrating their achievements, and cheering them on to success (Boucher, 2016).

Consequently, Boucher (2016) believes that the achievement gap cannot be closed without bringing African American males and their predominantly white teachers together, a concept he calls solidarity. He agrees with researchers like Powell and Marshall (2011) that successful teachers are the ones that can build solidarity with all students irrespective of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, age, or familial status. Successful teachers Boucher says, are also the ones to implement well-developed classroom procedures, rigorous curriculum, and individually tailored pedagogy. Boucher (2016) differs slightly from McGrady and Reynolds (2013) who lean more heavily in support of the fact that solidarity comes from putting well-trained and pedagogically qualified teachers of color to teach students of color despite acknowledging that the implementation of their solution will take a long time. What Boucher (2016) sees as a more immediate way to build solidarity, however, would be to work with, re-train, and change the mindset of the majority White teachers that are currently teaching Black boys. It was not until Deshawn's White teacher was in solidarity with him as a Black boy

was he able to turn Deshawn's life around and steer him towards the path to success (Boucher, 2016). Here again, is another example of how taking the positive approach and creating a counter-narrative helps to bring out the best in the African American male student. Positive talk and accolades motivate and empower, while negative talk and criticism tear down and discourage.

Aldridge (2008) published a book that espoused the educationally-leaning ideas of the eminent African American scholar, activist, and educator W. E. B. Du Bois (as cited in Aldridge, 2008) who during his lifetime fought for the dignified treatment of, and quality education for, African Americans. Du Bois' work (as cited in Aldridge, 2008) foresaw the achievement gap problem that exists today, very early in his life because he felt that the plight of Blacks in terms of assimilation after the abolition of slavery was never addressed. Du Bois (as cited in Aldridge, 2008) believed that if only people fully comprehended the challenges that African Americans faced, it would be easier for them to work towards their betterment. According to Aldridge (2008):

Du Bois' intention in pushing for the provision of quality education for African Americans and others was to make the world a better place...Aldridge's historical analysis of Du Bois' educational thought illustrated that throughout Du Bois' prolific scholarship, which represented only one of Du Bois' methods in his numerous and radical attempts to make the world a better place, were calls for a more complex examination of the schooling experiences of African Americans...that African-Americans must be given the chance to attain the most sophisticated, higher education as well, so that they might partake of the goods of civilization as well as be fit candidates to educate other African-Americans in turn, a task not to be left fully up to whites. (p. 144)

In 1903, Du Bois (as cited in Aldridge, 2008) advocated for the careful and diligent study of the plight of the Black American because everyone at the time professed to know about it. He was always concerned that the negative stance and marginalized state that slavery left Black Americans in would come back to haunt them someday as is happening now. Generation after generation of African American males are being disparaged, put down, and relegated to the background by the negative stereotyping of them as being never-do-wells. Most destructive to their progress, however, has been the barrage of negative reporting of their lived experiences. Ladson-Billings (1997) could not have said it better in her article, "It Doesn't Add Up" when she wrote that, "certainly enough literature documents the mathematics failure of African American students. What is lacking is the documentation of successful practice of mathematics for African American students" (p. 706).

**Celebration of the academic successes and accomplishments of African American male students.** Amongst many other researchers concerned at the time about the fact that very few Black boys graduated from high school and even fewer experienced postsecondary success was Lorenzo Baber (2014). He felt that African American males attending U.S. secondary and postsecondary academic institutions were not being encouraged, supported, and inspired enough to succeed and decided to take an intimate positive look at their transitional experiences. As a result, Baber (2014) embarked on a study that enabled him take a symbolic ride along with a group of high school Black boys as they drove through three main lanes: postsecondary inclinations empowerment lane, educational system navigation assistance lane, and equitable academic resources/opportunities access lane, on their journey from secondary school to community college. Hébert (1998), like Baber (2014), albeit much earlier, did also explore the academic lived experiences of black males by looking at both sides of the coin. He interviewed an achieving and an under-achieving African American student in the gifted program at their high school to better understand the disparity.

David W. Stinson (2013) also wrote an article entitled “Negotiating the “White Male Math Myth” African American Male Students and Success in School Mathematics” which majorly addressed the fact that the successes of African American male students, no matter how big, were often suppressed and not celebrated. He was a Caucasian mathematics teacher who was concerned about this plight of the African American students in his class and cared enough to do something about it. Stinson (2013) was perplexed by the share rarity of publications with educational articles that featured Black students who persevered and excelled in math as compared to a plethora of publications that harped on Black students who struggled with or outright failed mathematics. He wanted to know where the articles that celebrated the academic achievements of African American students were, why they were so few, and how the students who excelled in his math class were able to do so in spite of all the negative vibes that surrounded them.

The manner in which his Black mathematics students were able to rise above the negative stereotypes, keep their self-esteem, self-pride, and self-efficacy intact, maintain a winning attitude, and focus on instruction in the classroom, piqued Stinson’s (2013) curiosity. In order to comprehend how his African American male math students were able to do well in his class in the face of so much adversity, he decided to look into the way they carried on their school and home lives, extending his investigation beyond the confines of his math class. He was eager to learn how it was that his African American math students did well when related literature and social discourse said the contrary. He wanted to know the effects that all the cultural and historical discourse that existed in society about the academic performance of African American students had on his students. He also wanted to know what the discourses were doing to his black students' view of themselves and how they got around the often-negative comments.

Robinson and Werblow (2012)'s article "Beating the Odds: How Single Black Mothers Influence the Educational Success of Their Sons Enrolled in Failing Schools" held the answers to Stinson's (2013) questions. Their article conveyed to us that the often-single mothers of African American male students were the positive forces in their lives, forces strong enough to keep them focused on their education and determined to succeed. Robinson and Werblow (2012) found this out by interviewing and tracking the lived experiences of the mothers of the academically successful 11<sup>th</sup> grade African American males in their case study. They found similar personality traits among the mothers and discovered that they also used identical strategies in helping their sons rise above all the melee.

Like Stinson (2013), Robinson and Werblow (2012) were so disturbed by the share volume of underperformance by African American males that they decided to find the underlying cause. Find the underlying cause of it they did, but unlike their predecessors, they went about their search and discovery from a positive perspective by taking a look at successful African American students as opposed unsuccessful ones. In the process, they posed these counter-narrative questions at a time when much of the past reporting stated that Black single mothers negatively impacted their sons: How was it that the successful African American moms were able to put the academic requirements of their sons above their own? How were they able to motivate their sons to achieve educational and societal excellence? How did these mothers learn enough about the complex educational system to successfully navigate their way through it and act as advocates for their sons? Robinson and Werblow (2012) designed their case studies to shut down the negative notions and stereotypes on Black males, their academic performances, and the single mothers behind them. They strongly believed that equipped with a more appropriate discernment of Black male success, Black males will be more apt to address the issue

when academic performance expectations laced with institutional and societal racism reared their ugly heads. With the embrace of this awareness and call to action stance, they believed African American male students would make big strides in the move to bridge the achievement gap between Black and White students.

Douglas and Arnold's (2016) "Exposure in and Out of School: A Black Bermudian Male's Successful Educational Journey" article further highlighted the fact that the complexity of Black male identity in national and regional contexts had implications for educators who desired to assist Black males form healthy identities and achieve personal and educational success. There is much to learn about how formal and informal education influence and intersect with the identities and successes of Black males in the U.S. and international contexts like Bermuda – a jurisdiction that has explicit cultural and geopolitical connections to the U.S. (Douglas & Arnold, 2016).

Most helpful in the move to positivize the reports on African American male students' lived experiences and celebrate their success is their attainment of academic achievement in larger numbers and therefrom, the closure of the Achievement Gap. Massive efforts are being made currently to close the achievement gap and one cannot talk about those efforts without mentioning those of the Schott Foundation for Public Education (1991). Today, this organization is the biggest advocate for the success of African American male high school students in U.S. secondary schools. It was formed in 1991 by a mother and son dynamic duo to combat the inequity, racism, and stifling bureaucracy that exist and persist in U.S. public education. Schott Foundation for Public Education's (1991) goals, objectives, and mission are aptly and clearly stated in its own words as follows,



to develop and strengthen a broad-based and representative movement to achieve fully resourced, quality PreK-12 public education...it believes that public education is a mainstay of U.S. democracy... It provides not only a route out of poverty, but also the possibility to transform young lives...its grantmaking strategy seeks to create healthy living and learning communities, ensure fairness, opportunity, and access to high quality public schools for all children...it supports an “Opportunity to Learn” frame for understanding education policy...it recognizes that to truly close achievement gaps, the nation must address underlying opportunity gaps - the deep disparities that exist in access to quality educational resources, particularly for low-income students and students of color...Schott’s core belief is that well-resourced grassroots campaigns can lead to systemic change in the disparities poor children and children of color face in U.S. schools...In helping to build these campaigns into a movement, it recognizes its pivotal role as both funder and advocate. (p. 1)

The state of public education today in the U.S. of America leaves a lot to be desired. Sadly, there are millions of children who their parents send to their neighborhood schools diligently every school day hoping they get a good education, whose education will be marginalized and compromised because they attend run-down schools with inadequate classrooms, old text books, non-access to modern day technology, unqualified teachers, substandard amenities, draconian discipline policies, non-existent school support services like nurses, counselors, after-school programs, and very dismal academic performance records (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 1991).

As an advocate for students attending substandard public schools, Schott Foundation for Public Education (1991) promulgated an Opportunity to Learn framework as an avenue to

fairness, equality, the comprehension of educational policies, and the smooth navigation of the public education system. The Foundation's Opportunity to Learn framework spoke plainly about the fact that the U.S., in order to close the achievement gaps in education, must primarily undertake the resolution of the deep-rooted opportunity gaps and shameful disparities in the distribution of educational resources. This disparity, in the eyes of the Foundation, was more prevalent in schools in low-income neighborhoods and communities with more people of color where it was hoped that the Foundation will use its vast funding resources and astute student advocacy programs to bring about systemic changes in the public education system that would lead to equal access and opportunity for all students. For ten years running, the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2015) gathered and published nationwide data on the four-year graduation rates of African American male high school students as opposed to those of any other sub-groups. This move on their part was deliberate as they attempted to put the spotlight on the incessant disparity of access and opportunity that the Black male students have been, and continued to be subjected to, forging an impression of a sub-group of the population whose being and contributions did not matter to the country. To the Schott Foundation of Public Education (2015), however, Black lives and contributions mattered and have continued to matter as was shown by their 2015 report entitled "Black lives matter: The Schott 50 state report on public education and Black males." This report, in their own words, was "intended to draw public attention to the serious reality of a danger that does not instantly end young Black males' lives but one that creates a practically insurmountable chasm of denied educational opportunities that consigns them to poverty and limited chances to succeed in life" (p. 3).

The Schott Foundation for Public Education (2015) report stated that the national high school graduation rate for black males was decreasing, as follows: in 2011, it was 61%; by 2012,

it had dropped to 59%. In the same time frame, according to the report, the graduation rate in California for Black males went from 62% in 2011 (compared to 82% for White males) to 41% in 2012 (compared to 61% for White males), clearly indicating that more needed to be done besides looking over the data and acquiescing to what it indicated. By urging non-profit, philanthropic, and corporate entities to get involved and create initiatives and networks that would support African American male high school students, the Foundation hoped to tackle the challenges early to avoid the slew of repercussions that would come from neglecting them.

It is only by conducting comprehensive needs assessments, undertaking pedagogical restructuring that is backed by research, undergoing a period of educational reorganization, putting forth a plan that would attend to the students' needs physically, socially, and emotionally, providing support for school support/service providers, and recognizing the importance of parent/student/community collaboration, can states, school districts, and schools begin to build the solidarity and frameworks necessary to move black males towards academic success (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 1991). Consequently, a six-point plan to generate counter-narratives with positive overtones that will permeate the educational discourse on the achievement gap, enough to effect an upward trend in the academic performance of Black boys was laid out as follows: (a) fully functioning and equitably-accessed school support systems; (b) collection and reporting on a regular basis of quality positive educational data critical for education policy and decision-making; (c) private sector pro-action by way of initiatives and fellowships; (d) viable solutions in place of school suspension and/or expulsion of students; (e) community action by way of community builders getting involved in celebrating the accomplishments and carrying out the uplifting of young black males; and (f) philanthropic action and resources like those coming from the National Opportunities to Learn (NOL)

campaign, Campaign for Black Male Achievement (CBMA), Black Male Funders Learning and Action Networks, Sons and Brothers, African American Men and Boys Initiative, Racial Equity Resource Guide, and the Executives' Alliance (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 1991).

In Harper and Newman (2016)'s "Surprise, Sense-making, and Success in the First College Year: Black Undergraduate Men's Academic Adjustment Experiences", more was revealed and published about Black undergraduate men over the past 15 years than any other racialized gender in higher education. Despite the attention devoted to Black male collegians across a range of institution types, too little emphasis was made of their positive academic experiences and outcomes (Harper & Newman, 2016). Besides Strayhorn, Johnson, and Barrett's (2013) study of two formerly incarcerated Black men's adjustment to predominantly White institutions (PWIs), Harper and Newman (2016) found no other published research that explicitly examined Black men's first year of academic transition experiences.

There were two justifications for Harper and Newman's (2016) focus on the first college year of African American undergraduate men, namely: Black undergraduate men's alarmingly low rate of college completion and the deficit-oriented manner in which Black men were typically studied. They were most interested in understanding how Black men who initially struggled in their first year of college and overcame such challenges, became academically stable and high performing, ultimately persisting through toward baccalaureate degree attainment. Their interest and positive approach towards the lived experiences of the Black undergraduate male was informed by Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework, which presumed that much could be learned from Black men who succeeded, including those who initially struggled as freshmen. Nonetheless, they were particularly interested in understanding how

Black boys who persisted through high school and made academic achievements, made sense of their transitions to a range of postsecondary institutional contexts.

In addition to the importance of positively reporting about the lived experience of the newcomer college student, is the benefit of seeing things from their perspective. Theoretical perspectives on surprise and sense-making (Harper & Newman, 2016) of newcomers to organizations are useful for exploring how newcomers, such as first-year college students, view their transitions and reconcile the surprising misalignments of expectations and their actual performances (Louis, 1980). This framework of Louis' (1980) considers the expectations newcomers bring to a new organizational context and in higher education, entails what students expect college to be like, how they expect to be treated, and the relationships and outcomes they expect in exchange for their academic efforts, time away from their families, and financial investments. She explained that unrealistic and unmet expectations often led to transition turbulence and high rates of departure.

The element of surprise was also crucial in determining how a newcomer reacted to the discrepancies between what they expected going into the new environment and what actually transpired. Louis' (1980) model includes five forms of surprise: (a) when there is early consciousness of unfulfilled expectations; (b) when performance expectations of self or the transferability of one's skills from a previous environment to a new setting are unmet; (c) when aspects of the new role are unanticipated; (d) when new experiences and environments feel differently than the newcomer expected; and (e) when newcomers bring cultural assumptions from a prior place to a new culturally dissimilar context. Regarding these, Louis (1980) explains that cognitive revision is often necessary for coping and reorientation. Sense-making is the

process by which individuals interpret and cope with surprises, a strategy that reduces disappointments, disenchantment, and the chance of apathy or total failure (Louis, 1980).

### **Chapter Summary**

In order to solve the problem of the persistent academic non-success of African American male high school students, it is important to understand the underlying factors that fuel the flames of the poor performance. When you find the root of a problem, it is only then can you root it out from its core so that it will not rear its ugly head again. This study attempts to find out and understand the fundamental underpinnings behind the lack of success of young Black males in high school through four already promulgated doctrines and to take a shot at solutions through the assembly of three truly relevant themes. The doctrines are: social disorganization theory, self-efficacy theory, phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory (PVEST), and attribution theory. The themes are: the positive reporting of life narratives/lived experiences of African American male students and the celebration of the academic successes and accomplishments of African American male students.

Social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010), claims that children are a product of their society and if they come from a dysfunctional environment, it is a real detriment to their ability to thrive. With an understanding of a child's background, then the people who encounter or help that child will be able to use appropriate methods in dealing with that child.

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1994), states that when a child has self-confidence, high self-esteem and a strong belief in his or her ability to perform, ultimately, that child's self-efficacy will be high enough to withstand any challenges and strong enough to re-motivate the child and reset them back on the right path.

Phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory (PVEST) (Spencer, 2011), helps to explain how young African American males perceive their lived experiences notwithstanding the societal challenges they face and how they deal with those roadblocks. Students with a positive PVEST are more likely to succeed.

Attribution theory (Heider, 1958), gives an insight into how people perceive the behaviors and actions of other people. This theory works off the assumptions that there must be behavior observation, intentionally performed behavior, and forced or unforced behavior in order to be certain of cause of behavior. Once cause of behavior is ascertained, how blame is apportioned and handled becomes critical to success.

Positive reporting of life narratives/lived experiences of African American male students needs to occur more often. Harper (2012), claims that there are more bad reports on the performance of Black males than there are positive ones. He also maintains that if the negative narrative on the academic failure of the Black boy is changed and his achievements, no matter how small, are given more recognition than his failures, then he will perform better. The theme urges and encourages educational researchers to put more spotlight on positive reporting to bolster the confidence of Black youth.

The celebration of the academic successes and accomplishments of African American male students (Stinson, 2013), is a theme that like the one before it, believes that African American males are challenged from birth because of their race and gender and more often than not, are born into poverty. Therefore, they appreciate the smallest of lights at the end of their dark tunnels. All stakeholders in their lives and those responsible for their academic success are implored to get involved and to do everything within the scopes of their powers to push for

equity, access, community support, and funding in the inadequate inner city schools so that African American male students can have a fair chance.

In conclusion, while the theories offer a better understanding of the problem, the themes attempt to offer solutions.



## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Restatement of the Problem

The achievement gap between African American males and their White counterparts remains large and looming. While efforts have been made over the years to close the gap, the gap has persisted. Why does it seem like an impossible task to close this gap? The answer may lie in the fact that African American male academic achievement, and indeed their overall success, have been reported in a negative manner for so long as to produce a loss in confidence of their ability to perform successfully. All the information that has been collected and the articles that have been written on the subject hardly highlight the achievements of African American males that have beaten the odds and excelled. It is widely believed by a majority of the authors of the articles/studies selected for this study, that counter-narratives that dispel the unfavorable views that are in play are needed while conscious and deliberate efforts are made to report and represent African American males in a palatable light.

Two words: underachievement and underrepresentation, linked for a long time to African American male students, have done more to harm their educational quest than help it (Scott, 2012). They are detrimental words, but they provide a sense of urgency to the plight of African American male students and why the achievement gap problem needs to be re-addressed with the utmost urgency. The fact that African American male high school students who beat the odds and graduate from high school, do not get college scholarships at the same rate as their White counterparts is also of concern to researchers and others in the field of education (Scott, 2012). Therefore, it cannot be overemphasized that there is the interest and urgency to identify the factors that prevent African American male high school students, in particular, from performing well at school and to alleviate the challenges posed. Support structures for struggling students

need to be bolstered to prevent them from dropping out of school and heightened to motivate them to proceed on to college attendance.

No doubt that much of the data and educational reporting on African American male educational accomplishments have had a negative edge to them (Scott, 2012). The sheer number of the negative findings and the frequency of their occurrence are staggering. It crushes the self-esteem and the youngsters' belief in their ability to perform. The negative reporting is doing more damage and compounding the problem hence the push now for the performance of African American students to be recorded and reported concerning the good they have done. When you celebrate the success of a person, it encourages that person to do more. Negative reporting is destroying the self-worth and capacity of African American male students to rise above the calamity and move forward because their way of coping with the challenges is to stay away from the stressors or act out in detrimental ways (Scott, 2012). Most human beings would rather stay away from challenging situations than confront them just because it is easier to do so, and this is true for males more so than females.

One potential morale killer for African American male students is their placement in special education classes as a solution to their academic underperformance where special education is meant for students who have physical learning impediments and not students who have a motivational or social impediment (Wright, 2016). Therefore, where an African American male student's academic challenges would have been better handled, for example, by tutoring him after school, his placement in special education sends him a different message that crushes his spirit and drive and does nothing to prepare him for post high school academics (Wright, 2016). A large percentage of African American male students have White female teachers meaning that there is the possibility of a lack of connection because of the differences in

cultural backgrounds (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008). It becomes critical then for White female teachers to familiarize themselves with the backgrounds of their Black students so that they are better equipped to instruct them effectively (Douglas et al., 2008). When a Black student strays, the White teacher should be understanding, compassionate, culturally equipped, and able to redirect that student to get back on track (Wright, 2016). Moreover, stereotyping African American males as only being capable of the less intellectual jobs like building custodianship, hair barbering, body guarding, or sports instructing only serves to further diminish their accomplishments and kill their motivation to improve (Wright, 2016). It does no good whatsoever to further beat down people who are having challenges in life or who are downtrodden.

### **Restatement of the Purpose**

So much of the education research today is looking to change the negative perceptions, stereotypes, and narratives surrounding the Black male hoping that this positive approach will help to close the achievement gap (Ehrenreich, Reeves, Corley, & Orpinas, 2012). The counter-narrative resulting therefrom should look more towards recognizing their achievements no matter how minute, and celebrating their successes.

There is something uplifting about recognizing what works well in any circumstance, understanding why it is working well, seeing if there is something good to take away from it, using it to inspire others, and replicating it in an effort to produce similar or even better results (Ehrenreich et al., 2012).

Can you imagine the possibilities if this was the lot of African American male high school students? The sky would be their limit, would it not?

So, this study aims to examine the current strategies being used to make African American male students succeed in U.S. secondary schools, especially considering the incessant achievement gap crisis that has befallen them. Whatever is working well will be highlighted, celebrated, and continued, while whatever is not working well will be pointed out, discontinuation of it recommended, and hopefully, the proven strategies will be implemented. Success lies at the heart of what it is one wants to achieve and is a mindset that needs to be visualized, affirmed, and cultivated in anyone having struggles in life (Ehrenreich et al., 2012). Focusing on what one has achieved, rather than beating one's self up over what still needs to be done, which often is beyond one's control, is the way to go. By a constant self-reassurance of success, one can build-up one's self-belief and success attitude, but conversely, when one does not notice or is constantly downplaying his or her accomplishments as achieved by luck or by the grace of others, that person will never experience success (Ehrenreich et al., 2012). Ultimately, celebration of success feels good and releases Dopamine in the brain that becomes responsible for one wanting to keep repeating success (Wax, 2020). One of the best reasons to celebrate success is simply that it feels good and when one is moved to make life-changing decisions, it is out of the need to raise self-esteem and self-worth, both of which make for strong self-efficacy and true happiness (Wax, 2020). This is what the educational world and stakeholders should want for African American male students who need these encouragements to make the necessary life changes that will bring them success and happiness.

### **Restatement of the Research Questions**

Most current studies are based on the assumption that African American males are at extreme risk of dropping out of, underachieving in, or disengaging from school for reasons that have been hashed out and will continue to be hashed out in this study. Despite the dismal data

connected with African American male students, it is important to note that counter-data now exist to even out things, although not nearly enough (Harper, 2012). Since the successes of Black males are not more often celebrated the adverse portrayals of them persist while the good continually tries to overshadow the bad resulting in a reckless spinning of wheels with the success going nowhere (Harper, 2012). Since it is the aim of this study to find out why African American male students continue to underperform academically in spite of ongoing efforts to help them improve, what follows subsequently, is an extensive review of literature (50 articles and studies listed in Appendix A) to garner their messages and their perceived effect on the educational lives of Black students, while critiquing them in relation to what they have been able to do to improve or remedy the achievement gap dilemma. In light of the above and the fact that this problem has persisted from as far back as 1954 when school segregation was outlawed, this researcher had to ask the following very pertinent questions:

1. What, according to the 50 articles and studies examined for this study, are the five most effective academic strategies being used to help African American male students succeed in high school?
2. Why, according to the results of the examined articles/studies, does the achievement gap between African American male high school students and their White counterparts persist in spite of these strategies?
3. What is a new strategy model that emerges from this study as a solution to the poor academic performance of African American male students in U.S. high schools?

### **Research Design**

This study started from a concern about the continued underperformance of the African American male student in high schools in the U.S. African American male high school students

continue to academically achieve at a much lower level than their White counterparts, whether or not they attend the same school, and despite efforts made by all stakeholders to ameliorate the situation (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). Every year the high school graduation rate of White male students far exceeds that of Black male students, creating the ever-widening achievement gap and its attending crisis. According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2015), the graduation rate for African American high school students went from 61% in 2011 to 59% in 2012 nationwide while that of Black male students in California went from 62% in 2011 to 41% in 2012. Consequently, in order to find out why there is this widening achievement gap year after year despite mitigation efforts by education professionals, this study embarked on an examination of 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) for current practices on the subject matter. The 50 articles and studies used were obtained from the ERIC and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses web sites, through Pepperdine's Databases and E-Journals section after using specific criteria. This study also sought to see which strategies were working and which ones were counterproductive.

In order to get started, the main research question became: What, according to the 50 articles and studies examined for this study, are the five most effective academic strategies being used to help African American male students succeed in high school? The main research question came along with two follow-up questions. The first follow up question was: Why, according to the results of the examined articles/studies, does the achievement gap between African American male high school students and their White counterparts persist despite these strategies? The second follow-up question was: What is a new strategy model that emerges from this study as a solution to the poor academic performance of African American male students in U.S. high schools?

The research locations included the Pepperdine University library from whence the articles/studies came; Pepperdine University educational facilities where the inquiry and informative process took place; and private spaces where the articles/studies were thoroughly meta-synthesized and thematically synchronized. It was also in private spaces that the literature review was done, the methodology carried out, the data collected and synthesized, the research findings made, the relevant discussions had, the conclusions made, the recommendations given, and the whole dissertation written.

The study was designed to be a qualitative metasynthesis that employed “unique combinations of coding and themeing of qualitative data” (Saladna, 2016, p. 204), and no human subjects. The research population was made up of all possible articles on the research topic while the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) comprised the sample. The research instruments were metasynthesis coding, categorizing, and interpretation of the qualitative data collected. The researcher coded, categorized, and interpreted 50 articles and studies and reported on them in relation to the main purpose of the study and the three research questions posed. The data collection was made from the articles read and the key findings were analyzed using a manual metasynthesis qualitative method (see Appendices A & B).

## **Methodology**

This study used the metasynthesis methodology of qualitative research to gather data, meticulously organize information found within the data gathered, point out patterns in the data, examine and interpret the themes that emerged from an analysis of the data collected, and reach valuable conclusions from the findings. According to Erwin, Brotherson, and Summers (2011):

Qualitative metasynthesis is an intentional and coherent approach to analyzing data across qualitative studies. It is a process that enables researchers to identify a specific

research question and then search for, select, appraise, summarize, and combine qualitative evidence to address the research question. This process uses rigorous qualitative methods to synthesize existing qualitative studies to construct greater meaning through an interpretative process. (p. 186)

This researcher preferred to use Saldana's (2009) methodology of conducting a qualitative metasynthesis as laid out in his book "The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers." It entailed eight very detailed and meticulous steps.

**Metasynthesis methodology step one.** This is the interpretative, inductive, and systematic creation of raw data (information/body of facts) from an extensive read and review process of selected relevant archived documents of previous articles and qualitative studies (Saldana, 2009) and a rigorous text annotation of the research (investigations) and findings (conclusions) of that selection. This researcher created the raw data for this study from the intensive and meticulous read, review, and annotation (see Appendix B) of 50 relevant articles and studies (see Appendix A) selected from Pepperdine University's Databases and E-Journals.

**Metasynthesis methodology step two.** This is the arbitrary extraction of words and terminologies from the data corpus (raw data) that capture the essence of, and are in alignment with, the purpose of the study (Saldana, 2009). The following words and terminologies which were in accordance with the goals of this study were extracted from the 50 articles and studies that were diligently read, extensively reviewed, and closely examined:

educators – phenomenology – findings – realism – comparison – color – solutions – background – theories – strategies – metasynthesis – disparity – counterparts – boost – disorganization – inalienable – conclusion – status – identity – support – success – rate – research – Blacks – graduation – parents – analysis – synthesis – themes – high –



emergent – failing – categories – studies – codes – qualitative – extraction – assertion – people – strength – aspiration – empowerment – modeling – schools – advisement – readiness – persistence – stereotyping – threats – obstacles – roles – responsive – rigorous – diversity – pedagogy – White – equitable – boys – ample – bias – outlook – resources – opportunities – mentorships – positive – attribution – ethnic identity – qualified – educators – curriculum – self-efficacy – self-perception – self-esteem – religiosity – pride – strong – academy – informed – low – intervention – grade – success – peers – underrepresentation – academic – tracking – racism – discrimination – ethnic – inequities – diminished – high – communities – schools – dysfunction – habits – expectations – weak – study – moral compass – relationships – – ample – programs – questions – lived – American – taunts – positive – experiences – academic teachers – mistrust – advancement – improvement – achievement gap – solidarity opportunities – resilience – mechanisms – drive – goals – reporting – life narratives – African – male – secondary – United States – race – celebration – successes – data – accomplishments – encourage – emulation – abilities – teachers – ethnicity – aspirations – disidentification – rights – foundation – socio-economic – college – negative – coding – dedicated – engaging – coping – student – placement – counselors

As much as the words and terminologies extracted above could have gone on endlessly, this researcher used the Themeing the Data method of code generation as a limiting guide.

**Metasynthesis methodology step three.** This is the deliberate creation of “thematic statements and extended assertions” (Saldana, 2009, p. 205) from the word extraction list by using key metaphors and organizers to put them into phrases, concepts, ideas, and perspectives

that “represent the gist of an/(the) entire study” (Saldana, 2009, p. 205). The thematic statements and extended assertions created for this study are shown below:

aspirational support – empowerment – role modeling – high school – college advising – college readiness – persistence – stereotype threats – obstacles – culturally-responsive – rigorous – diverse pedagogy – positive reporting – ample opportunities – mentorships – aspiration – positive outlook – attribution – ethnic identity – encouragement  
highly-qualified – emulate – racism – diminishing communities – engaging curriculum – self-efficacy – self-perception – self-esteem – religiosity – pride – strong foundation – informed decisions – intervention programs – disidentification – success – peers – taunting – underrepresentation – academic abilities – tracking – racism – discrimination – ethnic biases – inequities – dedicated educators – failing schools – dysfunction – low expectations – study habits – moral compass – teachers – accomplishment – solidarity – mistrust – limited advancement – improvement – opportunities – resilience – coping mechanisms – drive – goals – equitable resources – life narratives – boost – lived experiences – motivation – higher achievement – celebrating successes –

At this stage of the metasynthesis methodology process, one can see that the word extractions have been put together to create word combinations and compound words that can be further condensed into metathemes used for coding analysis.

**Metasynthesis methodology step four.** This is the further condensation of word combinations to form thematic statements or metathemes, the strongest of which are selected to make up the metasynthesis analysis codes (or metathemes) that are then listed for compilation convenience and the conduction of the raw data coding (Saldana, 2009). A further condensation

of this study's word extractions produced the following metasynthesis analysis codes that were placed on the codes list:

Aspirational Support – Empowerment – Role Modeling

High School and College Advising – College Readiness

Persistence Despite Stereotyping – Threats and Obstacles

Culturally Responsive, Rigorous, and Diverse Pedagogy

Equitable Resources – Ample Opportunities – Mentorships

Positive Outlook – Attribution – Racial-ethnic identity (REI)

Highly-Qualified – Dedicated Educators – Engaging Curriculum

Self-Efficacy – Self-Perception – Self-Esteem – Religiosity – Pride

Strong Academic Foundation – Informed Intervention Programs

Academic Disidentification – Success Taunts from Peers

Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities – Tracking

Racism – Discrimination – Ethnic Biases and Inequities

Diminished Communities – Failing schools – Dysfunction

Low Expectations – Weak Study Habits – Moral Compass

Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity – Mistrust

Limited Advancement – Improvement Opportunities

Lack of Resilience – Coping Mechanisms – Drive – Goals

Positive Reporting – Life Narratives – Lived Experiences – African American Males

Students – Celebration – Student Successes and Accomplishments – Black male students

The above enlisted codes were made more fluid and comprehensive by the addition of conjunctions and other necessary grammatical terms that produced the final codes list and codes key used in the coding exercise.

**Metasynthesis methodology step five.** This is the categorization of the codes list of metathemes under major headings that incorporate the study's research questions or hypotheses and "harmonize with your/(the) study's conceptual framework or paradigm" (Saldana, 2009, p.71) in preparation for the analysis coding exercise. This study's codes were categorized under three major headings that were in alignment with its research questions, as follows:

*Academic success strategies* (aligned with Research Question 1). The initial nine academic success strategies codes (metathemes) used for the coding exercise of this study were: Aspirational support, empowerment, and role modeling; High school and college advising, and college readiness; Persistence despite stereotyping, threats, and obstacles; Culturally-responsive, rigorous, and diverse pedagogy; Equitable resources, ample opportunities, and mentorships; Positive outlook, attribution, and racial-ethnic identity (REI); Highly-qualified and dedicated educators, and engaging curriculum; Self-efficacy, self-perception, self-esteem, religiosity, and pride; and Strong academic foundation, and informed intervention programs (see Appendix A). The nine strategies were eventually narrowed down to five megathemes: Aspirational support, Persistence, Culturally-relevant pedagogy, Positive racial-ethnic identity, and Self-efficacy.

*African American (AA) – White achievement gap reasons* (aligned with Research Question 2). The initial eight achievement gap reasons codes (metathemes) used for the coding exercise were: Academic disidentification and success taunts for peers; Underrepresentation of academic abilities and tracking; Racism, discrimination, ethnic biases, and inequities; Diminished communities, failing schools, and dysfunction; Low expectation, weak study habits,

and moral compass; Lack of teacher/student solidarity, and mistrust; Limited advancement and improvement opportunities; and Lack of resilience, coping mechanisms, drive, and goals (see Appendix A). The eight were eventually narrowed down to six megathemes: Academic ability underrepresentation, Racism and ethnic bias, Low expectations, Teacher/student non-solidarity, Advancement opportunities shortage, and Non-resiliency.

***Recent advocated solutions for bridging the achievement gap*** (aligned with Research Question 3). The advocated achievement gap solutions codes (metathemes) used for the coding exercise were: the positive reporting of life narratives and lived experiences of African American male students; and the celebration of the successes and accomplishments of African American male students. These solution codes were further shortened into two megathemes: Positive reporting of life narratives and Celebration of student successes. In addition to the three research questions-aligned headings above were other headings like Author and Date, Source Type, Method, and Population, that assisted with the categorizing of the study's 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A), in readiness for the code analysis exercise.

**Metasynthesis methodology step six.** This is the analysis coding of the categorized and study-aligned codes of a study with the aid of a manual device like transcription analysis or a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) like MAXQDA and NVivo, in order to expose patterns, classifications, correlations, dominance, and frequencies pertinent for making key findings and reaching conclusions/assertions/an overarching theme (Saldana, 2009).

This researcher used a manual charting system, complete with code and abbreviation keys to analyze the data, the results of which were depicted in a group of similar charts collectively entitled Chibuzo Walton Literature Analysis Coding (see Appendix A). The 50 archived documents retrieved and used for this study were first listed in alphabetical order by

author and source type. Secondly, additional information was given as to whether the documents were articles or research studies in which case, they were further distinguished by research method and population. Thirdly, each article/study was matched with all the metathemes or codes that it espoused using an X as an indicator/matching tool. Finally, where necessary, percentages of selected data were calculated to identify “major theme occurrences” (Saldana, 2009, p. 205) and infer “potentially significant relationships between the dominant themes” (Au, 2007, p. 263).

**Metasynthesis methodology step seven.** This is the synthesis of the results of the qualitative data coding analysis (patterns, frequencies, correlations, and emergent themes exposed) to arrive at conclusions that fulfill the purpose of the study and that “directly answer(s) your/(the) research questions and goals” (Saldana, 2009, p.71) of the study. From a synthesis of the results of the coding analysis conducted, this study was able to arrive at the five most frequent academic success strategies (see Table 1) from a list of 9, the three most frequent achievement gap reasons (see Table 2) from a list of 8, and the two most advocated achievement gap solutions (see Table 3).

**Metasynthesis methodology step eight.** This is the assessment of the overall success of the study based on the revelations from the answers to the research questions of the study and the over-arching theme. Maher and Hudson (2007), could not have painted a better picture of step eight when they said that the metasynthesized qualitative studies/archived documents selected for a study, after the data collection process, produce metathemes that capture the nature and essence of the study; the metathemes are condensed to form larger concepts or megathemes; and the megathemes are then “theme-woven into an elegant concluding narrative” (p. 821). This study theme-wove its megathemes into “an elegant concluding narrative” (Saldana, 2009, p. 205)

that thoroughly answered its three research questions as follows (megathemes are bolded for visibility):

A qualitative metasynthesis of the 50 articles/studies (see Appendix A) reviewed for this study suggests that the conscious presence of positivity in a classroom with African-American boys present by the use of success- and academically-based strategies like **persistence, positive racial-ethnic identity, aspirational support, culturally-relevant pedagogy, and self-efficacy**, with the deliberate absence of negatives like **racism and ethnic biases, low academic expectations, academic abilities underrepresentation, teacher/student non-solidarity, advancement opportunities shortage, and non-resiliency**, and the willful practice of the **positive reporting of life narratives** along with the **celebration of student successes** and accomplishments will bridge and eventually close the achievement gap.

### **Human Subjects Considerations**

Human participants in research take part in so many ways ranging from pilot studies, to course projects, case studies, interviews, and surveys, to name a few (Coleman, Menikoff, Goldner, & Dubler, 2015). Approval for any research study involving human beings must be sought from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the educational entity involved (Coleman et al., 2015). If minors are involved, informed consents from their parents are needed, and the minors cannot be pressured into participating in the research study (Coleman et al., 2015).

Furthermore, special considerations must be given in a research study to those who cannot fully comprehend the information given to them to enable them make an informed decision and there should be equal opportunity for participation, free from any form of discrimination (Coleman et al., 2015). During an interview research study process, frequent

breaks must be given to prevent the human subject from getting tired or bored and survey instruments must be scrutinized for possible words or ideologies that may be offensive to the participants (Coleman et al., 2015). Nevertheless, none of these protocols was necessary for this study because it involved no human population or sample.

Since this study was a qualitative metasynthesis study, it only necessitated the collection of data from archived documents that did not involve live human beings. Despite the non-use of humans, this researcher was still required, as a matter of protocol, to complete and submit to the IRB of Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP), an IRB approval request form. The approval was granted (see Appendix D).

### **Population**

Pepperdine University's West Los Angeles campus library boasts of a ton of archived information, most of which are accessible online. It has a rich, expansive assortment of books, videos, journals, and articles which are all invaluable resources when it comes to the collection of research materials and information. There are also numerous databases available at the library for one to choose from some of which include: ERIC, Academic Search Complete, JSTOR, EBSCO host databases, LexisNexis Academic, Mango Languages, Open Access Theses and Dissertations, ProQuest Databases, Project Muse, Sage Research Methods, Taylor & Francis Social Science & Humanities Library, Brill Online, Center for Research Libraries (CRL) Online Catalog, and University of Chicago Press Journals, America's Historical Newspapers, American Doctoral Dissertations, 1933-1955, American Periodical Series Online, Dissertations and Theses (ProQuest), Los Angeles Times, and RefWorks, to name a few. The above-mentioned databases and others too numerous to mention made up the population for this study.



**Sample**

In order to make the study topic concise and study-feasible, it was pertinent for this researcher to choose a manageable sample size that best captured the essence of the study. In doing so, Databases and E-Journal Resources by subject was first selected followed by ERIC, which provided access to over 1.6 million records and links to more than 337,000 full text documents of education literature and resources dating as far back as 1966.

To further narrow down the sample size from that of 337,000 full text articles, specific words were entered into the search boxes using search options, modes, and expanders to modify the search process. The key words used to narrow down the database articles in order to arrive at a diminutive sample size, were: African American males, success, effective strategies, high school, and U.S. From the over 190 articles/studies generated by these key words, 50 truly relevant ones were selected and stored in RefWorks, a program provided by Pepperdine University to help with references management.

**Bias**

Qualitative data, by its nature makes it arduous for the person conducting the study to detach himself or herself emotionally from the data so that objectivity can be maintained, and bias avoided (Bordens & Abbott, 2014). One other person coded the metasynthesis data along with the researcher so that if there was inconsistency in interpretation, the truth to the interpretation would be established by an agreement between both parties that coded the data.

Since there were no human subject participants, it was not possible to ask the people who provided the data whether or not the analyses and interpretations reflected their beliefs. The fellow interpreter had to be relied on, in this case, to avoid bias.

In order to reduce bias in this metasynthesis study, theory triangulation, which is a powerful method for validating data using two or more theoretical schemes, was used. Furthermore, two other people reviewed the conclusions made in order to catch missing parts and attest to their prudence.

### **Instrumentation**

There was no need to develop, test, or use an actual instrumentation or measurement device in this study because the instrument used was non-tangible. The non-tangible instrumentation used here was the read and review method of data collection. Qualitative data was collected by reading and reviewing extensively, the 50 articles and studies selected (see Appendix A) as the sample; annotating by hand on the paper copies of the articles/studies the emergent themes, concepts, ideas, perspectives, and theories discerned from the read and review; and organizing all the information garnered into comprehensible output.

**Validity.** There was no way to prove the validity of the read and review process as a research instrument because it could not undergo physical testing as would have a tangible instrument like a survey or questionnaire.

**Reliability.** Like validity, there was no reliability of the read and review process as a research instrument because it was arbitrary and subject to human bias. However, read and review was adequate for gathering appropriate data that was useful for successfully conducting this study and answering its research questions that culminated in an emergent solution for the achievement gap.

### **Data Collection**

The historical method of data collection was utilized to collect relevant qualitative data for this study. Gay (1981) aptly described the historical data collection method as “the

systematic collection and objective evaluation of data related to past occurrences in order to test hypotheses concerning causes, effects or trends of these events that may help to explain present events and anticipate future events” (p. 432). Instead of hypotheses, this study generated research questions.

The answering of the study’s research questions helped this researcher (a) better understand the origination of the achievement gap; (b) find out why the gap has continued to rear its ugly head year after year (c) discover the educational strategies and intervention programs that have been employed and continue to be employed unsuccessfully; and (c) create a new strategies model that would emerge from the study and provide a solution.

The data corpus of this study came from the thorough reading, extensive review, and careful examination of the 50 articles and studies (the sample) obtained from Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses web sites, through Pepperdine University’s Databases and E-Journals. Written notations of the themes, concepts, ideas, perspectives, and theories discerned were made on the paper copies of the articles/studies examined (see Appendix B). Those words and word groupings eventually became a part of the thematic phrases and sentences used in the manual literature analysis coding of this study.

### **Data Analysis**

In preparing the text-based data for manual coding, the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) selected for this study were printed out and numbered 1-50 in alphabetical order by last name of the main author. Then precoding was done by underlining key words in each article, highlighting striking phrases, and circling pertinent concepts. On the front page of each article/study was written a very brief summary of its contents with regards to African American high school male academic achievement. The front page of each article carried a summary for

easy reference. The notations made contained the essence of each article/study to include instructional strategies, academic performance data, cognitive theories, ideologies, lived experiences, racial issues, and societal injustices.

The data analysis process involved the generation of the beginning codes by noting where and how patterns formed. Through data reduction, the data was condensed into labels to establish categories for effective analysis, and then the data compilation was made while deducing inferences from the codes' meanings. Overarching themes that showed what the data was about emerged from the codes combinations and were properly defined. An examination of how the themes held up the data, the theories, and the research questions followed and any missing or incomplete part of the analysis was traced and found. A full definition of the themes was also given, indicating which parts of the data were being captured and revealing the most interesting aspects of those themes. Eventually, the study report was written, and member tracking was done to see which themes made the most significant contributions and if the sample descriptions made were precise.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter was all about the inception of the research study, the putting together of the frame of reference and action, the choosing of the method for the conduction of the research study, and the execution of that methodology. It had a wealth of information that included the research design, the research population and sample, the human subjects considerations, the research instrument, the data collection and analysis techniques, and the chapter summary.

The research design told the reader how the topic of the study came about, what questions were asked and answered to move the study along, and what the population and sample entailed.

The population informed the reader that over 337,000 journal articles and studies were readily available in one database (ERIC) and the sample told how 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) were derived after using key research words to prune the population.

The human subjects consideration let the reader know that no human subjects were used for the study and, as such the study did not need any complex approvals.

The research instrument was the physical read and review of the 50 articles and studies used in the derivation of relevant codes and overarching themes eventually used for the data analysis. There is no reliability or validity to a read and review instrument.

Data collection was done through the historical method of collecting information from past events, in an organized manner. The data collected were examined and analyzed to see if they could provide answers to current events. This study essentially used the past to better understand the present and to provide a viable solution for the present in moving into the future.

## Chapter 4: Research Findings

### Results

Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, and decade after decade, the problem of the continuously low academic performance of the African American male high school student continues to weigh on the conscience of those who are responsible for the academic success of all students, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, physical disability, and age. According to Bonner, Lewis, Bowman-Perrott, Hill-Jackson, and James (2009), despite the time and energy the U.S. has expended on policies, research, initiatives, programs, and reform aimed at improving educational givers, instructional content, teaching time, school infrastructure, and instructional delivery, the academic performance of African American males continues to lag behind that of their White, Asian, and Latino counterparts

As an educator and school administrator, this researcher's concern about the dismal academic performance of black male high school students led to this study with its metasynthesis of 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) that addressed similar concerns. This study was undertaken with the aim of highlighting the positives in black male academic endeavors in order to bring about meaningful change. According to Floyd (1996), the problem lies in the adjectives used to describe the endeavor of black male students. Hardly are these words: aspiring, resourceful, competent, or motivated used in conjunction with their performances, consequently leading to low expectations, with failure seen as their norm (Floyd, 1996). By presenting counter-narratives to the current deficit view of African American male students as never-dowells, by reducing their overrepresentation in mediocre academic programs, by raising the level of expectation and their participation in higher end academic courses, and by celebrating their

successes rather than highlighting their failures, this researcher hopes to improve the cards that are dealt the African American male student anywhere in the U.S. When high expectations are matched/met with equal opportunity, people do match up and meet up.

**Research question 1.** The first research question that provided guidance for this study was: What, according to the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) examined for this study, were the five most effective academic strategies being used to help African American male students succeed in high school? Based on a synthesis of the 50 articles and studies reviewed for this study, the five most effective academic strategies being used to help African American males succeed were: persistence, positive racial-ethnic identity (REI), aspirational support, culturally-relevant pedagogy, and self-efficacy.

Table 1

*Academic Success Strategy Theme*

Academic Success Strategies	Articles/Studies ( $N = 50$ )	
	Number	Percentage
1. Persistence	38	76.0%
2. Positive racial-ethnic identity (REI)	35	70.0%
3. Aspirational Support	34	68.0%
4. Culturally-relevant Pedagogy	30	60.0%
5. Self-Efficacy	30	60.0%

Table 1 shows the five top themes associated with academic success strategies, the number of articles/studies in which each theme was found, and their frequency percentages.

***Persistence.*** The lived experiences of African American youth as they transition through life and circumstances, play an incredibly significant role in determining their future outcomes. African American male students must stay the academic course and build resistance against the many obstacles they face if they are to succeed in school. The man-made obstacles, since they are caused by others, and therefore beyond the students' locus of control, are the hardest ones to overcome and those external man-created obstacles to African American male academic achievement include stereotyping (termed the stereotyping effect), racism, discrimination, and marginalization (Peffley, Hurwitz, & Sniderman, 1997).

According to Steele and Aronson (1995), stereotype threat is the trepidation people go through when they are put in a certain category that is contrary to their sense of self and self-worth. They suggest that stereotype threat could be responsible for the achievement gap between African American male high school students and their white counterparts. It assumes that people loathe behaving in a manner that is reflective of the deficit cultural portrayal related to the stereotyped group that denotes them as inconsequential (Steele & Aronson, 1995). This spontaneous, largely unplanned fear of stereotyping unnerves people and makes them act in ways that are not beneficial to them and that hinder critical thinking and positive results on crucial performance assessments or any other type of academic undertaking (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

***Positive racial-ethnic identity (REI).*** When it comes to the issue of racism and African American males, how they view themselves racially and ethnically and how they think society views them, in return become very pertinent as to whether or not they succeed in their endeavors. Many in education believe that young Black males fail to achieve academically because they have a negative sense of racial-ethnic identity (Wright, 2009). In some cases, it is believed they have identity conflicts and fail to achieve, on purpose - oppositional behavior - (Stinson, 2011)



because they do not want to face peer isolation as a result of their being seen as acting White in connection with their academic success. Stinson (2011) did not feel that the oppositional behavior blame lay with the Black male student when he said:

Any theoretical explanation or meta-narrative that attempts to explain the schooling experiences of Black students (or historically marginalized students in general), I believe, must first begin by deconstructing the hegemonic ideology of Whiteness that infects U.S. public schools. That is to say, we must refuse the oversimplified act of focusing the spotlight (or blame) on the child rather than on the alienating hegemonic discourses of Whiteness – and maleness, middle-classness, Christianness, heterosexualness, and so on – that are (unjustly) the very foundation of the structure of U.S. public schools. (p.63)

Wright (2009) believes, nonetheless, that more attention should be placed on the positive lived experiences of those African American male high school students who do both, that is, those who have a positive or healthy racial-ethnic identity (HREI) – positive stress-free, depression-free behavior and identity that are rooted in high self-esteem – and those who go on to succeed regardless of the stereotyping challenges they face. HREI requires a strong sense of community connectedness, foundational roots, and erstwhile belongingness, to take hold (Wright, 2009).

When an African American male student is enrolled in a high school that has all the protective factors, when he succeeds, he will not need to make excuses for his success or denigrate himself should he fail (Noguera 2003). A healthy racial-ethnic identity affords African American young males the opportunity to see things from a non-judgmental perspective and is the reason why they are more understanding of non-encouraging and negative messages received from other people like the teachers who are marginalizing them and not expecting them to strive for success because of their racial background and makeup (Oyserman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001).

*Aspirational support.* All responsible adults especially para-professionals who serve in an educational capacity, most especially with Black boys, should be supportive of and an inspiration to all children, believing that they all are able to learn, achieve, and succeed (Bailey & Paisley, 2004). So for Black boys' careers to develop successfully, everyone who directly works with them or represents them, from the educational professionals through school institutions to career organizations, must first come to terms with their own biases and negative views of these boys in order to have a positive impact on their lived experiences (Bailey & Paisley, 2004). Not only must there be a positive support system for these boys, but that system must also have an unprejudiced comprehension of them and be willing to rid them of any harmful beliefs that they may have (Bailey & Paisley, 2004). African American boys must be armed with tools to empower them and enable them to be constructive contributors and orchestrators of their own realities. They must be empowered to succeed and then be advocated for and portrayed in favorable light in every aspect of their lives.

Finally, the protection of African American boys against non-beneficial relationships with their peers will afford them the positive connections, role models, and pillars of strength they need to be high academic achievers (Bailey & Paisley, 2004). Not only should the African American male who is focused and engaged in successful academic pursuits be looked at as thriving in only one arena, but that male's success should also be recognized and commended as an aftermath of all the support and nurturing that he received from educators and paraprofessionals alike (Bailey & Paisley, 2004). Our youth should not be alone in their struggles through life. They should know that the adults placed in their support path to lead them aright are there and ready to do so. They should have confidence in the system and the structures that have been put in place for them as guiding beacons of strength and prosperity.

***Culturally-relevant pedagogy.*** African American male high school students need to be taught in a way that is cognizant of their ethnic background as well as their personal challenges (Grimmett, 2010). They must possess the critical thinking and analytical skills that will enable them make meaningful decisions and judgment calls in their spheres of life and influence.

Grimmett (2010) could not have articulated it better when he said:

Educate and train African American boys, as they grow into adolescence and adulthood, rooted in and nurtured by (a) positive expectations to achieve and succeed (i.e., academically, socially, and occupationally); (b) consistent encouragement and support to develop their potential and to engage learning and career development opportunities; (c) emphasis on the importance of educational excellence for career success and personal fulfillment; and (d) exposure to diverse social, cultural, and career experiences that enhance their worldview and help them develop new interests and aspirations. (p. 78)

Cultural development goes hand-in-hand with educational development and the development of a healthy racial-ethnic identity (HREI) (Kunjufu, 1986). Education of Black boys without a sense of cultural belonging, self-pride, and self-esteem, is counterproductive (Kunjufu, 1986). Black boys are multicultural in nature as they are influenced as they go through life, by an amalgam of factors like racism, ethnicity, societal ills, discrimination, and an amalgam of institutions like their schools, religious bodies, history, communities, families, and ancestry (Cross & Cross, 2008). It is through the lens of this amalgam of cultural influences that they view the world and act. For educators, educational administrators, educational paraprofessionals, and the educational strategies and institutions set up for these African American boys to work effectively, there must be an all-round infusion of African American knowledge steeped in African American culture (Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings,

2010). It is only when school personnel and all others who work with or come in contact with African American male high school students in an academic capacity acquaint themselves with African American culture, traditions, and outlook on the world, can there begin to be progress made towards improving their academic performance and bridging the achievement gap (Lynn et al., 2010). When black boys feel understood, validated, and appreciated by society, their self-concept is healthy, and when their self-concept is healthy, so will be their interpersonal relationships, their social interactions, and their performance in any endeavors they undertake (Lynn et al., 2010). With the incorporation of the cultural background information of African American boys into their schooling, they have a chance at academic success and can no longer be singled out as being problematic or unable to succeed.

*Self-efficacy.* When one sets a goal and totally believes in one's ability to attain that goal without fear or fervor, that person is said to have self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989). It is having the capacity to accomplish the desired goal while positively viewing one's ability to achieve. Self-efficacy is the highest form of self-confidence coupled with a level of determination and total commitment to one's success (Bandura, 1989). There are African American male high school students who succeed despite the odds being stacked up against them, but they are in the very slim minority compared to their White counterparts (Bandura, 1989). By focusing on the success of this slim minority of African American boys, rather than the failure of the many, one can begin to gain insight into the factors attributable to their success and harness them.

Bandura (1989), in trying to get us to better understand self-efficacy and its importance in the academic achievement circuit for African American boys, let us know that, self-efficacy is a positive sense of personal perception of ability and a necessary condition for human achievement and constructive interests. Self-efficacy is necessary because ordinary social realities are strewn

with difficulties, full of impediments, and rife with failures, adversities, setbacks, frustrations, and inequities (Bandura, 1989). People must have a robust sense of personal efficacy to sustain the perseverant effort needed to succeed (Bandura 1989). “Because the acquisition of knowledge and competencies usually requires sustained effort in the face of difficulties and setbacks, it is resiliency of self-belief that counts” (Bandura, 1989, p. 1176).

The pertinence of the self in terms of human endurance, human perseverance, human resilience, human achievement, and human existence cannot be overstated. There can be no self-efficacy without self-esteem at the core of one’s motivation to act, and therefore, the setting of one’s target and the attainment of that target shows self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989). Moreover, when there is the absence of a correlation between self-esteem and personal success, disidentification occurs (Williamson, 2011). When there is a mismatch between students’ perspectives of their academic capabilities in relation to that of their peers (academic self-concept) and school success (GPA), they disidentify from that mismatch, meaning that the way they see themselves has no effect on the way they behave or perform (Williamson, 2011). Such students are not moved to positive performance because they have disconnected how they act from how they feel and will not experience success in the manner in which those who have not disidentified will (Williamson, 2011).

Compensatory self-inflation (Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1985) or self-affirmation (Lui & Steele, 1986) is when in the normal order of things, people are able to handle difficult situations by buttressing their self-concept. When African American male high school students or any students, for that matter, are resilient, they have a positive view of life and the people around them while they set lofty targets with a concise view of what they want to accomplish and are in control of their own destiny (Lui & Steele, 1986). They are generally pleased with who they are

and what they have achieved. When children are given the chance to learn, that knowledge of equal opportunity motivates them to excel even if they are from poor families or have been labelled as being at-risk of failing (Finn-Stevenson & Stern, 1997). This prompted the creation and implementation of new and successful intervention programs like Head Start, Success for All, Comer-Zigler Initiative, and Accelerated Schools that have prevented failure by catching problems early in infancy and dispelling them (Finn-Stevenson & Stern, 1997).

**Research Question 2.** The second research question that provided guidance for this study was: Why does the achievement gap between African American male students and their White counterparts persist in spite of these strategies? Based on an analysis of the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) reviewed for this study, six reasons emerged for the persistence of the achievement gap. Table 2 shows the six reasons associated with the persistence of the achievement gap and the number of articles/studies in which these reasons were found.

Table 2

*Reasons for Achievement Gap Theme*

Achievement Gap Reasons	Articles/Studies ( <i>N</i> = 50)	
	Number	Percentage
1. Racism and Ethnic Bias	35	70.0%
2. Low Expectations	26	52.0%
3. Academic Ability Underrepresentation	24	48.0%
4. Teacher/student non-solidarity	24	48.0%
5. Advancement opportunities shortage	24	48.0%
6. Non-resiliency	24	48.0%

*Racism and ethnic bias.* When the primary institutions where young people go to learn have racist, ethnic bias, discriminative, and inequality tendencies that are mostly directed towards young people of color (more particularly Black male youth), it should not be surprising that African American male high school students struggle academically (Carter, 1992). Not only is it present in schools and other institutions of learning, racism is also heavily knitted into the fabric of U.S. cities, towns, communities and neighborhoods and does nothing to foster positive interactions between teachers and their students (Carter, 1992). Martin and Baxter (2001) reiterated that the inadequate nature of the classroom rapport between teachers and their students was the reason for the continued occurrence of the academic achievement gap.

For decades, adolescent black men living in American inner cities have had to contend with racism exacerbated by mayhem, low socio-economic living conditions, and a myriad of other adverse conditions (Bauer, Sapp, & Johnson, 2000). Racism and stereotyping that are deep-rooted in society persist and present a big challenge emotionally, behaviorally, socially, and academically for African American boys and men (Bauer et al., 2000). Not only are schools in poor communities treated differently than schools in rich communities in terms of funding, they are also denied items that will make education more amenable to young people, and since a large number of Black households are poor, they are the ones that suffer the brunt of funding and amenities discrimination (Bauer et al., 2000).

The good news, however, is that educational institutions are making efforts to counter the racism challenge. “As a way to combat the negative effects of racism and improve interracial relations, schools have embraced Multicultural Education, the curricula that exposed students to a socially diverse variety of heroes, historical events, and holidays” (Martin & Baxter, 2001, p.

382). Martin and Baxter (2001) went on further to say that by adopting an antiracist educational model, schools are aiming at positively altering the standard of academic performance of African American male students, in particular. They believe that by implementing an antiracist educational model, educational institutions are taking the right step in the right direction. It would enable schools and educators, they argue, formulate a shared discourse around the racist lived experiences of African American male students. That discourse, it is hoped, would stem the tide of racism and the stereotyping of people of color, and lead to the implementation of teaching practices that will mitigate those negative circumstances (Martin & Baxter, 2001).

When Americans cease and desist from marginalizing the capabilities, educational motivation, and acumen of Black males, the achievement gap will be abridged (Banks & Banks, 2001). When Americans stop seeing Black male high school students as recalcitrant and unwilling to learn and work hard, and start believing in their abilities, African American male high school students will excel (Banks & Banks, 2001). Until the prejudice, disparity, and cultural discriminations against African American males are heavily curtailed or cease to exist thereby giving them an even chance at success, they will continue to struggle (Banks & Banks, 2001). The American general public and American schools particularly, set the tone as to how American youth and their cultural backgrounds will be viewed and received (Banks & Banks, 2001).

***Low expectations.*** One of the stereotypes faced by African American males is that they lack the will to excel academically with the perception that other things like sports, and rap music pique their interest, so they are not expected to do well in school (Taylor 1999). Another stereotype is that African American males do not take education seriously enough so some of their dilemma is self-inflicted (Floyd. 1996). When it comes to education, it seems as if African



American males switch off their moral compass (Floyd, 1996). They would not burn the midnight oil like their White and Asian counterparts in order to succeed and when they are not clowning around in class or giving the teacher a negative attitude, they are absent (Farmer & Hope, 2015). Nonetheless, they know better, but education is not the priority (Floyd, 1996). More effort should be made by all concerned to steer the Black male student towards school success. Teachers should set aside their biases, stop seeing the African American male student as unable to apprehend, and thereby stop their marginalization of them (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

***Academic ability underrepresentation.*** By placing African American males in Special Education, by denying them the opportunity to take Advancement Placement classes, and by placing them in academic ability groups by subject matter or curriculum, a great disservice is done to them (Gamoran & Kelly, 2003). Grouping people according to their ability is an unequal, discriminatory, and divisive practice (Gamoran & Kelly, 2003). Many in education have pointed out the racially segregated nature of tracking whereby White and Asian students are placed in programs that prepare them for college - college preparatory tracks, and Black American and Hispanic students are placed in lower-leveled tracks even though they are academically comparable to their White and Asian counterparts (Kelly, 2009). The good news is that tracking is a dying practice and is no longer used in public schools as a criterion for placement of students (Kelly, 2009).

***Teacher/student non-solidarity.*** Accountability for the academic performance of students has more so and decidedly fallen on the shoulders of educators in sharp contrast with their capacity to handle the immense responsibility. Hand in hand with the immense obligation to produce successful students is student behavior and when students behave poorly and are defiant of authority, they tend to perform poorly (Fallis & Opotow, 2003). Without adequate

funding, resources, and training to handle increasing student misbehavior that is more rampant with students of African American descent, teachers have turned to harsher methods of discipline that have gradually roped in and ultimately come to rely more on law enforcement agents (Fallis & Opotow, 2003). In order to stem the tide of student poor comportment to meet test performance standards, school administrators and police have become woven into the fabric of school discipline (Fallis & Opotow, 2003). This school discipline practice is unintentionally becoming the norm across the U.S. especially in big cities with a large number of African American males (Fallis & Opotow, 2003). The result of this increasing involvement of law enforcement in school discipline is the early incarceration of American youth, with African American male high school students leading the way (Fuentes, 2011). Bowditch (1993), in addition, also discovered the systematic disillusionment and ousting from high school of students with poor attendance and bad grades, using the disciplinary system as a means to get them to drop out.

To combat the problem of schools increasingly using administrators and school police to address student bad behavior, the concept of solidarity between teachers and their students come to the forefront. Solidarity is the existence of a bond between teachers and the students they teach and mentor. Michael Lee Boucher (2016),

defined solidarity as alliance, but with the added areas of advocacy, and a deep-caring connection with the other. Teachers who demonstrate solidarity with their classrooms are more than just caring. They defend, support, coach, mentor, and provide for their students in ways that put student needs first, as well as see themselves as part of the communities beyond the school. (pp. 90-91)

Developing solidarity amongst people requires more than just affirming loyalty to one another. It also entails having to navigate the racial, cultural, and stereotyping divide, a process which takes a little while and which could end up not as intended (Boucher, 2016). Classroom solidarity is built over a longer period of time by demanding a step-by-step approach to understanding student misbehavior, doing away with teacher biases and pre-conceived notions on the behavior of certain ethnic groups especially the ones that perceive African American boys as only wanting to play sports (Harris et al., 2014), addressing the problem together with a higher level of engagement by teachers and support staff, and a commitment to solving the problem inhouse (Boucher, 2016). Educators who are able to build solidarity are not only in strong alliance with their students, but also positively involved in their lived experiences and the neighborhoods they come from.

*Advancement opportunities shortage.* Academic success in schools for students, in general, and African American students, in particular, is directly related to the structuring of learning opportunities for students (Epstein & Maclver, 1992). This observation is particularly true of African American male high school students who are often characterized as unserious about education and therefore not afforded the same learning opportunity as their peers with a more positive characterization (Epstein & Maclver, 1992). One way to increase learning opportunities and enhance faculty-student engagement for Black male students is through the creation of learning communities, study skills courses, remediation classes, and freshmen orientations at secondary schools and community colleges (Wood & Ireland, 2014). In terms of academic factors, reading remediation, learning communities, study skills courses, and participation in orientation had a positive effect on faculty-student engagement (Wood & Ireland, 2014). So, the social and economic problems students face later in life are deemed to be as a

result of their educational encounters. The level of education they reach, the type of jobs they get, and the type of relationships they develop with their families and friends in adulthood are a direct consequence of the unfairness and imbalances of their educational journeys (Wood & Ireland, 2014). As adequately stated by Sanders and Reed (1995), although teachers' professional personalities, their taught curriculum, and the school activities they plan are important and impactful to all students, it is the effect that these teacher-dependent factors have on already marginalized African American male students that is most impactful.

Since students' lived school experiences ultimately shape the way they organize things, where they place themselves in society, and the extent of their self-efficacy, Adler, Kless, and Adler (1992) argue that the way schools are structured, the curriculum they plan and impart to students, and the interactions they foster between students and their peers, parents, and teachers have to be carefully thought out and executed in order to yield positive results.

*Non-resiliency.* African American male high school students, like any other group of students, have a choice to make when it comes to education. One would want to believe that choice is as cut and dried or as easy as success or failure. Well, given the right circumstances like the absence of racism, discrimination, inequalities and stereotyping and the presence of support, stellar amenities, and equal opportunity, it will be easy to choose success (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). However, this is not the case for Black males who all their lives have known nothing but negativity (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). They can purposely develop resilience against the negativity and rise above it or they can let it consume them where they purposely throw up their arms and succumb to it. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) best explained it this way, stating that African American male students who choose not to succeed are engaging in what they termed successful failure. Successful failure is a silent protest by Black male students against the

inequalities inherent in society and a way of showing their collective feeling of hopelessness in their effort to advantageously reposition themselves by way of academic success (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

African American male students are susceptible to high risk factors like racism, stereotyping, and discrimination, to name a few, and unfortunately, are unaware of the elements that exist at their disposal to help shield them from these antagonistic factors (Spencer, 2008). Their resilience to these challenges which is their ability to bear the burden of the obstacles in their path, and their agency which is their belief that they can bring about positive change from sheer self-determination - two very effective coping mechanisms - require more scrutiny and further study (Spencer, 2008). Resilient African American males can shake off the stigma of racism and stereotyping to become great thinkers, problem solvers, decision makers, and trustworthy contenders in the venue of academic success (Spencer, 2008). That there are not enough studies in this regard speaks to what researchers have professed for many years – the misreporting and misrepresentation of the lived experiences of African American male youth (Spencer, 2008). According to the report of the American Psychological Association Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents (2008),

research on other important cultural variables and the intersection of these variables is necessary to further understand the strengths of African American children and adolescents. The portrait of resilience includes an extended sense of self, gendered racial identity, and the intersection of other important cultural components including social class, disability, and sexual orientation. (p. 37)

### Research Question 3

The third research question that provided guidance for this study was: Does the solution to the poor academic performance of African American male students lie in the positive coverage of their lives by changing the current narrative and celebrating their successes? Based on an analysis of the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) reviewed for this study, the more recent advocated solutions for bridging the achievement gap are as follows:

Table 3

#### *Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging Achievement Gap Theme*

Solutions for Bridging Achievement Gap	Articles/Studies ( $N = 50$ )	
	Number	Percentage
1. Positive Reporting of Life Narratives	40	80.0%
2. Celebration of Student Successes	39	78.0%

***Positive reporting of life narratives.*** From Stinson (2013), we know that most of the articles and reports written about the academic achievement of African American male high school students tell their stories from the negative aspect that there is such an immense need now for the positive reporting of their life narratives, especially as there is proof that it boosts their self-esteem and self-worth needed to positively affect school success. Stinson (2013) put it succinctly when he said:

I became puzzled by the scarcity of education literature that focused on African American students who achieve and persist in mathematics given the abundance of literature focused on African American students who appear to reject mathematics (and schooling, and academics, in general). Where were the success stories of African

American students? As Ladson-Billings (1997) argued - and my 5-year experience confirmed - it just didn't add up. (p.73)

What researchers who are concerned about the lack of positive reports on the academic lived experiences of African Americans, in general, and African American male high school students, in particular, are saying, is that there should be more reports on and more highlighting of the successful attainments of Black youth (Ladson-Billings, 1997). Concerned researchers want more reporting on the advancements of Black youth instead of their setbacks, their successes instead of failures, their furtherances instead of impediments, their triumphs instead of frustrations, their prosperities instead of adversities, their equities instead of inequities, their challenge resiliencies instead of their challenge vulnerabilities, and their self-efficacies instead of their self-defeats (Ladson-Billings, 1997).

Since African American male high school students are, without a doubt, the group ethnically and otherwise, that comes across the most formidable threats to schooling (McGee, 2013), there should be more studies done (and made attainable) that present realistic solutions to the unfavorable views that society holds about them. Although, lately, there have been more efforts at positively reporting and highlighting the academic achievements of African American males, it is not nearly enough, especially when compared to the negative reports that are out there (Thompson and Lewis, 2005). As a result, more researchers and scholars like Walker (2006), Thompson and Lewis (2005), Berry (2008), and Stinson (2006), have spoken out in support of and advocated for more focus to be placed on the positive reporting of the school experiences and overall successes of African American youth. Stinson (2006), most notably stated the need for taking a closer look at and reporting more on what motivates African American male students to succeed, whether it is the positive peers groups, well-intentioned

teachers, supportive family members, and/or protective communities involved in their lives. Slowly, but surely, this researcher has found that there is now a paradigm shift towards the positive presentation of the lived experiences of African American students as a whole, and African American male high school students, in particular.

*Celebration of student successes.* Studies' consensus from various researchers now say that it is more important to highlight, praise, and/or laud the academic successes of African American male students than it is to spotlight their failures or lack of success especially in an attempt to reverse their negative school trends and boost their aspirations (Valencia, 2010). Normalizing the failure of African American males has gone on too long that it is time to take a different approach in the way their academic performances are discussed and/or reported (Valencia, 2010).

Noguera (2008) could not have better laid out the Black boy's challenges with/obstacles to academic success and the paths to remedy them as he did in his book entitled, "The Trouble with Black Boys...And Other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education." The trouble with Black boys, he said, was threefold: (a) the Student Experience – where African American males often encounter severely diminished communities, racism, stereotyping, low expectations, and misrepresentation of their academic abilities, instead of aspirational support, empowerment, ample opportunities for advancement, the encouragement of self-efficacy, the positive reporting of their lived experiences, and the celebration of their accomplishments (categories used in the metasynthesis literary analysis coding of this study); (b) the Search for Equity – where Black boys experience inequity/discrimination in advanced placement class allocation, college advisement, college preparedness, academic rigor, qualified educators, intervention programs availability, advancement opportunities, along with ethnic biases, and



dysfunctional schools, instead of the equitable distribution of resources and favorable circumstances (some of the literary analysis coding terms used in this study); and (c) the Schools We Need – where African American young men are understood, nurtured, encouraged, supported, advised, protected from racism/stereotyping/identity threats and, most importantly, academically and socially prepared to successfully take on the world of work in particular, and life in general.

Summarily, the greatest news is that the negativity towards African American boys is dissipating as more researchers call for greater academic opportunities for them, more extensive positive coverage of their schooling experiences, and the continuous celebration of their accomplishments (Walker, 2006). When people's successes are celebrated and their accomplishments highlighted, it makes others that are coming behind them look favorably upon them, wanting to emulate their successes and generally follow in their footsteps.

### **Summary of Findings**

Today, the persistence, time after time, of the academic or achievement gap between the school performance of African American male high school students and their White counterparts is one of the most annoying and discomfoting challenges permeating our secondary schools in particular and the educational arena, as a whole (McWayne, 2012). This, along with the strong desire to see a bright light at the end of the tunnel, is the reason for this study. The situation is more severe when one considers the fact that White students are not even performing at their prime but putting forth mediocre school results (Hilliard, 2003). Most dire, however, is the fact that there is no biological or genetic reason for the repeated out-performance of the Black youth by the White youth and the resulting education gap (Hilliard, 2003). Singham (2003) also shared this concern when he said:

The repeated attempts to explain and solve the vexing problem of the achievement gap have clearly been inadequate. Perhaps we have been focusing on the wrong factors entirely. After all, it is clear that there is nothing intrinsic about "blackness" or "whiteness" that can be the cause of the gap. There are no genetic or other immutable traits that could conceivably be the cause of the gap. Thus, the problem is manifestly one that can and should be solved. (p. 586)

Still so many experts both from within and without school education have continued to take on the achievement gap problem without success (Hilliard, 2003). The problem is now more pervasive than ever, and is one that this researcher strongly feels can, and should be resolved. So why has the achievement gap problem remained largely unsolved? Singham (2003) seems to think that the major obstacle to solving the problem is the myth-like nature of the topic whereby the general masses seem to have resigned themselves to it without question. He also put forth his reasons as to the causes of the achievement gap as follows:

You will find a range of analyses and a corresponding variety of suggested solutions: biased standardized tests, tests that do not match the learning styles of Black students, less money spent on educating Black students, socioeconomic differences, lack of motivation, negative peer pressure, lack of family support for education, teacher biases, and many other possibilities. (p. 587)

In order to see what many more researchers think, have found out, tried out, or have proposed as a solution to the achievement gap problem, this researcher examined and synthesized 50 related articles and studies and came up with findings as enumerated below.

**Strategies.** The five most effective academically- and success-based strategies that emerged from the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) examined were:

1. Persistence
2. Positive racial-ethnic identity (REI)
3. Aspirational Support
4. Culturally-relevant pedagogy
5. Self-efficacy

Majority of the researchers and authors in the 50 articles and studies examined for this study were in agreement that the presence of the above strategies in the academic arena and their use by teachers of African American male students, particularly in U.S. secondary schools, will make them successful.

**Achievement gap persistence reasons.** The six main reasons for the persistence of the achievement gap that emerged from the 50 articles and studies examined, were:

1. Racism and ethnic biases
2. Low expectations
3. Academic ability underrepresentation
4. Teacher/student non-solidarity
5. Advancement opportunities shortage
6. Non-resiliency

Majority of the 50 articles and studies researchers and authors agreed that the absence of the negative factors above that are deemed to be responsible for the achievement gap between African American male students and their White counterparts in U.S. secondary schools will boost the self-efficacy and confidence of Black boys and raise their level of academic performance.

**Achievement gap solutions.** The two most advocated solutions for bridging the achievement gap that emerged from the 50 articles and studies examined were the:

1. Positive reporting of the life narratives/lived experiences of African American male high school students which would elate them and motivate higher achievement
2. Celebration of student successes and accomplishments which would encourage emulation and boost aspirations.

The three subsections above centered around the three research questions posed in this metasynthesis study and formed the basis of the answers to the questions.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

Without a doubt, the achievement gap in the academic performance between Black and White male high school students in the U.S., whether measured in terms of grades, test scores, completion rates, or dropout rates, is real, prevalent, and unyielding, as revealed by the No Child Left Behind act of 2001 as well as Braun, Chapman, and Vezzu (2010). Early African American history, however, does counter the indication that African American males were never ever keen on education and that their educational apathy was mostly responsible for their continued poor academic attainment (Braun et al., 2010). According to Du Bois (1935), history does tell of a period in the U.S. when enslaved African Americans risked severe punishment and even death at the hands of their slave owners in order to get educated. Ladson-Billings (2006) reminded us of the past when Blacks, determined to keep schools running, voluntarily established tax programs while the school educators and administrators of those schools went above and beyond the call of duty to help out those communities.

It then begs the questions: How did that insatiable quest for education change? When did the drive to get educated and to succeed therein, change? Why did the African Americans, especially the male gender, lose interest in education making it lower in their priority of things to achieve? It is only when these questions are asked and answered can one begin to understand and appreciate the depth of the problem. Then, there is the over-arching question of what the solution to the problem is. In concern solidarity, this researcher undertook this study to examine what has been done in the past and what is being done currently to help African American male high school students succeed academically in light of the fact that they continue to underperform against their white counterparts, year after year, decade after decade, century after century. From a position of concern for the continued existence of the achievement gap and with an ardent

desire to understand the problem and find a lasting solution to it, this study asked and made efforts to answer three research questions. The three research questions were:

1. What, according to the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) examined for this study, are the five most effective academic strategies being used to help African American male students succeed in high school?
2. Why, according to the results of the examined articles/studies, does the achievement gap between African American male high school students and their White counterparts persist in spite of these strategies?
3. What is a new strategy model that emerges from this study as a solution to the poor academic performance of African American male students in U.S. high schools?

Rather than approach the achievement gap solution from a negative aspect of pinpointing the problem and passing blame or judgment on the miscreants, this researcher chose a more positive approach. This researcher examined 50 articles and studies on corrective measures and strategies that have been used or are currently in use, and that have produced positive results, to see if the answer to the achievement gap questions lay there. What emerged from the examination of the 50 articles and studies was a series of overarching themes and theoretical frameworks that are discussed subsequently.

**Discussion on Research Question 1:** What, according to the 50 articles and studies examined for this study, are the five most effective academic strategies being used to help African American male students succeed in high school?

**Strategy 1: Persistence despite stereotyping, threats, and obstacles.** The first of the five most effective academic strategies used to help African American male students succeed in high school as gleaned from the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) examined was:

Persistence despite stereotyping, threats, and obstacles. African American males know that they have to endure racism, discrimination, stereotyping, and inequalities as the more disadvantaged group of citizens in the U.S. (Baber, 2014). This is something that they did not ask for but were born into and since they cannot change it overnight, they have to learn to navigate through it and build coping mechanisms they can count on to pull them through the hard times (Baber, 2014). By persisting through the stereotypes that they are subjected to, they develop resilience to stereotype threat. The term, stereotype threat, was coined by Steele and Aronson (1995) to mean the trepidation people go through when they are faced with a stigma that shakes the core of their being and sense of self.

Stereotype threat is the most compelling of all social inequities and it goes a long way in helping one understand why some students excel on performance tests for example, and others do not (Steele & Aronson, 1995). It is based on the presumption that people dislike behaving in a way that is associated with the negative or inferior cultural stance (Steele & Aronson, 1995). It is involuntary fear that comes with high anxiety and other negative reactions that deter creative thinking, stellar test taking, or any other classroom activities that require accountability (Steele & Aronson, 1995). According to Wang and Gordon (1994), students who rise above the most trying times while others falter under the weight of those same obstacles and students who have learned how to cope with stereotype threat are said to have resiliency. Resilient students, however, have buffers or protective factors like strong family support, solid personality traits of their own, and outside supporters to fall back on, making it easy for them to power through (Wang and Gordon, 1994). These shields do not eliminate stress, though, but considerably reduce it to functional levels and give the students a way to excel in school above all else (Wang and Gordon, 1994).

In order to succeed in U.S. schools, it is clear that African American male high school students have to be resilient to the challenges presented by racism, stereotyping, and marginalization. Resiliency is what will enable them persist in spite of the obstacles they encounter. Resilient youth do not let adverse situations defeat them. They face up to and stand up against the forces of negativity that exist in society and in their schools. Resilient and persistent African American male high school students are the ones that will pass any high school exit exams, graduate from high school with high GPAs, and go on to attend institutions of higher learning (Farmer & Hope, 2015).

**Strategy 2: Positive outlook, attribution, and racial-ethnic identity.** The second of the five most effective academic strategies used to help African American male students succeed in high school as gleaned from the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) examined was: Positive outlook, attribution, and racial-ethnic identity. African American boys must have a racial-ethnic identity that validates and legitimizes them so they can stay unaffected by the perils of racism and stereotyping (Kunjufu, 1986). With spiritual-humanistic development, and armed with innate value, positive outlook, attribution, inbred ability, and a purposeful life, African American males can develop a great sense of being, stack up enough ammunition against negative messages from people and society, and have a good reason to achieve (Kunjufu, 1986). Spirituality is a support mechanism and persistence tool for many African American male students in institutions of higher learning (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010). “Maintaining this spiritually-grounded perspective has enabled these students to transcend their circumstances and the racial hostility of their college environment” (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010, p. 12). It then falls on the support system of the African American male that includes parents, teachers, caregivers, and societal role models, to nurture his spiritual-humanistic development, a state of his being that



can withstand the trials and tribulations that are perpetuated by class, gender, culture, and societal restrictions.

Racism is the biggest player in the arena of oppositional forces that promulgates the negative views that African American boys have of themselves, causing them to underperform (Gayles, 2005). Racial viewpoints and their related beliefs present impediments to their success. The important conversation to be had therefore, is in that part of the education of African American male high school students that deals with their academic achievement and comportment challenges, a situation that is more unique to them than their peers/people of a similar demographic origin (Noguera, 2003). Once again, it is those African American male high school students that have resiliency and persistence, along with a positive outlook, healthy racial-ethnic identity, and attribution, that will succeed academically.

**Strategy 3: Aspirational support, empowerment, and role modeling.** The third of the five most effective academic strategies being used to help African American male students succeed in high school as gleaned from the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) examined was: Aspirational support, empowerment, and role modeling. Aspirational support for African American males mostly comes from their parents, particularly their mothers, as most of them are raised by single mothers (Baber, 2014). Black males commend their mothers for being present in their lives and inculcating in them great personal principles and standards of behavior, leading them in the right direction, and guiding them along the achievement path (Shade, 1982). Black mothers are usually the main avenue for love, ambition, acceptance, assistance, and inspiration for their sons' educational quests and interests (Shade, 1982).

Other sources of aspirational support and empowerment for African American male students include close family members, family friends, their local communities, and contrary to

popular belief, their peers (McGee & Spencer, 2015). There is always that one extended family member or family friend who steps in to mitigate and save a young boy from impending doom when his family becomes dysfunctional. Dugan and Coles (1989) tell us that aspirational support can also come, surprisingly, from a most unlikely source like the peers of Black boys, considering the fact that those peers often shun their Black boy friends for acting White when they experience academic success. Resilient youth always have that one non-parental adult that they are closest to and who helps them stem the tide when there is any type of family disagreement (Wang & Gordon, 1994).

The aspirational support and empowerment of African American males both require some measure of resiliency to occur as resilient youth do have even dispositions that encourage beneficial inter-relationships amongst them, their parents, and their peers that ultimately lead to success (Baber, 2014). According to Winfield (1994), young people that are resilient usually have very academically engaged parents who guide them daily and are knowledgeable of their challenges, persistence levels, and aspirational goals. Resilient, persistent, motivated, and goal-oriented youth plus supportive adults equals a recipe for success. "School programs that foster resilience among African-American youth do so by a critical reexamination of school culture, policy, and structure in order to provide "protective processes" within the school/community environment" (Winfield, 1994, p. 49). Clark (1983) best presented it in the study he conducted that compared successful Black youth with unsuccessful ones when he said, "we have pinpointed important differences and...were repeatedly struck by the strong mutual support systems and wide range of controlled structured activities in the homes of competent students" (p. 210).

Role models as an academic success strategy for African American boys is also widely utilized whereby young Black boys connect with other youthful and successful African

American men like college graduates, job professionals, educational faculty, and men with advanced degrees (Kafele, 2012). Intervention programs that are structured to make African American boys feel more in control of their set goals and impending outcomes are great success strategies, much in the same way that local organizations that offer economic, social, psychological, occupational, and moral support for them provide excellent opportunities for success (Wang & Gordon, 1994).

**Strategy 4: Culturally-responsive, rigorous, and diverse pedagogy.** The fourth of the five most effective academic strategies being used to help African American male students succeed in high school as gleaned from the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) examined was: Culturally-responsive, rigorous, and diverse pedagogy. Schools that take into cognizance the different cultural backgrounds of their students when planning curricular lessons and social activities are said to be culturally-responsive (Wang & Gordon, 1994). When rigor and multiple teaching strategies are added to their already culturally-relevant curriculum, such schools have a higher propensity for all-round student success. Pursuant to Wang and Gordon (1994), schools that hold their teachers and support staff responsible for student heterogeneity awareness, student and parental participation in school activities, and equal access to instruction and educational opportunities, help their students build resilience and capacity for success.

Teachers are looked upon as the protectors and first line of defense for students like African American males in high school whose low socio-economic standing in society makes them more susceptible to failure (Powell & Marshall, 2011). Teachers who make up in school for the home deficiencies of their students, teachers who take into consideration the cultural backgrounds and the community shortfalls of their students, teachers who fully and gainfully utilize the instructional time of their students, teachers who have faith in the capability of all

students to learn, and teachers who make the learning exercises in her classroom rigorous and alluring for students, are gearing students towards positive academic achievement and lasting success (Wang & Gordon, 1994).

**Strategy 5: Self-efficacy, self-perception, self-esteem, religiosity, and pride.** The fifth of the five most effective academic strategies being used to help African American male students succeed in high school as gleaned from the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) examined was: Self-efficacy, self-perception, self-esteem, religiosity, and pride. Self-efficacy is a belief in the ability to succeed at any undertaking one puts one's mind and effort toward (Bandura, 1997). Self-perception is the way a person sees themselves, in other words, figuratively taking a mirror image of oneself (Bonner, Lewis, Bowman-Perrott, Hill-Jackson, & James, 2009). Self-esteem is how highly or lowly one regards oneself mostly relative to society's stratum (Cokley, McClain, Jones, & Johnson, 2012). Religiosity (religious ideology, exclusivity, external practice, personal practice, and salience) is the level of belief, devotion, dedication, or enthusiasm that one puts into religion and religious activity (Pearce, Hayward, & Pearlman, 2017). Pride is the amount of pleasure, satisfaction, honor, and joy, one feels from the accomplishment of a task (Noble, 2011). Any African American male who has positive self-efficacy, positive self-perception, positive self-esteem, ardent religiosity, and infinite pride, is bound to be successful in school. The one attribute that encompasses them all and is the most domineering according to the findings of this study, is self-efficacy.

Social cognitive theory attempts to best clarify for us what self-efficacy is by using four possible origins of the concept: vicarious experience, enactive attainments, verbal persuasion, and physiological state (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy by vicarious experience is best explained by Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2008) who believe that "observing the successes, failures,

rewards, and punishments of others creates expectations in observers that they are likely to experience similar outcomes for performing the same behaviors” (p. 157), in other words, success by emulation. Self- efficacy by enactive attainments is the belief in one’s ability for future success based on past successes (Bandura, 1997), in other words, success by past successful performances. Self-efficacy by verbal persuasion is the belief in one’s ability to succeed in future endeavors based on words or acts of encouragement from other people (Bandura, 1997), in other words, success by encouragement. Self-efficacy by psychological state is the belief in one’s ability to succeed based on one’s state of mind and level of resilience to stressors, challenges, or obstacles (Bandura, 1997), in other words, success by resiliency.

**Discussion on Research Question 2:** Why, according to the results of the examined articles/studies, does the achievement gap between African American male high school students and their White counterparts persist in spite of these strategies?

Close examination, analysis, and synthesis of the 50 related articles and studies selected for this metasynthesis study initially identified eight reasons for the persistence of the achievement gap, namely (a) Academic disidentification, (b) Academic ability underrepresentation, (c) Racism and ethnic bias, (d) Diminished communities, (e) Low expectations, (f) Teacher/student non-solidarity, (g) Advancement opportunities shortage, and (h) Non-resiliency. Of the eight reasons, three stemmed from internal/self-inflicted conflicts while five arose from external/society-inflicted conflicts.

Table 4

*Internal versus External Individual Conflicts*

<b>Internal Conflicts</b>	<b>External Conflicts</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Academic disidentification</li> <li>2. Low expectations</li> <li>3. Non-resiliency</li> <li>4. Teacher/student non-solidarity</li> <li>5. Academic abilities underrepresentation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Racism and ethnic biases</li> <li>2. Diminished communities</li> <li>3. Advancement opportunities shortage</li> </ol>

However, in narrowing down the eight causes of the persistent achievement gap through the use of data quantification and charting for statistical analysis, six top reasons emerged as follows: (a) Racism and ethnic bias, (b) Low expectations, (c) Academic ability underrepresentation, (d) Teacher/student non-solidarity, (e) Advancement opportunities shortage, and (f) Non-resiliency. A look at Table 4 shows that, of the six top reasons, four of them fall under the internal conflicts category which indicates that the lack of academic success by Black boys was mostly deliberate and self-inflicted. When an African American male student academically disidentifies by purposely failing so that his peers would not isolate him or accuse him of acting White; when an African American male student fails to make time to study knowing the consequences of a lack of or poor study habits; when an African American male student tolerates the marginalization of his capabilities when he knows he performs at a higher level; when an African American male student lacks resilience or coping mechanism for inevitable societal challenges like racism, stereotype threat, discrimination, inequities, or ethnic biases; when an African American male student fails to bond with or distrusts his teachers; when

an African American male student fails to take advantage of the advancement and improvement opportunities offered at his school; and when an African American male student cannot rise above the ills in his school or community environment but chooses to wallow in it; then these are nothing more than self-inflicted predicaments (Honora, 2002; Stinson, 2013; Taylor, 1999; Wood & Ireland, 2014; Wright, 2011).

As much as educators, educational support staff, educational institutions, educational reformists, and educational researchers are putting in combined efforts to improve the academic performance of African American male students, if the students they are trying to help are non-receptive, nonchalant, unmotivated, and non-cooperative, they will not succeed (Lundy, 2003). Thus, the achievement gap will continue to persist until African American male high school students become willing participants and/or equal partners in the move to improve their stake in the arena of academic achievement (Lundy, 2003). In other words, Black male students must denounce and refrain from falling victims of oppositional culture theory (Lundy, 2003). They cannot do this alone, though and require all hands on deck to turn things around (Wood & Ireland, 2014).

**Discussion on Research Question 3:** What is a new strategy model that emerges from this study as a solution to the poor academic performance of African American male students in U.S. high schools?

Every single one of the 50 articles and studies (see Authors and Date section of Appendix A), selected for this metasynthesis study, in one way or another, touched on the need to report the lived experiences of African American male students in a positive light and to celebrate their successes. The articles/studies pushed for the positive reporting of life narratives and lived experiences of the African American male student as a means to motivate them towards higher

achievement. The articles/studies also reiterated the importance of celebrating Black student successes and accomplishment as it encouraged peer emulation and boosted student aspirations.

Much of the existing report on, record of, and research studies that center on the academic state of affairs of African American male students preach of doom and gloom and see the proverbial glass as half empty for Black boys as opposed to seeing it as half full (Hughes, 2010). They focus on the dire academic performance results of this section of the school population rather than on the positive outcomes and strides they are making towards raising their test scores and GPAs (Bonner, 2001). The discourse and focus of educators, researchers, and schools regarding the lived experiences of African American male students must change toward seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and the glass as half full. The researchers/writers of the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) examined for this study all believed that the achievement gap would only begin to close when positive reporting was done on African American male students' academic endeavors and their successes celebrated in a remarkable way. Research and programs of this caliber, they believed, would not only inspire people to move in the direction of goading Black students towards success, but also persuade all stakeholders in the education business to make a paradigm shift in the way they viewed and treated them.

### **Linking Findings to Theoretical Framework**

Table 5

#### *Linking Findings to Theoretical Frameworks*

<b>Theoretical Framework</b>	<b>Linked to Findings</b>
Social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942, as cited in Kubrin, 2010)	Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction

(continued)



*Linking Findings to Theoretical Frameworks*

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1994)	Persistence despite stereotyping, threats, and obstacles
Phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory-PVEST (Spencer, 2011)	Aspirational support, empowerment, role modeling  High school and college advising, college readiness  Culturally-responsive, rigorous, and diverse pedagogy
Attribution theory (Heider, 1958)	Positive outlook, attribution, and racial-ethnic identity (REI)
Critical race theory (Bell, 1987)	Positive reporting of life narratives/lived experiences  Celebrating student successes and accomplishments

In linking the findings of this study to theoretical framework, one of the reasons that emerged for the persistence of the achievement gap between African American male high school students and their White counterparts was: diminished communities, failing schools, and dysfunction, all extensively covered in social disorganization theory. In social disorganization theory, Gallagher (1988) recognized that the success of students was rooted in the external social factors that they were exposed to early in life like the state of the neighborhood, the condition of the local schools, and the opportunities for advancement that were available in that community. It was clear, therefore, that one had to fully understand these elements and incorporate them into any research that attempted to comprehend the gap's existence with the aim of eliminating it. It is not about waving a magic wand and hoping the problem disappears, but rather about knowing what made the African American male student succeed, making those opportunities available, and creating the motivational circumstances that would make that Black male student successful (Gallagher, 1988).

In linking the findings of this study to theoretical framework, another reason that emerged for the persistence of the achievement gap between African American male high school students and their White counterparts was: lack of coping mechanisms, drive, goals, and non-resiliency, all extensively covered in self-efficacy theory. Bandura's (1994) theory of self-efficacy was delineated as a theoretical framework where self-efficacy was assigned the part of clarifying changes that evolved from fearful and evasive behavior. Self-efficacy theory is based on the principle assumption that psychological procedures, serve as an avenue for making and empowering personal efficacy (Bandura, 1994). The theory makes distinctions between expectations of efficacy and response-outcome expectancies and refers to one's belief in his or her capacity to enact behaviors that are pertinent to the manifestation of specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1994). A person with strong self-efficacy exudes the ability to control one's motivation, behavior, social surroundings, every aspect of human endeavors, and ultimately their destiny (Noble, 2011). Self-efficacy theory invades the areas of education, research, and clinical practice, making it one of the most important self-regulating mechanisms and success indicators (Noble, 2011).

When one has self-efficacy, that person is in full control of his or her actions and there exists in that person a very high level of competitiveness, drive, ambition, and a strong will to succeed in every aspect of life (Noble, 2011). With self-efficacy, Noble (2011) tells us, comes an invigorated person, one that is self-assured, proud, motivated, self-driven, and with a great deal of self-determination. Inadvertently, with a high sense of self-efficacy, there is no attainment limit for Black boys. Imagine the possibilities when they approach life from a vantage point as opposed to a point of disdain or disadvantage. It is not out of the ordinary to find self-efficacy as a common denominator for educational instruction, research, and practice.

In linking the findings of this study to theoretical framework, another reason that emerged for the persistence of the achievement gap between African American male high school students and their White counterparts was: academic disidentification and successful performance taunts from peers, all extensively covered in phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory (PVEST).

According to Spencer (2011), PVEST is all about individual personal perceptions of today's world, in other words, the way people see the world. It is also about, he said, people's beliefs regarding specific situations they find themselves in, the coping skills they develop to deal with perception challenges, and the support they get from different facets of life. The coping skills and support system would wrap around the African American male student like a warm blanket keeping the cold out (Spencer, 2011). With the right PVEST, Black boys would be able to stay afloat where others without this coping mechanism would sink; and when taunted with a racist slur, discriminated against, and/or marginalized, an African American boy with PVEST would be able to persist through them and come out a better person (Spencer, 2011). PVEST is a theoretical framework that gives those who are trying to change their biases about the achievements of Black boys, a good platform to do it on as it shows them how Black boys cope with challenges they face in their ill-equipped, mostly dysfunctional schools and communities (Spencer, 2011). PVEST assumes that all humans are vulnerable to the daily challenges meted out by society and so must get ready to handle them in the most harmless and expedient way (Spencer, 2011). Since we are imperfect creatures and society can give out a hard dose of reality, we must all wear our hard realities protective vests so that we can absorb the seismic shocks that result from man's inhumanity to man (Spencer, 2011).

In linking the findings of this study to theoretical framework, another reason that emerged for the persistence of the achievement gap between African American male high school students and their White counterparts was: teacher/student non-solidarity and the mistrust of educational professionals by those they seek to teach, all extensively covered by attribution theory. African American male students often operate from a disadvantaged aspect because they feel everyone is against them and when they fail to perform well in school, they blame everyone else (teacher, school administrators, support staff, parents), except themselves (Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 2015). Although attribution theory was not developed with African American youth in mind, it gave Graham et al. (2015) a platform on which to conduct their trial intervention program. Attribution theory dislikes the fact that people lay outward blame for their own internal failures and make it their reality (Graham et al., 2015). Therefore, PVEST tries to channel people away from the blame game towards owning the mistake and using it as a learning experience/opportunity.

**Critical race theory (Additional).** While linking the findings of this study to theoretical framework, critical race theory emerged, towards the end, as too noteworthy to be left out of the discourse. Critical race theory vehemently supports the notion that the lived experiences of African American male students, in particular, should be reported in a positive way and their successes celebrated in ways that motivate them to do more/better (Bell, 1987). The narrative spotlight would be better placed if it focused on the Black male students with great academic performances than on the underperforming ones displaying oppositional behavior (Bell, 1987).

## **Conclusions**

The persistence of the achievement gap is perplexing to everyone in education, more so to those who are concerned enough to want to better understand the problem and do something

definitive to remedy the situation (McWayne, 2012). In order to fully understand the extent of the problem, it becomes pertinent to delve into the life narratives/lived experiences, academic and otherwise, of the subjects of the study: African American male high school students, in this case. The subjective nature of the study and the fact that one has to find meaning in the midst of all that is happening with the continuously underperforming Black boys especially at the high school level, begs the question of the use of qualitative methods (Polkinghorne, 1988).

This study emerged from this researcher's genuine concern about the persistence of the academic achievement gap between African American male high school students and their White counterparts. Since the achievement gap phenomenon has gone on for many years with no good end in sight, many people from all walks of life like educators, administrators, local government agents, educational reformists, psychologists, school counselors, community advocates, clergy, and parents, have undertaken this problem with the aim of solving it (Land, Mixon, Butcher, & Harris, 2014). Well-documented are the efforts made by numerous enthusiasts, past and present, to close or eliminate this gap and this researcher has joined them in tackling the problem with an urgency and a race for the solution as the problem has become more dire over time.

It is only when we begin to utilize the academic success strategies that are tailored to suit the need of our African American male high school students; only when we address the real reasons discovered through thorough research and examination for the persistence of the academic achievement gap; and only when we adopt the more recent/newer suggested solutions for bridging the gap, can we begin to put a dent in the achievement gap problem towards a lasting resolution (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009).

When we go back to business as usual, then we continue to do harm to the very vulnerable part of the U.S. school population that needs to be protected the most. The problem

of African American male high school students' continuous academic underperformance has gone on for far too long with varying people from all walks of life who have dealt with the problem, not being able to stem the tide (Davis & Jordan, 1994). It is about time to do things a different way by trying out two new strategies that emerged from this study as very promising especially when carried out with the veracity, intensity, and frequency needed to make it work. The two new emergent strategies are to, with ardent fervor, urgency, expediency, and abundance: (a) positively report the life narratives and lived experiences of African American male students and (b) celebrate the successes and accomplishments of African American male students. For that section of the population that has been knocked down and dragged in the mud for years, these strategies/measures are neither too much to ask nor too difficult to execute and there is no one who will continue to do wrong and be put on a pedestal for others to emulate (Harper, 2015).

Therefore, it becomes pertinent to reduce the affective filter of African American male high school students by checking our own prejudices and biases towards them in order to give them a fair chance (Bonner, Lewis, Bowman-Perrott, Hill-Jackson, & James, 2009). We must increase their resiliency, heighten their self-efficacy, give them aspirational support, give them ample opportunities to advance, teach them in a culturally-responsive manner to suit their backgrounds, have a positive outlook about their dispositions, inspire them, give them equitable resources and timely interventions to buttress their shortcomings, and see if they will not rise to the occasion, perform above expectations, and succeed (Baber, 2014; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Floyd, 1996).

### **Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

The main recommendation for policy and practice made in this study is to highly encourage those in the teaching and educational administration professions to fully understand

their student populations with regard to their cultural and ethnic backgrounds, modes of learning, social, economic, financial, and political underpinnings, capabilities, academic and professional goals, in other words, fully understand who they really are to teach them successfully (Floyd, 1996; Powell & Marshall, 2011). By diligently engaging them in conversations, ice-breaking activities, and other non-threatening means of familiarity, African American male high school students can be drawn closer together to their educators in solidarity before they can be taught fruitfully, and thereby get a clean slate, free of bias, and with limitless operational boundaries and opportunities for growth (Powell & Marshall, 2011).

Another policy and practice recommendation, according to Hawkins (1970), Dawson-Threat, (1997), McWayne, (2012), Wood & Ireland (2014), and Boucher, (2016) is to elevate the level and quality of the relationship between teachers and their Black students to create more depth and student/teacher solidarity. Hawkins (1970) went on to state that,

teachers must communicate concerns for, and belief in Black students in such a way that the students see themselves as being able to face and solve their problems, whether these problems are in the school, in the home, or in the general community. (p. 45)

Increasing the avenues and realm of learning possibilities for African American male students will definitely have a positive impact on their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and resilience (Hawkins, 1970). Early childhood programs should be made available to all African Americans and other people of color so that they have solid backgrounds, from the very start, from which academic success, retention, and continuance materialize.

Finally, intervention programs should be designed for African American male students that would enable them increase their knowledge about the correlation between education, decision-making, health, welfare, and their future successes in life (Grimmett, 2010; Farmer &

Hope, 2015). It has been suggested that they be given developmental life courses that would positively impact their immediate developmental attitudes, plans and choices (Kafele, 2012). Ample advancement opportunities should be provided by all who have a stake in the education of African American youth; and their better interests and higher education goals towards stellar educational outcomes should be supported (Davis & Jordan, 1994; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008; Owens, Lacey, Rawls, & Holbert-Quince, 2010).

Table 6

*Linking Researcher Policy and Practice Recommendations to Findings*

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Links to the 5 Academic Success Strategies Finding</b>	<b>Links to the 6 Achievement Gap Reasons Finding</b>
1. Mandatory cultural awareness and sensitivity training for educators	Culturally-relevant pedagogy	Low Expectations Racism and ethnic biases
2. Mandatory learning modalities training	Culturally-relevant pedagogy	Underrepresentation of academic abilities
3. Improvement in the quality of teacher/student relations	Aspirational support	Teacher/student non-solidarity
4. Increase in learning opportunities for African American male students	Aspirational support Culturally-relevant pedagogy	Advancement opportunities shortage
5. Implementation of meaningful and beneficial intervention programs	Aspirational support	Advancement opportunities shortage
6. Self-efficacy camp-like escapades/field trips for Black boys	Persistence Self-efficacy Positive racial-ethnic identity	Racism and ethnic biases Non-resiliency

(continued)



*Linking Researcher Policy and Practice Recommendations to Findings*

7. Refraining from the use of ineffective educational policies	Culturally-relevant pedagogy Aspirational support	Teacher/student non-solidarity
8. Encouragement of the academic excellence of the African American boy	Aspirational support Culturally-relevant pedagogy	Low expectations Advancement opportunities shortage Underrepresentation of academic abilities

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Further study needs to be conducted on why the achievement gap issue is so obstinate despite efforts to annihilate it. “Lacking in the assessment of school achievement among African American adolescents is an understanding of how these youths cognitively envision themselves in the future and how appraisals of their personal future may shape academic performance” (Honora, 2002, pp. 301-302). In all realms of schooling genres, most of what we know that have been written by educational researchers about African American males, continue to perpetuate this deficit narrative about the extent to which they can get academically (Harper, 2015). The time to counterbalance the one-sided misrepresentations of Black males and the inner-city schools that educate them, is now (Harper, 2015). Visual sociology and critical race methodologies should be utilized in creating positive narratives about African American boys and other boys of color (Dawson-Threat, 1997; Robinson & Werblow, 2012; Stinson, 2013). Researchers and educational reporters should stop promoting study designs that, time after time, portray African American male students in bad light and start producing designs and strategies that enlarge the achievements of Black boys, pose anti deficit-oriented research questions, and

switch those negative research questions into positive ones that shed more progressive insights into African American achievement (Harper, 2015; Douglas & Arnold, 2016). Honora's (2002) optimism about the reversal of the academic underperformance of African American male high school students (future outlook concept) was expressed as follows:

Inherent in the definition of future outlook is the belief that individuals' hopes for and expectations of the future influence present behavior...students who are optimistic about the future tend to be more academically motivated than students who are uncertain about their possibilities... cognitive manifestations of the future, either positive or negative, influence current behavior and may serve as a motivating factor for school achievement (Nurmi, 1991)...conceptions of the future are integrated into and manifested through students' academic performance. (p. 302)

The need for the further study of the reasons for the persistence of the achievement gap is more pertinent now than ever before. It has lingered for far too long and hindered the progress of one of the most vulnerable demographic groups in the U.S. – the African American male.

**School resistance:** Why is it that despite the numerous efforts made by educational institutions and governmental agencies alike to improve the academic performance of African American male high school students, they still perform academically way below their white counterparts (McWayne, 2012)? With all hands on deck to help African American male students succeed, could the problem of poor performance be more internal than external? In examining the 50 articles and studies (see Appendix A) selected in relation to the academic underperformance of African American male high school students, it became obvious that school resistance from these students was one major reason for the persistence of the achievement gap. In other words, it was not a case of wrong being done to them but them doing wrong to

themselves deliberately, in order to belong and not face alienation by their peers (Wright, 2011). School resistance, termed oppositional culture theory by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) made great strides in explaining this phenomenon. Oppositional culture theory states that while under the impression that academic success would destroy the relationship they had with their peers, African American boys would dummy down their academic performance so as not to be accused of acting white and, thereby, face isolation by their peers (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Society in general, the educational community in particular, and African Americans most especially, must reverse this oppositional culture phenomenon so that African American boys do not have to disidentify in order to be on what they are made to think is the right side by their peers – the non-White-acting side – academic failure.

In further explanation, Ogbu's (1991) thesis of blocked opportunity, a crutch of oppositional culture theory, states that African American males, like their Native American counterparts, belong to the involuntary minority strata of people who did not of their own volition opt to be members of American society. Their ancestors were forcibly brought into American society by slavery, so there is not the abject willingness to adapt to the American way of life and move upwards in society as would be the case with voluntary minorities, like Asians (Ogbu, 1991). Asians came to America of their own free will and, therefore, have the drive to overachieve academically in order to ensure success (Ogbu, 1991). African Americans see American culture as being in stark conflict with their identity and perceive good fortune obstacles as their reality rooted in history (Lundy, 2003). Since they feel that they cannot get a fair chance, they adopt a defeatist approach to life, a why-bother-trying attitude (Lundy, 2003). From this oppositional culture frame of reference, with the discriminatory, oppressive, and racist

legacy they inherited, and with their fear of peer isolation for excelling (seen as acting White), African American male students come under tremendous stress (Lundy, 2003).

With their past, painful, their future, uncertain, and their affective filter heightened, Black boys purposely dummy down their academic performance as a stress coping mechanism (Honora, 2002). For African American male students to overcome this long time effects of drudgery, they have to collaboratively and incessantly meet the challenges posed head-on and arrest them with resilience, self-affirmation, self-efficacy, spirituality, self-esteem, positive personal perception of ability, stereotype resistance, unapologetic racial-ethnic identity, academic engagement, dedication, alliance, aspirational family and community support, ownership of opportune moments, seizure of learning and service opportunities, pride in success and accomplishments, strength in the face of negative peer pressure, and assumption of personal responsibility for decisions and actions taken (Floyd, 1996; Dawson-Threat, 1997; Lundy, 2003; Hughes, 2010; Noble, 2011; Kafele, 2012; McWayne, 2012; Borman & Grigg, 2013; Borman & Grigg, 2013; Baber, 2014; Wood & Ireland, 2014).

**Academic disidentification:** The second major reason gleaned from the 50 related articles and studies examined for this study, relative to the persistent academic underperformance of African American male high school students, is academic disidentification – the nonexistence of a correlation between school performance outcomes and how highly one regards himself or herself, or the lack, thereof (Osborne, 1999). Academic disidentification is one of the factors blamed for repeated low academic performance by African American male students, along with a home-school disconnect, low socio-economic status, below-standard schools, and racial identity challenges (Cokley, McClain, Jones, & Johnson, 2012).

Since academic identification deems that a student with high self-esteem will want to excel academically in order to protect that gleaming self-image, it must mean that the African American male high school student who continues to underperform repeatedly, does not see his academic success indicator, which in this case is his Grade Point Average (GPA), as related to his self-concept or self-worth (Cokley et al., 2012).

Prior research showed that African American males were more likely to academically disidentify over time than their male counterparts (Cokley et al., 2012). Why was this the case? Well, Osborne (1999) cites three reasons: the first, being that academic disidentification is the result of decades of the stigmatization of the African American male since slavery days; the second, being that academic disidentification is the African American male's response to the apathy that is shown his racial, social, and economic struggles; and the third being that academic disidentification is displayed as a protest African American males make against the ills of society that they have faced since birth.

**Self-victimization:** African American males, more often than not, perceive education as effeminate and therefore detrimental to their masculinity and their desire to be big and strong (Holland, 1989). Instead, they cling to sports, rap music, and fast moneymaking avenues as their road to fame and fortune, and by this stance, ignore education, a crucial foundation-laying pillar upon which they can stake a claim to guaranteed success in life (Taylor, 1999). It is self-victimization, when African American males are willing perpetrators of their own dilemma, and willing participants in their own educational undoing. While it is true that sports excellence and fame can improve the lot of African American males in their quest to transcend their low socio-economic status, it is also true that sports excellence and fame can destroy them by using them in their prime and then letting them go when they are no longer able to play (Taylor, 1999).

True, athletics provides a route to resilience, self-esteem, pride, and discipline for African American male students, but it is a less certain route than education. Sports is one sure way for them to prove themselves. However, they do not have to achieve sports and education success in isolation. They can be both education and sports success stories, all at the same time. Taylor (1999) could not have put it more succinctly when he wrote:

We need educators who clearly state their belief in the intellectual potential of African American boys and who make explicit the purpose and mission of schooling. Surely, many youths find confidence, hope, and even opportunity on the playing field or court but with education in hand, when sports play ends, what remains are the skills, hopes, and dreams instilled by educators. Let African American boys hear this message in the classrooms, hallways, and lunchrooms—that you believe in their education and that you believe in them. (p.78)

### **Chapter Summary**

Having successfully conducted this metasynthesis study on the strategies aimed at helping African American male students succeed in U.S. secondary schools, having reported on its findings, and having had an earnest discussion on the implications of what was examined, uncovered, discovered, and ultimately promulgated, two things remain very poignant: (a) the need to positively report the life narratives and lived experiences of African American males as a way to motivate higher achievement (wordings used in Literature Analysis Coding in Appendix A), and (b) the need to celebrate African American male student successes and accomplishments in order to encourage emulation and boost aspirations (wordings also used in Literature Analysis Coding in Appendix A).

Garibaldi (1992) could not have agreed more when he said: “When we publicly recognize the successful academic experiences of young African American men, we simultaneously raise their self-concept, self-esteem, and academic confidence” (p. 7), as well as their academic performance, thereby ultimately erasing the achievement gap. This urgent need for a counter-narrative for the academic experiences of Black boys further came out loudly, clearly, and unequivocally when Garibaldi (1992) said:

Negative peer pressure, specifically the invective that African American students are "acting White" if they strive to achieve academically (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), is a major deterrent to many non-White students' school performance. External influences that affect children's dispositions toward learning must be addressed by schools and teachers so that students who do perform at or above average are not ostracized, ridiculed, intimidated, physically assaulted, or belittled by their peers. More must be done by parents, communities, the media, and educators to minimize the social and psychological stresses that academically-talented African American students must confront on a daily basis. (pp. 7-8)

In further support of this researcher's conclusion that the negative attitudes and portrayals of African American male secondary school students must change in order to eliminate the achievement gap, Garibaldi (1992) said:

Teachers have a pivotal role to play in reversing the negative academic and social behaviors of African American males; but they, too, are susceptible to internalizing and projecting the negative stereotypes and myths that are unfairly used to describe African American males as a monolithic group with little hope of surviving and being successful. Teachers who ascribe to such beliefs, therefore, must change their subjective attitudes

about Black boys' ability to succeed. The fact that many African American males do succeed in school makes this issue even more important. Teachers who hold negative perceptions can inadvertently turn off Black male students who have high abilities, positive self-concepts, outstanding personal expectations, and achievable aspirations. Teachers, therefore, must challenge these young men intellectually and, when possible, provide them with immediate, continuous, and appropriate reinforcement as well as positive feedback for their academic accomplishments. Their encouragement can significantly enhance for all students, not only the importance and value of education for long-term financial and personal success, but especially so for Black male youths. (p. 8)

Research question one was answered by the findings of the study when the five most effective academic strategies being used to help African American male students succeed in high school were revealed. Research question two uncovered eight major reasons why the achievement gap persists to this day despite the use of the topmost brilliant academic strategies. Research question three brought to light, the fact that the academic achievement gap could be bridged by the positive reporting and success magnification of the lived experiences of African American young men

The study discussions were centered around the three research questions and their responses. The study findings were linked to the social disorganization, self-efficacy, phenomenological variant of ecology systems, and attribution theories. In order to explain the need to counter the negative reporting of the academic performance of African American male high school students with positive reporting and the celebration of their successes, critical race theory was referenced by more than 50% of the articles/studies selected for this study, hence its eventual addition to the list of theoretical frameworks.



In concluding, the importance of the five most effective academic strategies aimed at helping African American male students succeed in U.S. secondary schools, the eight reasons for the reoccurrence of the academic achievement gap between African American males and their White counterparts, and the two main solutions for bridging the achievement gap espoused by the selected articles/studies were reemphasized. Recommendations for policy, practice, and further study were made, and final thoughts on the study were given.

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Authors and Date	Source Type	Method	Population	Academic Success Strategies	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging the Achv. Gap
(B) Boucher, M. L. (2016)	P-R Journal	QUAN: Case Study	White HS teachers successful with AA students	1 Aspirational Support, Empowerment, Role Modeling 2 High School & College Advising, College Readiness 3 Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4 Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5 Equitable Resources, Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6 Positive Outlook, Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7 Qualified/Dedicated Educators, Engaging Curriculum 8 Self-Efficacy, Perception, Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9 Strong Acad. Foundation, Informed Intervention Prog.	1 Academic Disidentification/Success Taunts from Peers 2 Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3 Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4 Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5 Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6 Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7 Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8 Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1 Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2 Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
Brown, A. L. (2009)	P-R Journal	QUAL: Ethnog.	AA male teachers working with AA male students	X	X	X
Cokley, K., McClain, S., Jones, M., & Johnson, S. (2012)	P-R Journal	QUAN	AA male/female urban high school students	X	X	X
Davis, J. E., & Jordan, W. J. (1994)	P-R Journal	QUAN	NELS: 88 archival dataset of middle and high school students	X	X	X
Dawson-Threat, J. (1997)	Book	Chapter	AA male students	X	X	X

Authors and Date	Source Type	Method	Population	Academic Success Strategies	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging the Achv. Gap
TC) Donnor, J. K., Shockley, K. G. (2010) 9	P-R Journal	Article	AA male students	1. Aspirational Support, Empowerment, Role Modeling 2. High School & College Advising, College Readiness 3. Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4. Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5. Equitable Resources, Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6. Positive Outlook, Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7. Qualified/Dedicated Educators, Engaging Curriculum 8. Self-Efficacy, -Perception, -Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9. Strong Acad. Foundation, Informed Intervention Prog.	1. Academic Disidentification/Success Taunts from Peers 2. Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3. Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4. Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5. Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6. Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7. Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8. Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1. Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2. Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
Douglas, B., Lewis, C. W., Douglas, A. Scott, M. E., & Garrison-Wade, D. (2008) 10	P-R Journal	QUAL	Black high school students being taught by White teachers	X	X	X
Douglas, T. M. O., & Arnold, N. W. (2016) 11	P-R Journal	QUAL: Narrative Analysis	Black Bermudian male student	X	X	X
Ehrenreich, H., Reeves, P. M., Corley, S., & Orpinas, P. (2012) 12	P-R Journal	QUAL: Phenom	Focus grps of Gr 11 high & low aggression studis AA male univ freshmen 2005-2006 cohort	X	X	X
Farmer, E. D., & Hope, W. C. (2015) 13	P-R Journal	QUAN		X	X	X

Authors and Date	Source Type	Method	Population	Academic Success Strategies	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging the Achv. Gap
<b>14</b> Floyd, C. (1996)	P-R Journal	QUAL phenom	AA male/female 12 <sup>th</sup> grade students	1. Aspirational Support. Empowerment. Role Modeling 2. High School & College Advising. College Readiness 3. Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4. Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5. Equitable Resources. Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6. Positive Outlook, Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7. Qualified/Dedicated Educators. Engaging Curriculum 8. Self-Efficacy, -Perception, -Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9. Strong Acad. Foundation. Informed Intervention Prog.	1. Academic Disidentification/Success Taunts from Peers 2. Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3. Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4. Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5. Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6. Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7. Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8. Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1. Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2. Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments
Graham, S., Taylor, A., & Hudley, C. (2015)	P-R Journal	QUAN	AA boys Gr 3-5 clas. as aggressive	X	X	X
Grimmett, M. A. (2010)	P-R Journal	Article	AA boys' career development model	X	X	X
Gayles, J. (2005)	P-R Journal	QUAL ethnog.	AA male HS seniors with high GPA	X	X	X
Harper, S. R. (2015)	P-R Journal	QUAL	AA & L male HS stdnt. Gr 11 & 12	X	X	X
Harper, S. R., & Newman, C. B. (2016)	P-R Journal	QUAL phenom	AA male college juniors/seniors with high GPA	X	X	X





Authors and Date	Source Type	Method	Population	Academic Success Strategies	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging the Achv. Gap
TF) Lundy, G. F. (2003) 25	P-R Journal	Article	All American high school students	1. Aspirational Support. Empowerment. Role Modeling 2. High School & College Advising. College Readiness 3. Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4. Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5. Equitable Resources. Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6. Positive Outlook. Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7. Qualified/Dedicated Educators. Engaging Curriculum 8. Self-Efficacy. -Perception. -Esteem. Religiosity. Pride 9. Strong Acad. Foundation. Informed Intervention Prog.	1. Academic Disidentification/Success Tauts from Peers 2. Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities. Tracking 3. Racism. Discrimination. Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4. Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5. Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6. Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity. Mistrust 7. Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8. Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1. Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2. Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
Lynn, M., Bacon, J. N., 26 Totten, T. L., Bridges, T. L., & Jennings, M. (2010)	P-R Journal	QUAL Ethnog.	High school personnel-tchr. counsl. admin, etc	X	X	X
McGee, E. O. (2013) 27	P-R Journal	QUAL Phenom	High achieving AA male HS stidnt	X	X	X
McMillian, M. M. (2004) 28	P-R Journal	Article	AA male high school students	X	X	X
McWayne, C. M. (2012) 29	P-R Journal	Article	AA male elem. and high school students	X	X	X
Moller, S., & Stearns, E. (2012) 30	P-R Journal	QUAN	NELS 1988-2000 data of MS stidts-8 <sup>th</sup> gr to adulthood	X	X	X

Authors and Date	Source Type	Method	Population	Academic Success Strategies	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging the Achv. Gap
31 TG) Moore, G. W., & Slate, J. R. (2008)	P-R Journal	QUAN	All Texan HS stdnt in AP classes (2004-06)	1. Aspirational Support. Empowerment. Role Modeling 2. High School & College Advising. College Readiness 3. Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4. Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5. Equitable Resources. Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6. Positive Outlook. Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7. Qualified/Dedicated Educators. Engaging Curriculum 8. Self-Efficacy, -Perception, -Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9. Strong Acad. Foundation. Informed Intervention Prog.	1. Academic Disidentification/Success Taurts from Peers 2. Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3. Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4. Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5. Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6. Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7. Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8. Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1. Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2. Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
32 Noble, R. (2011)	P-R Journal	QUAL	AA male college students who excelled in Math	1. Aspirational Support. Empowerment. Role Modeling 2. High School & College Advising. College Readiness 3. Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4. Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5. Equitable Resources. Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6. Positive Outlook. Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7. Qualified/Dedicated Educators. Engaging Curriculum 8. Self-Efficacy, -Perception, -Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9. Strong Acad. Foundation. Informed Intervention Prog.	1. Academic Disidentification/Success Taurts from Peers 2. Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3. Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4. Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5. Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6. Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7. Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8. Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1. Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2. Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
33 Owens, D., Lacey, K., Rawls, G., & Holbert-Quine, J. (2010)	P-R Journal	Article	AA male college students	1. Aspirational Support. Empowerment. Role Modeling 2. High School & College Advising. College Readiness 3. Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4. Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5. Equitable Resources. Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6. Positive Outlook. Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7. Qualified/Dedicated Educators. Engaging Curriculum 8. Self-Efficacy, -Perception, -Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9. Strong Acad. Foundation. Informed Intervention Prog.	1. Academic Disidentification/Success Taurts from Peers 2. Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3. Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4. Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5. Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6. Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7. Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8. Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1. Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2. Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
34 Patton, D. U., Wooley, M. E., & Hong, J. S. (2012)	P-R Journal	QUAL	AA young boys transitioning to high school	1. Aspirational Support. Empowerment. Role Modeling 2. High School & College Advising. College Readiness 3. Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4. Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5. Equitable Resources. Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6. Positive Outlook. Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7. Qualified/Dedicated Educators. Engaging Curriculum 8. Self-Efficacy, -Perception, -Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9. Strong Acad. Foundation. Informed Intervention Prog.	1. Academic Disidentification/Success Taurts from Peers 2. Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3. Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4. Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5. Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6. Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7. Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8. Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1. Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2. Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
35 Perrakis, A. I. (2008)	Prof. Journal	QUAN	AA and White male community college students	1. Aspirational Support. Empowerment. Role Modeling 2. High School & College Advising. College Readiness 3. Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4. Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5. Equitable Resources. Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6. Positive Outlook. Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7. Qualified/Dedicated Educators. Engaging Curriculum 8. Self-Efficacy, -Perception, -Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9. Strong Acad. Foundation. Informed Intervention Prog.	1. Academic Disidentification/Success Taurts from Peers 2. Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3. Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4. Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5. Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6. Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7. Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8. Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1. Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2. Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations



Authors and Date	Source Type	Method	Population	Academic Success Strategies	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging the Gap
TD Stinson, D. W. (2013) <b>42</b>	P-R Journal	Article	AA male student with math success	1 Aspirational Support, Empowerment, Role Modeling 2 High School & College Advising, College Readiness 3 Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4 Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5 Equitable Resources, Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6 Positive Outlook, Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7 Qualified/Dedicated Educators, Engaging Curriculum 8 Self-Efficacy, Perception, Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9 Strong Acad. Foundation, Informed Intervention Prog.	1 Academic Disidentification/Success Taunts from Peers 2 Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3 Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4 Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5 Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6 Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7 Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8 Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1 Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2 Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
Swinton, A. D., Kurtz-Costes, Rowley, S. J., & Okeke-Adeyanju, N. (2011) <b>43</b>	P-R Journal	QUAN	AA students in grades 8 and 11	1 Aspirational Support, Empowerment, Role Modeling 2 High School & College Advising, College Readiness 3 Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4 Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5 Equitable Resources, Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6 Positive Outlook, Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7 Qualified/Dedicated Educators, Engaging Curriculum 8 Self-Efficacy, Perception, Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9 Strong Acad. Foundation, Informed Intervention Prog.	1 Academic Disidentification/Success Taunts from Peers 2 Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3 Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4 Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5 Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6 Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7 Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8 Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1 Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2 Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
Taylor, E. (1999) <b>44</b>	Prof. Mag.	Article	AA male student athletes	1 Aspirational Support, Empowerment, Role Modeling 2 High School & College Advising, College Readiness 3 Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4 Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5 Equitable Resources, Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6 Positive Outlook, Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7 Qualified/Dedicated Educators, Engaging Curriculum 8 Self-Efficacy, Perception, Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9 Strong Acad. Foundation, Informed Intervention Prog.	1 Academic Disidentification/Success Taunts from Peers 2 Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3 Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4 Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5 Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6 Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7 Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8 Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1 Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2 Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
Thompson, L. R., & Lewis, B. F. (2005) <b>45</b>	P-R Journal	QUAL CS	AA male high school student	1 Aspirational Support, Empowerment, Role Modeling 2 High School & College Advising, College Readiness 3 Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4 Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5 Equitable Resources, Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6 Positive Outlook, Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7 Qualified/Dedicated Educators, Engaging Curriculum 8 Self-Efficacy, Perception, Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9 Strong Acad. Foundation, Informed Intervention Prog.	1 Academic Disidentification/Success Taunts from Peers 2 Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3 Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4 Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5 Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6 Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7 Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8 Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1 Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2 Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
Travis, R., & Ausbrooks, A. (2012) <b>46</b>	Prof. Mag.	Article	AA male high school students	1 Aspirational Support, Empowerment, Role Modeling 2 High School & College Advising, College Readiness 3 Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4 Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5 Equitable Resources, Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6 Positive Outlook, Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7 Qualified/Dedicated Educators, Engaging Curriculum 8 Self-Efficacy, Perception, Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9 Strong Acad. Foundation, Informed Intervention Prog.	1 Academic Disidentification/Success Taunts from Peers 2 Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3 Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4 Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5 Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6 Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7 Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8 Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1 Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2 Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations
Williams, T. R., Davis, L. E., Cribbs, J. M., Saunders, J., & Williams, J. H. (2002) <b>47</b>	P-R Journal	QUAN	AA male and female high school students	1 Aspirational Support, Empowerment, Role Modeling 2 High School & College Advising, College Readiness 3 Persistence despite Stereotyping, Threats, & Obstacles 4 Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, & Diverse Pedagogy 5 Equitable Resources, Ample Opportunities/Mentorship 6 Positive Outlook, Attribution, & Racial Ethnic Identity 7 Qualified/Dedicated Educators, Engaging Curriculum 8 Self-Efficacy, Perception, Esteem, Religiosity, Pride 9 Strong Acad. Foundation, Informed Intervention Prog.	1 Academic Disidentification/Success Taunts from Peers 2 Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities, Tracking 3 Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities 4 Diminished communities, failing schools, dysfunction 5 Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass 6 Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity, Mistrust 7 Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities 8 Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, Goals	1 Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement 2 Celebrating Student Successes & Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations



**Abbreviations:**

Acad.	Academic
Achv.	Achievement
Admin.	Administrators
AP	Advanced Placement
CCR	College and Career Readiness
Clas.	Classified
Conf. Proceed.	Conference Proceedings
Counsel.	Counselors
CS	Case Study
Elem.	Elementary
Ethnog.	Ethnography
GATE	Gifted And Talented Education
GPA	Grade Point Average
Gr.	Grade
Grp.	Groups
HS	High School
L	Latino
MS	Middle School
NELS	National Education Longitudinal Study
Phenom.	Phenomenology
P-R Journal	Peer-Reviewed Journal
Prof. Mag.	Professional Magazine
Prog.	Programs
QUAL	Qualitative Methodology
QUAN	Quantitative Methodology
Stdnt.	Students
Tchr.	Teachers
Thru	Through
Counsel.	Counselors

## Code Key

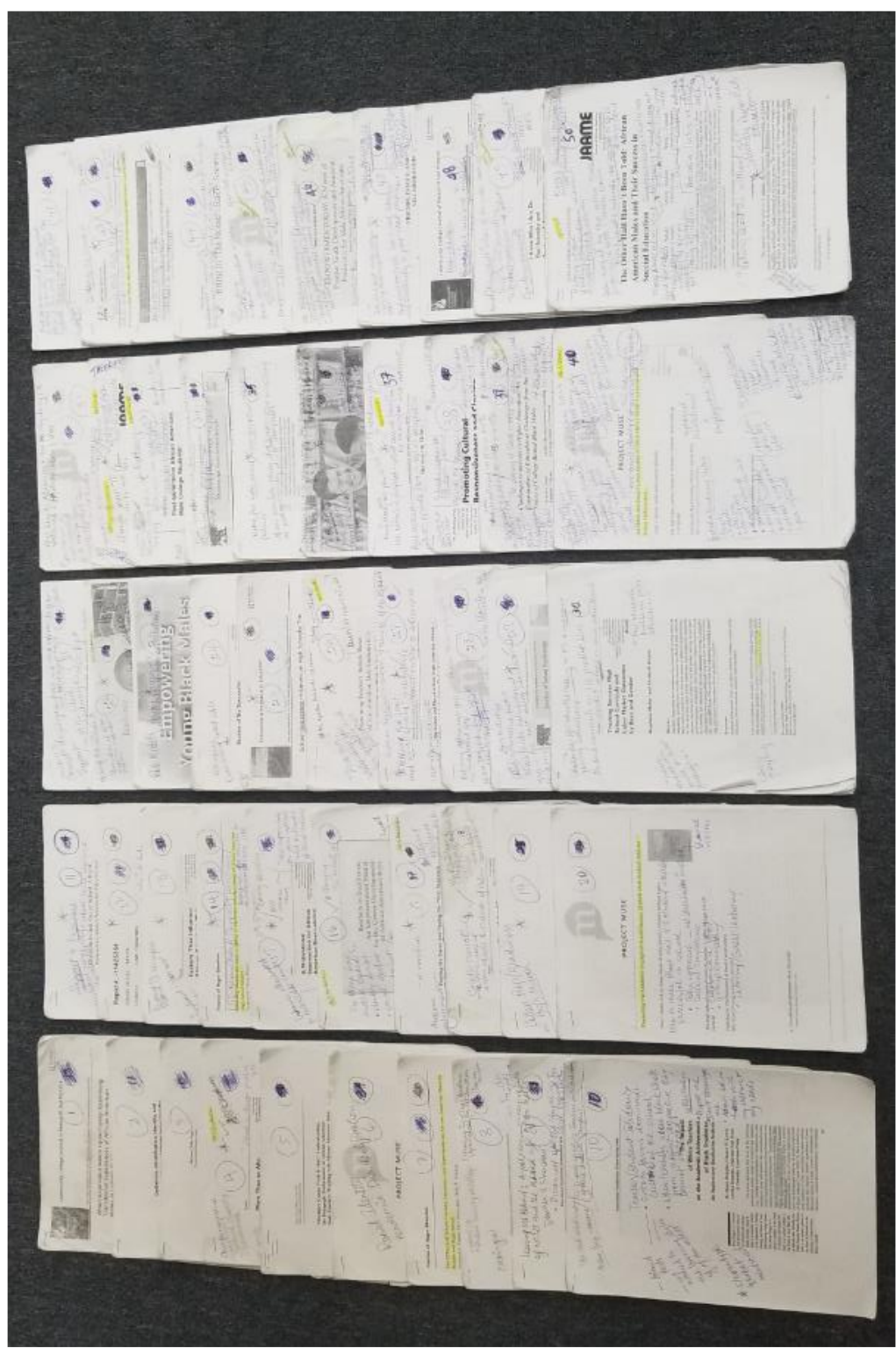
Category Code	Academic Success Strategies AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging the Achievement Gap	Definition/Description
Aspirational Support. Empowerment. Role Modeling	Academic Success Strategies	Receiving support aimed at academic achievement from family members, teachers, guidance counselors, and role models. Obtaining a strong sense of identity, self-image, purpose, and resilience to threats
High School and College Advising. College Readiness	Academic Success Strategies	Being academically ready for college. Receiving information about, and assistance with, major obstacles in the pathway to postsecondary access (i.e., academic preparation, cost of education, social transition)
Persistence Despite Stereotyping, Threats, and Obstacles	Academic Success Strategies	Resisting pre-formed negative ethnicity, gender, and ability views/biases. Persisting through academic, economic, and social obstacles, threats, and road blocks encountered in lived experiences
Culturally-Responsive, Rigorous, and Diverse Pedagogy	Academic Success Strategies	Obtaining quality and intellectually challenging academic content and instruction. Learning in a conducive academic environment. Having cultural strengths identified and nurtured in the classroom
Equitable Resources. Ample Opportunities. Mentorships	Academic Success Strategies	Benefiting from all the academic resources available to all students, irrespective of race, affluence, or social status. Knowing about and having access to job opportunities, avenues for self-advancement, and mentors
Positive Outlook, Attribution, and Racial Ethnic Identity (REI)	Academic Success Strategies	Knowing that there are great prospects for the future. Being able to make the right assessment about lack of success. Being proud of ethnicity and moving positively forward despite history of injustice and discrimination

Category Code	Academic Success Strategies AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging the Achievement Gap	Definition/Description
Highly-Qualified Educators and Engaging Curriculum	Academic Success Strategies	Having culturally responsive teachers, dedicated counselors, caring administrators, and steadfast support staff, all of the highest quality. Having a rigorous curriculum
Self-Efficacy, Self-Perception, Self-Esteem, Religiosity, and Pride	Academic Success Strategies	Being confident enough to bring about the desired outcome. Having a positive view of, and feeling about self despite threats from discrimination, stereotyping, and low expectations
Strong Academic Foundation. Informed Intervention Programs	Academic Success Strategies	Having very strong early education that make academic transitions easier and academic achievement attainable. Benefiting from information-based and research-backed academic intervention program that plug gaps in knowledge and mastery
Academic Disidentification/Success Taunts from Peers	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Disassociating from successful academic outcomes due to low self esteem, poor academic self-concept, and the fear of being labeled as "Acting White" by peers
Underrepresentation of Academic Abilities. Tracking	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Being seen as incapable of producing the desired academic outcome. Being separated into academic ability groups
Racism, Discrimination, Ethnic Biases, & Inequities	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Being seen as inferior to others of a different race, experiencing negative distinctions by class, generating negative preconceived notions in absentia, and being short-changed where others are not
Diminished communities, failing schools, disfunction	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Living in deteriorating neighborhoods with poor performing schools, every aspect of life in total disarray

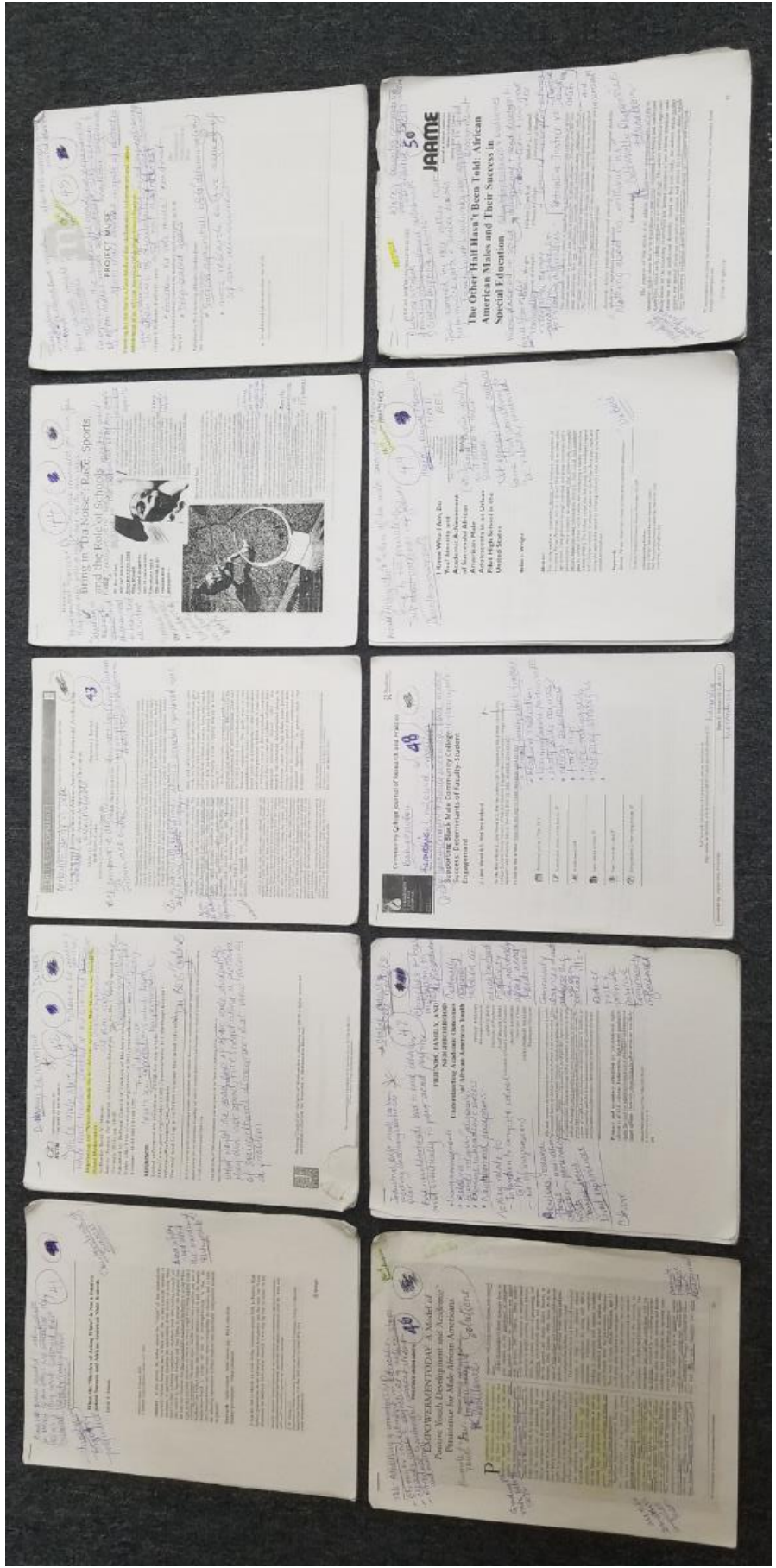


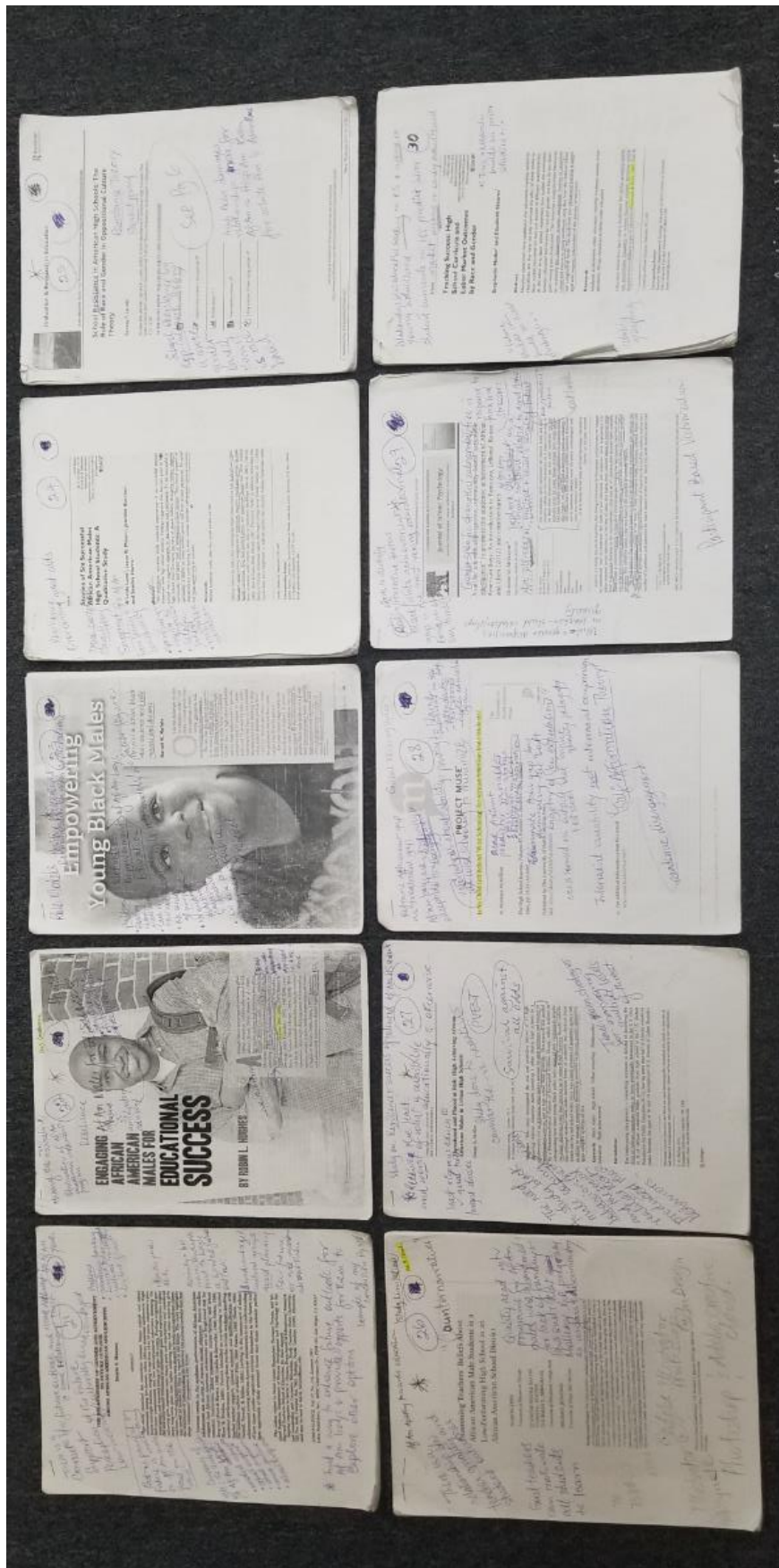
Category Code	Academic Success Strategies AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging the Achievement Gap	Definition/Description
Low Expectations, Weak Study Habits/Moral Compass	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Being seen only as low performers who lack appropriate study skills and the willingness to see education as a means to a better future
Lack of Teacher/Student Solidarity. Mistrust	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Not having teachers standing solidly behind as allies and sources of support. Feeling that teachers undermine rather than enhance academic effort
Limited Advancement and Improvement opportunities	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Not being placed in, recommended for, and having the chance to participate in academic programs like GATE. Not being encouraged to take AP and college classes that will enhance GPA and accelerate graduation
Lack of Resilience, Coping Mechanisms, Drive, and Goals	AA-White Achievement Gap Reasons	Not being equipped with life and attribution skills needed to keep going in tough times. Not having the tools to combat social, economic, ethnic, and academic challenges
Positive Reporting of Life Narratives/Lived Experiences motivates higher achievement	Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging the Achievement Gap	Writing about/presenting life's happenings/events in a favorable way leads to positive self-perceptions that culminate in self-advancement via achievement
Celebrating Student Successes and Accomplishments Encourages emulation and boosts aspirations	Recent Advocated Solutions for Bridging the Achievement Gap	Recognizing and commemorating success is a great way to motivate others towards exemplary attainment and the urge to surpass the performance of predecessors

APPENDIX B: 50 Dissertation Articles and Studies Read and Meta-Synthesized



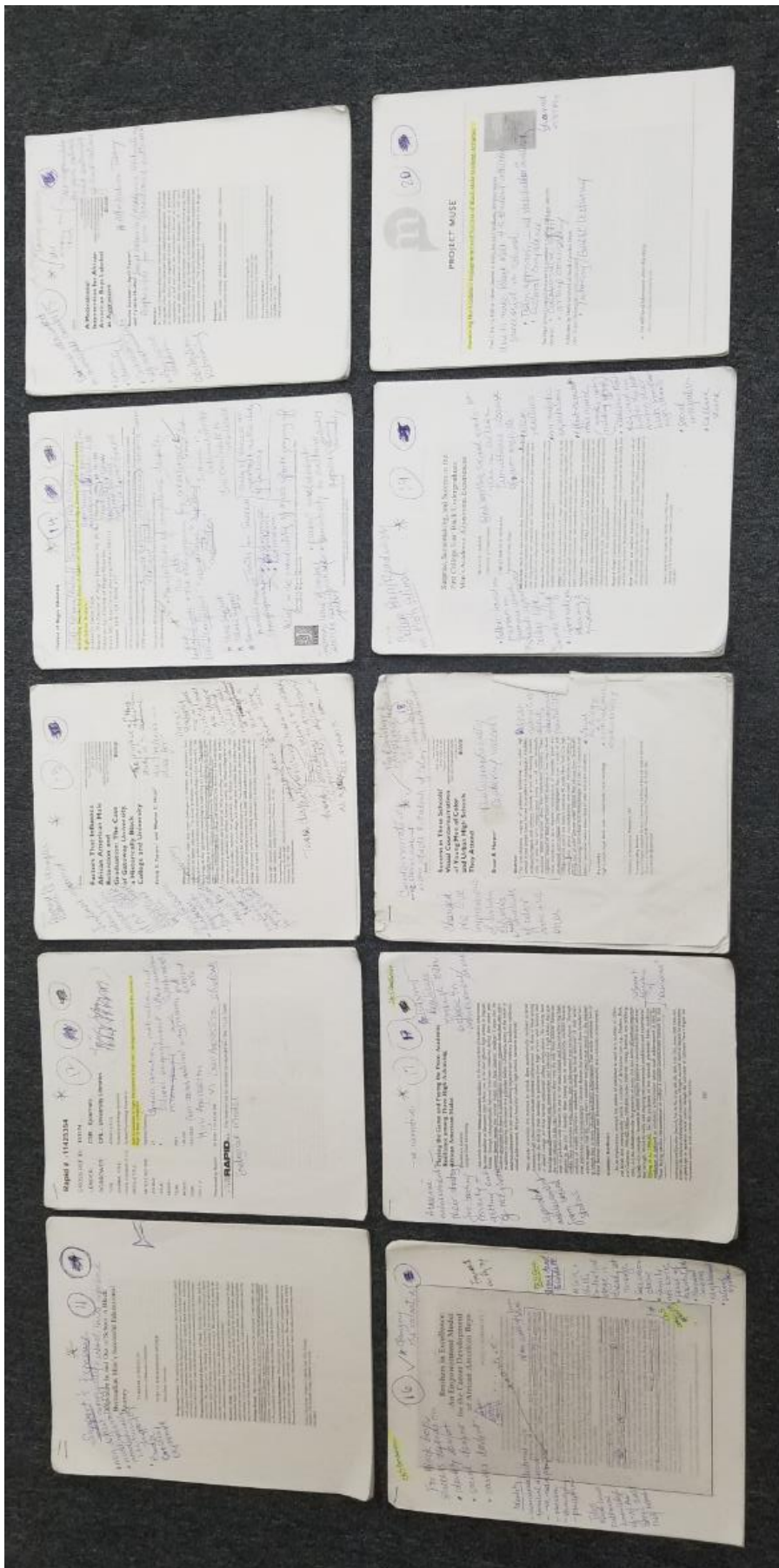






Activate Windows





is results suggest that persistent social and psychological phenomena can be mitigated by social psychological intervention

Chapter 2: Review of literature

Theoretical Framework and Themes  
Social Disorganizational Theory

Junior

- 1) Barber, L.D. (2014) Af Am males transitioning from H.S. to College  
Aspirational support/systems navigation/stereotype persistence
- 2) Bonner II et al (2009) Underestimat<sup>n</sup> of gifted Af Am males' acad. abilities  
Perceptions of achievement of Af Am males
- 3) Borman & Grigg (2013) Lose Ach Gap thru self-affirmat<sup>n</sup>. Stereotype threat to social identity/self esteem
- 4) Boucher, Jr M.L. (2016) White Tch in solidarity with his Af Am students  
Tolerance of Cultural diversity
- 5) Brown, A.L. (2009) More blk male tchrs needed to teach Blk boys  
Pedagogy not tailored to Af Am students bkgnds-
- 6) Cokley et al (2012) Acad Disidentificat<sup>n</sup> Racial ID. Certain amt of Self Esteem is attached to acad/learning/outcome
- 7) Davis & Jordan (1994) school inequities/limited oppor<sup>s</sup>. Tch. context/structure/experiences effect on Af Am males in MSE HS
- 8) Dawson-Threat (1997) Tch/student relationship. Racial ID dev. Student dev theory  
Environment affects learning
- 9) Danner & Shreckley (2010) NCLB and the miseducation of Af Am males  
Pub schs/school reform have failed Af Am
- 10) Douglas, et al (2008) Effect of white teachers on acad achvmt of Af Am students view blk students from deficit persptv
- 11) Douglas, & Arnold (2016) Blk Birmingham Male Support & Exposure. Non-deficit community + sch based exp. multigen. acad. teaching support
- 12) Ehrenreich, et al (2012) sch engmt, grades, retention, motivational affect perform and drop out rate. Poor acad achvmt = high aggression
- 13) Farmer & Hope (2015) Informed research-based interv<sup>n</sup> programs. Recipes for success - Acad prep, study habits, college advsng access, nonemphants on sports
- 14) Floyd, C. (1996) Resilience, support, Self-Esteem belief. Achvg despite odds  
Perseverance, optimism, Persistence, Parent involvement, cultural sensitivity
- 15) Graham, et al (2014) Interv<sup>n</sup> for aggressive Af Am boys. Attribution Theory. Take resp for own actions. Outcome → controllable causes
- 16) Grimmer, M.A. (2010) Brothers in excellence A the narrative. Strong Acad foundat from birth. ID, Soc. Career dev = success  $\Delta$  ↑ 1/5 concept mod
- \* 17) Grayles, J. (2005) Resilience of 3 high achvg Af Am males A narrative  
Separate Achvmt from social status Achvmt to beat poverty ghetto



- 18) Harper, S.R (2015) Visual Countermatrix. Visual sociology and critical race methodology used to create the <sup>anti-deficit counter-narrative</sup>
- 19) Harper & Newman (2016) College prep readiness, summer bridge, social integrat<sup>o</sup>  
College <sup>College</sup> Cultural Shock, effort-expect<sup>o</sup> mismatch. <sup>Info sharing guidance</sup>
- 20) Harris, et al (2014) Athletes success in HS. Team approach. Cultural competence, collaborative effort, grp counsel<sup>y</sup> <sup>tutoring, guest lecturing</sup>
- 21) Honora, D.T (2002) Gender & Achvmt Future studies should... p 314  
Past punishment, future uncertain, so deal with now  
Disident<sup>y</sup> <sup>Acad tracking, mistrust, suspension rate</sup>
- 22) Hughes, R.L (2010) Intrusion vs Advise<sup>ment</sup> <sup>Anticipatory</sup> <sup>the narrative/reporting</sup>  
Resilience, genuine care, fictive kinship, reciprocity
- 23) Kafele, B.K (2012) Empow<sup>ing</sup> Y&B Mafwa<sup>m</sup>, Educat<sup>o</sup> Purpose +ve perspectives <sup>high expect<sup>o</sup>s</sup>  
Reading at/above G.L. Manhood lessons, Role Models <sup>Peer influence self respect</sup>
- 24) Lund, et al (2014) Resilience. Racial percept<sup>o</sup> stereotyping. Family/community <sup>to successful Af Am males in HS</sup>  
Support, spiritual growth, resp to mother, <sup>helpful self workers</sup> inner innovation
- 25) Lundy, G.F (2003) Resistance Race & Gender roles in opposit<sup>o</sup> Culture Theory  
high achvmt damages relationships stereotyping
- 26) Lyns, et al (2010) Tech quality, Af Am aparty, +ve narratives, qual acad/<sup>o</sup> prog  
and student outcomes
- 27) McGee (2013) +ve narratives, resilience, strats for managing multiple levels of threat, coping mechanisms (PVEST) Threatened At Risk
- 28) McMillan, M.M (2004) WCLB. Ability stereotypg. Self-Affirm<sup>o</sup> theory. close Gap  
by high expectat<sup>o</sup>s <sup>Call it "treatmt gap" to see econ status of prep level</sup>
- 29) McWayne, C (2012) Activate Intelligence Gap is most vexing <sup>educ aspirations</sup>  
Teacher/student <sup>ed concern</sup> relationship  
Self-esteem, outlook, self-concept, sense of <sup>future</sup> future
- 30) Moller & Stearns, (2012) Relat<sup>o</sup> b/w edu tracking and income HS curr. predicts labor market income ability grouping
- 31) Moore & Slote (2008) AP courses More whites in AP classes than Blacks/Hispanics  
AP scores used as measure of HS success but <sup>Blks can't get in</sup>  
AP classes should reflect Diversity Discrimination
- 32) Noble (2011) Self Efficacy <sup>Theory</sup> <sup>the narrative</sup> +ve sense of pers. percept<sup>o</sup> of ability  
Attribut<sup>o</sup> Theory <sup>Expectancy</sup> <sup>Value Theory</sup> <sup>Divot<sup>o</sup></sup> <sup>Dedical<sup>o</sup></sup> <sup>Enthusiasm</sup> <sup>Source of self efficacy</sup>
- 33) Owens, et al (2010) CareerCouns. Acad access, Learning support, Networking  
Lived experiences, Acad prep<sup>o</sup> <sup>Opport for Univ. Edv.</sup> <sup>consider Af Am interests/outlook</sup>
- 34) Patton, et al (2012) Difficult HS transit<sup>o</sup> due to violence, fear, low read achvmt, <sup>risk stressors</sup>  
PVEST, Soc Disorg, Peer Pressur<sup>o</sup>, Dysf neighbor, Self Esteem, <sup>Coping mech</sup> Support.

- 35) Perrakis, A.E (2008) Acad success factors - GPA & Course Completion Non racial/gen policies, racial discrimination, community college access as gateway to higher ed strain theory - access problems
- 36) Powell & Marshall (2011) +ve teacher-student relationship. At risk youth transitions equitable education, Advocacy/Support Grounded theory
- 37) Robinson & Werblow (2012) Single black moms & sons in failing schools. A narrative about & academic excellence Theory = soc-eco theory of soc dev support
- 38) Schellenberg & Grotthaus (2009) Close the achv gap c stols blending  $\Delta$  narrative. core acad & sch counslg stols Tech outlook Educ equity
- 39) Scott et al (2013)  $\Delta$  narrative self-esteem, Placing blk boy in spec-ed. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Mentoring/Parental Supp Parental involvement
- 40) Simms, et al (2008) Support, positive racial identity, employnt opportunities. The right educational attitudes, hindering factors  $\Delta$  narrative
- 41) Stinson (2010) "Acting white" burden  $\Delta$  narrative stereotyping, bigotry prejudice. Raceless persona theory (Fordham) Cultural Ecology theory (Gibson)
- 42) Stinson (2013) Negotiating the "white male male myth". Du Bois quotes  $\Delta$  narrative Critical Race Theory Blackness Discursive formation
- 43) Swinton, et al (2011) Affirmation Theory <sup>and motivation on</sup> controllable vs uncontrollable factors. Indi's interpretation of success & failure influence motivation
- 44) Taylor, E (1999) "Da Noise" Academics with sports reverse perception  $\Delta$  narrative sports contracts vs diplomas. Run with an idea not only a ball
- 45) Thompson & Lewis (2005)  $\Delta$  narrative determination Male athlete career goals role models self concept, self-esteem, acad conf. success despite all odds
- 46) Travis Jr. & Ausbrooks (2012) Empwmt Today Acad persistence Role models, mentors, youth dev clear goals, acad steps, grad rate
- 47) Williams, et al 2002 Acad outcomes, Bad neighborhoods, Role Models self-esteem GPA, No. of suspensions, Culturally Resp. Educ
- 48) Wood & Ischard (2014) Faculty-student engagement, Learning Communities work habits, Multilevel modeling, Reading Mediation
- 49) Wright, B.L (2016) "Acting white"  $\Delta$  narrative, Healthy thin race Oppositional cultural frame (REF) Du Bois
- 50) Wright, B.L (2016) Culturally Resp. Educ  $\Delta$  narrative, Support Home-School collabor. Spec Ed assignment system Restv-Just

APPENDIX C: Authorization to Use Tables


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## APPENDIX D: IRB Approval/Exemption Letter



Pepperdine University  
 24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
 Malibu, CA 90263  
 TEL: 310-506-4000

## NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: January 25, 2018

Protocol Investigator Name: Chibuzo Azinge-Waiton

Protocol #: 17-11-655

Project Title: Strategies aimed at helping African American male students succeed in United States secondary schools: A Meta-Analysis

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Chibuzo Azinge-Waiton:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Brett Leach, Regulatory Affairs Specialist