Journal of Research Initiatives

Volume 2
Issue 2 *Dedication*

Article 6

9-26-2016

African American Early Literacy Development: An Integrative Review of the Research

Tiffany A. Flowers
Georgia Perimeter College

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.uncfsu.edu/jri

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons, and the Elementary Education and Teaching Commons

African American Early Literacy Development: An Integrative Review of the Research

About the Author(s)
Dr. Tiffany A. Flowers is an Assistant Professor of Education at Georgia Perimeter College. She is an Indiana Minority Faculty Fellow, Frederick Douglas Teaching Fellow, and an NCTE Early Career Award Leadership Award Recipient. Her research interests include African American Literacy Development, Literature, Diversity Issues in Education, Traditional Literacy, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Correspondence concerning this manuscript may be e-mailed to tflowers@gpc.edu.

JRI

AN EXAMINATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT: AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

Tiffany A. Flowers

Abstract

An integrative review of the research literature was conducted in order to explore plausible explanations of the achievement gap. Research articles were analyzed for this review of the research literature. The findings of this integrative review were included and the educational implications for practice are delineated.

Introduction

In recent years, scholars and practitioners concerned about the reading achievement gap between Black and White students examine the role of children's early literacy experiences and the indicators of later literacy development (Hunter, 2012; Husband, 2012; Britto, Brooks-Gunn, & Griffin 2006; Craig, Conner, & Washington, 2003; Edwards, 2004; Edwards, 1992; Erickson, 1987; Harris, 2003; Matthews, Kizzie, Rowley, & Cortina, 2010; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005; Thompson & Shamberger, 2015; Washington, 2001). These findings include the need to look at early literacy experiences, language development, and parental involvement. In a study by Washington (2001) the authors suggests that intervention and prevention strategies for African American students must begin prior to Kindergarten or during the preschool years in order to eliminate or prevent early reading difficulties. In a different study by, Britto, Brooks-Gunn, and Griffin (2006), the authors studied early maternal reading and teaching experiences of African American families, and the effect on the school readiness of African American children. The results of this study had a similar finding. The African American children whose mothers in this study provided high levels of support and guided participation during reading experiences demonstrated increased school readiness in the area of early reading. Roberts, Jurgens and Burchinal (2005), found similar results in their study by examining the home literacy practices of African American students in preschool and their effects on the students' later language and literacy skills. The authors found that later language and literacy development were based on the maternal support within the home environment.

Craig, Conner and Washington (2003) analyzed longitudinal data for African American preschoolers and Kindergarteners in the area of reading comprehension. The authors found that preschool students from low-income homes performed significantly higher on a reading assessment than the Kindergarten students from middle class homes. A significant implication of this particular study is that if preschools emphasize early language and literacy experiences then it is possible to improve later literacy development for African American students.

In a study by Edwards (1992) she asserts that one of the main issues preventing the literacy development of African American children is the lack of book knowledge children possess when they enter school. Also, she believes that African American parents tend to expose

their children to nontraditional literacy materials (i.e. letters, brochures, etc). Therefore, Edwards suggests that educators need to work with parents to build early literacy partnerships to aid in the literacy development and achievement of African American children.

While some scholars believe that maternal support, home literacy practices, and preschool literacy experiences are indicators of achievement for later literacy (Edwards, 2004; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005). Other scholars believe that using Standard English may influence later reading achievement for African American children (Craig, Conner, & Washington, 2003; Harris, 2003). To this end, reading scholars focus on several key indicators related to the early literacy achievement gap. Those indicators include: (a) Early literacy experiences; (b) Educational access to quality reading materials; and (c) Early Intervention strategies. However, a careful examination of early literacy research suggests that the early indicators pertaining to the achievement gap in the early grades may be insufficient because the achievement gap persists. In other words, researchers continue to struggle with the essential question, "What are the root causes and remedies of the Black–White achievement gap?"

Therefore, the purpose of this integrative review of the existing research literature is to examine alternative explanations of the Black–White achievement gap. Several areas will be explored in order to examine alternative explanations of the achievement gap. Those alternative explanations include: (a) African American Vernacular English; (b) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy; and (c) Establishing partnerships with Black parents.

African American Vernacular English

During the 1970s and 1980s, the research literature about African American Vernacular English (AAVE) was used to challenge earlier claims and findings from the 1960s and 1970s about the language deficiencies of African Americans (Labov, 1982; Toliver-Weddington, 1973; Wofford, 1979). During this time, linguists began to problematize the previous assertions pertaining to the deficiencies in the language of African-American children. Collectively, this innovation within the research literature on AAVE helped to legitimize AAVE as a language (Dillard, 1973; Labov, 1972; Wofford, 1979). Research and discussions surrounding AAVE were instrumental in adding to the existing body of research pertaining to African-American language development.

One such study by Heath (1983), discusses the importance of children's socializing experiences, and how the modes of communication (verbal and nonverbal patterns) of children differ substantially by race and class. Further, Heath found that African-American parents socialize their children to rely on nonverbal and direct commands. This finding was in stark contrast to White parents in the study who socialize their children to ask questions and recognize indirect learning cues. Heath (1983) asserts that a child's socialization outcome or cultural capital (Kammijn & Kraaykamp, 1996; Kingston, 2001) is an important cause related to the educational experience of African Americans.

In a different study entitled *Understanding storytelling among African-American children: A journey from Africa to America*, Champion (2003) traces the variations, style, and abilities of African-American students in the early grades. Champion also compares the variations and patterns in stories by African and African-American children and found similar patterns. In addition, Champion addresses the implications for classroom teachers and community leaders in improving and continuing the tradition of storytelling. Understanding storytelling among African-American children may help scholars gain greater insight into: (a) the socialization of African-American children through language and storytelling; (b) the casual and formal language patterns among young African-American female and male storytellers; and (c) to document storytelling as a part of the rich traditional community

norm that is learned through observation, interaction, and participation with adults in the community. Studying the language experiences of African-American children through storytelling may hold great possibilities for scholars who have sought to study the distinct features of African-American Vernacular and dialect. Storytelling among African-American children creates another avenue to learn about traditions, language, and learning styles. In addition, Ladson-Billings (1995) suggests that classrooms that allow the home language (e.g. storytelling) into the classroom are classrooms where students are more likely to experience academic success.

In a study by Charity, Scarborough, and Griffin (2004) the researchers in this study found that there were three possible explanations that influence reading achievement for African American children. Those explanations include instructional variation by linguistically biased teachers, interference between oral and written dialect features, and metalinguistic influences on the development of language and reading. Although, all of these factors are salient to the early literacy development of African American children it is imperative to note that no single indicator or explanation accounts for the later literacy development of African American children.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Erickson (1987) asserts that culturally responsive pedagogy is a way to foster a system of trust in the classroom that builds bridges between teachers, students, and the community. In addition, other scholars continue to call for culturally relevant pedagogy as a way to foster communication within classrooms and limit cultural conflict (Delpit, 2004; Hale, 2001; Irvine, 2002; Lee, 1995). However, since Erickson's work in 1987 there are few studies that take into account what teachers can do in the classroom.

Further, many of the culturally relevant pedagogy studies are at the secondary level. However, Erickson (1987) believes that culturally responsive teaching is a promising pedagogy that should be explored further in the early grades. This belief is also held by scholars that call for culturally responsive teachers as a way to foster home, school, and community in the early grades (Foster, 1992; Edwards, 1992; Irvine, 2002). Erickson (1987) asserts that culturally responsive pedagogy is a promising and positive area of research and believes that researchers should continue to conduct research in this area.

Researchers who conduct studies in this area distinguish what is considered to be good teaching from culturally relevant pedagogy. An article by Ladson-Billings (1995) entitled "But that's just good teaching!: The case for culturally relevant pedagogy" distinguishes culturally relevant pedagogy from good teaching practices by defining the nature and approach to this method as:

> A pedagogy of opposition not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective not merely individual, empowerment. Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. (p. 160)

Further, Ladson-Billings recognizes throughout this article that culturally relevant pedagogy includes various approaches within classrooms such as linking the school and home culture of students. In fact, Ladson-Billings explains the premise of culturally relevant pedagogy as a link between the school, home, and community culture of students. In addition, Ladson-

Billings believes that teachers must focus on empowering African-American students to achieve academically, and that teachers should aid African-American students in preserving their existing cultural competence (for example, African-American Vernacular English), while learning Standard English, and in developing critical consciousness to challenge existing social systems.

Culturally responsive pedagogy includes a myriad of issues that are beginning to be explored in the research literature. Those issues range from: (a) creating more culturally diverse curricula (DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2003; Farris, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Watkins, 2001); (b) to affirming students' home culture (Foster, 1992); (c) using specific instructional strategies during instruction (cooperative learning, storytelling, etc.; Bondy & Ross, 1998; Levine, 1994); and (d) empowering students to make social change.

For example, in a study by Delpit (1992), the author speaks to the notion of home, school, and community support in culturally different environments. Delpit asserts that students should be taught to overcome obstacles to student achievement, and that teachers should be mostly responsible for reiterating the importance of learning to students. Therefore, culturally relevant theory seeks to empower students by critically examining the society in which they live, by becoming active participants within the school environment.

Researchers who support the notion of culturally relevant pedagogy assert the linguistic differences, cultural heritage, and socioeconomic status are all positive factors that teachers should consider within their pedagogy (Asante, 1991; Watkins, 2001; Wilson, 1991). Further, researchers have asserted that teachers' interactions with African American students sometimes create confusion and cultural conflict for pupils within the classroom, thus making learning difficult (Delpit, 2004; Ferguson, 2001; Hale 2001; Thompson, 2004). Therefore, culturally relevant pedagogy represents another positive contribution that may impact upon the early literacy development of African-American children. In fact, educators who employ this approach believe that culturally relevant pedagogy is important for the academic, cultural, and social development of African-American students (Gay, 2000; Paul, 2000; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003).

Perhaps it may be the case that culturally relevant pedagogy is one way to move the research away from deficit orientations and to engage students and parents; researchers who study culturally relevant pedagogy do so from the position of engaging Black parents (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). The utility of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, its practices and perspectives appear to be promising for African-American students (Hale, 2001; Lee, 1995, 2001). However, more research is clearly needed in this area to determine whether culturally relevant pedagogy positively impacts upon African-American literacy development. As more research is conducted to study culturally relevant pedagogy for African-American students, we can determine whether this is a critical step toward examining the many factors that strengthen or detract from the literacy development of African-American children. Educators should begin to question whether there are challenges to creating diverse curricula for African-American students? What impedes our progress as educators in this endeavor?

Establishing Partnerships with African American Parents
Some educators and preservice teachers often lack the cultural competence to build community partnerships with minority parents (Coleman, 1997; Edwards, 2004; Epstein, 2001). In fact, we know from many different studies that preservice teachers often have trouble when communicating with African-American parents (Boutte, Keepler; Studer, 1993). Also, we know that some teachers have a lack of understanding when it comes to working with African-American students (Thompson, 2004). In particular, young Black males have dealt with the brunt

of these issues, including the lack of mentoring and positive role models (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Tatum, 2003), and socialization into special education classes (Ferguson, 2001).

Therefore, it is important for educators to learn to work with parents, communities, schools and local educational agencies to forge partnerships to address the needs of diverse communities (Irvine, 2002). Further, it is important for all stakeholders to begin a call to action. Educators must pose critical questions such as: (a) what is incomplete about the existing body of research in terms of African-American literacy development? and (b) what is unsatisfactory about the existing research practices as they apply to African-American literacy development?

Methodology

The increase in integrative reviews as methodology produces a need for more systematized processes related to research (Cooper, 1998). We have explored searches and the usefulness of each: primary, secondary and tertiary searches (Cooper, 1998). Each of these searches offers research reviewers' a way to cull, gather, and sift through the mélange of resources and materials. In our case, as research reviewers, we searched for information about African American literacy development and then examined the literature on African American literacy development by categorizing it in three ways: *African American students' language development, black families and school involvement* and Black students and *academic achievement.* We compared the various search types; discussed threats to validity when considering integrative reviews and concluded with a possibility of integrative reviews as a systematized process.

Researching African American literacy development came with costs—and benefits to us. Cooper (1982) contends, "The integrative review process is the most *frequent kind of review*," which made it a useful approach for our research project (p. 13). Although it is the most frequent kind of review, it is costly in terms of time, funds, and "cognitive characteristic" regarding the search scope and criteria for selection of studies. As well, searching terminology such as *Black* or *African American* has its own contextualized place. For instance, although the information is available, keywords and terminology can couch the researched population in ways incongruent to the reviewers' mission. For example, when a team member started a past research project the initial internet searches for 'black girls" produced pornographic and derogatory websites. Additionally, online "educational/academic" sources produced links that were limiting and ambiguous. Most shocking however were the indices of certain books and articles written about by and about black girls and women. Some authors had relegated the same population to the footnotes even as they sought to lift them onto the pages. Indeed, there is work to be done as research reviewer's form ways for understanding how to search, uncover, delve and discard irrelevant and/or inconsequential works and, ultimately present them (Cooper & Ribble, 1989). Cooper named steps as stages: *Problem Formulation, Data Collection, Data Evaluative, Analysis and Interpretation and Public presentation* (p. 15).

Albeit the literacy arena is broad; yet, many documents related to literacy development propelled our need to search for studies and artifacts specifically about *African American literacy development* therein decreased the number of studies. Additionally, as reviewers we had to differentiate between the types of searches as we sifted through a mélange of resources: professional publications, book chapters as well as publications for popular audiences, newspapers magazine articles, and commentaries. We conducted on-line searches using three primary databases. The search engines, such as, J-Stor, EBSCO host, ERIC, LexisNexis and Education full text using the keywords: *early literacy and African Americans, preschool and African Americans, black families/African Americans and literacy, black families/African*

Americans and early literacy, black families/African Americans and education, black parents/African Americans and reading, black students/emergent literacy, black parents/African, black children and reading/black children handwriting, black parents/African Americans and involvement. Using the reference pages of 10 articles we conducted a tertiary search (Cooper, 1982) to find articles that fit within the parameters of our research project. Cooper's methodology presents itself as a tripartite balance among specifying search strategies, analyzing others' research, and synthesizing common themes.

After conducting all levels of searches and with the results of the three searches, we organized the articles into three key themes. We were able to make more "accurate judgments" about the literature—the relevant versus irrelevant pieces—as each of us had conducted literature searches for other research projects (Cooper, 1982). However, a major consideration concerned the relevance criteria (p. 126). The articles were organized into three distinct categories. The first category, *language development,* included studies pertaining to the language development of African American students and the impact of language on literacy development. The second category, *family involvement*, included studies related to African American families and studies conducted with the families during the early grades. The third category, *academic achievement* included longitudinal studies, large scale studies with a majority African American population, and studies that examine the effect of strategies on African American literacy development. We discussed differences in reporting based upon theoretical and epistemological stances and determined whether these differences would impact the "guidelines for editorial judgment," that according to Cooper creates "variance in reviews," (p. 134). Collateral to the search work mentioned above Cooper cautioned about threats to validity at each stage. Cooper (1982) maintained that threats decreased when reviewers produce more operational details, more information and more attention to study details (p. 294). Consequently, he contended three influences affect the outcomes of literature searches: (1) the degree of expertise of the searcher; (2) the amount of information available (i.e., keywords, bibliographics, abstracts), and (3) the cognitive characteristics of the searcher. Cooper advocates a systematized process related to integrative reviews, there very well can be systemic and paradigmatic shift to accommodate voices heralding claims to objectivity.

Discussion

Over the years, scholarly works have explored the factors impacting upon the early literacy development of African-American children (Charity, Scarborough, & Griffin, 2004; Ferguson, 2001; Washington, 2001). One explanation is that early language development may influence later reading achievement (Craig, Connor, & Washington, 2003; Hiebert, 1988; Reid & Hresko, 1980). Also, researchers have found that family and community backgrounds are important factors that may impact upon the early literacy development of African-American children (Edward, 1992; Foster, 1992; Heath, 1983; Lareau, 2003). As mentioned earlier, the early literacy achievement gap for African-Americans students has caused concern for many researchers. Although there is much early literacy research about the achievement gap, there appears to be little research that addresses how to support African-American students' academic achievement in schools. What are the researchers' goals in creating more effective pedagogy? How do we prepare teachers to teach African-American children?

Therefore, more innovative early literacy researchers should examine issues related to the factors that positively strengthen the early literacy development of African-American children. Although we have much early literacy research, clearly researchers need to identify specific strategies for helping African-American students because the fundamental questions related to

the early literacy development of African-American children in schools remains unanswered. For example, many studies discuss the need for parents and teachers to be partners in the educational process; however, little research addresses the positive outcomes of these relationships as well as why it is important to work with parents (Morris, Taylor, Knight, & Wasson, 1996).What are the roots of the issues related to the achievement gap within early literacy? What are some of the struggles that African-American students experience in the early grades? Is reading achievement different for African American students by gender? What are the impediments to developing as lifelong readers in the early grades?

Educational Implications

African-American students exist within an educational system that reinforces mainstream ideas and values and creates a disconnect with African-American students (Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, & Bonous-Hammarth, 2000). The larger educational system must begin to shape teaching techniques and philosophies that incorporate diversity and cultural awareness. In addition, the use of multiple communication and culture centered learning strategies aid in promoting a multicultural philosophy that others can model into their personal philosophies (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001). Professional development of teachers and teacher training needs to take place in order to facilitate the inclusion of culturally responsive techniques to aid in modifying and creating a curriculum that is reflective of the diverse student populations they service (Grant & Grant, 1986).

Additionally, educational systems should develop programming that fosters parental involvement due to the positive influence this involvement has on school-related student outcomes (Hill & Taylor, 2007). Historically parental involvement consisted of volunteering, at-home academic activities, parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher association involvement, and school activity involvement. Parent involvement in the early grades has been correlated with early success with regards to academic, language skills, and social competence (Grolnick & Slowiaczeck, 1994; Hill & Craft, 2003). Parent-school partnerships allow both to mutually agree on student expectations in respect to behavior and academic achievement, ensuring this is communicated throughout the child's multiple environments (Hill & Taylor, 2007). Consist messages communicated to children ensures reduction in behavioral issues and increases in academic achievement, as well as clear understanding of student expectations for schools, parents, and students. Parental involvement brings an added benefit of fostering relationship and support building. Parents are equipped with needed skills and information that assists them in making important decisions regarding their children (Hill & Taylor, 2007).

Conclusion

To overcome these challenges, researchers may want to consider focusing on research partnerships with local schools and other local area educational agencies to study and strengthen the early language skills of African-American children. Additionally, it may prove helpful to focus on programs such as Early Start, Even Start, and Head Start in the early preschool years when children acquire language skills. This avenue could prove to be useful in providing education and information for early caregivers to strengthen the early language skills of African-American children. Educators must pose critical questions such as: (a) what is incomplete about the existing body of research as it concerns African-American literacy development? and (b) what is unsatisfactory about the existing research practices as they concern African-American literacy development?

References

Allen, W., Epps, E., Gullory, E., Suh, S., & Bonous-Hammarth. (2000). The black academic: Facutly status among African Americans in U.S. higher education. *The Journal of Negro Education, 69(1/2), 112-127.*

Asante, M. K. (1991). The Afrocentric idea in education. *The Journal of Negro Education, 60*(2), 170–180.

Asante, M. K. (1988). *Afrocentricity*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Bondy, E., & Ross, D. (1998). Confronting myths about teaching Black children: A challenge for teacher educators. *Teacher Education and Special Education,* 21, 241-254.

Boutte, G. S., Keepler, D. L., Tyler, V. S., & Terry, B. (1992). Effective techniques for involving "difficult" parents. *National Association for the Education of Young Children,* 19–22.

Britto, P. R., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Griffin, T. M. (2006). Maternal reading and teaching patterns: Associations with school readiness in low-income African American families. *Reading Research Quarterly, 41*, 68-89.

Champion, T. B. (2003). *Understanding storytelling among African-American children: A journey from Africa to America*. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Charity, A., Scarborough, H., & Griffin, D. (2004). Familiarity with school English in African-American children and its relation to early reading achievement. *Child Development, 75*, 1340–1356.

Coleman, M. (1997). Families and schools: In search of common ground. *Young Children,* 14–21.

Cooper, H. (1998). Synthesizing Research: A Guide for Literature Reviews. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cooper, H., and Ribble, G. (1989) Influences on the Outcome of Literature Searches for Integrative Research Reviews. *Science Communication.* 10: 179-201.

Cooper, H. (1982). *Integrating Research: a guide for literature reviews*. 2nd edition.

Cooper, H. (1982). Scientific guidelines for conducting integrative reviews. *Review of Educational Research,* (52), (2), 291-302.

Craig, H. J., Conner, C. M., & Washington, J. A. (2003). Early positive predictors of later reading comprehension for African-American students: A preliminary investigation. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 34*, 31–43.

Champion, T. B. (2003). *Understanding storytelling among African-American   children: A journey from Africa to America*. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Davidson, M., & Foster-Johnson, L. (2001). Mentoring in the preparation of graduate researchers of color. *Review of Educational Research, 71(4),* 549-574.

DeCastro-Ambrosetti, D. (2003). Sociolinguistic foundations to African centered pedagogy: A literature review. *The High School Journal, 86*, 31-48.

Delpit, L. (2004). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom (updated edition)*. New York: New Press.

Delpit, L.D. (1992). Acquisition of literate discourse: Bowing before the master? *Theory into practice, 31*, 296-302.

Dillard, J. (1973). *Black English: Its history and usage in the United States*. New York: Random House.

Edwards, P. (2004). *Children's literacy development: making it happen through school,*

family, and community involvement. New York: Pearson.

Edwards, P. (1992). Involving parents in building reading instruction for African-
    American children. *Theory into Practice, 31*, 350–359.

Epstein, J. L. (2001). Introduction to the special section. New directions for school,
    family, and community partnerships in middle and high schools. *NASSP Bulletin,
    85*, 3–47.

Erickson, F. (1987). Transformation and school success: The politics and culture of
    Educational Achievement. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 18*, 335-356.

Farris, S. (1997). 'Don't Go There': Exploring unknown territory in the culturally diverse
    classroom. *Radical Teacher, 51*, 31-35.

Ferguson, A. (2001). *Bad boys: Public schools in the making of black masculinity.*
    Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Foster, M. (1992). Sociolinguistics and the African-American community: implications
    for literacy. *Theory into practice, 31*(4), 303-311.

Fuller, B., Holloway, S. D., & Liang, X. (1996). Family selection of child-care centers:
    The influence of household support, ethnicity, and parental practices. *Child
    Development, 67*, 3320–3337.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New
    York: Teachers College Press.

Grant, C., & Grant, G. (1986). Increasing the educational opportunities of Black students by
    training teachers in multicultural curriculum development. *The Western Journal of Black
    Studies, 10(1),* 29-33.

Grolnick, W.S., & Slowiaczek, M.L., (1994). Parents' involvement in children's schooling: A
    multidimensional conceptualization and motivation model. *Child Development, 65,* 237-
    252.

Hale, J. (2001). Culturally appropriate pedagogy. In W. H. Watkins, J. L. Lewis, & V.
    Chou (Eds.), *Race and Education: The roles of history and society in educating African
    American students* (pp. 173-188). MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Hale, J. (2001). *Learning while black: creating educational excellence for black children*.
    Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Heath, S.B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and
    classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hiebert, E. (1988). The role of literacy experiences in early childhood programs. *The
    Elementary School Journal, 89*, 160–171.

Hill, N. E., & Taylor, L. (2007). Parental school involvement and children's academic
    achievement: Pragmatics and issues. *Child Growth and Development, 14,* 37-40.

Hill, N. E., & Craft, S.A. (2003). Parent-school involvement and school performance: Mediated
    pathways among socioeconomically comparable African-American and Euro-American
    families. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95,* 74-83.

Hunter, P.C. (2012). It's not complicated: *What I know for sure about helping our
    students of color become successful readers*. New York: Scholastic.

Husband, T. (2012). Addressing reading underachievement in African American boys
    through a multi-contextual context. *Reading Horizons, 52*, 1-25.

Irvine, J.J. (2002). *In search of wholeness: African American teachers and their
    culturally specific classroom practices*. New York: Palgrave.

Kalmijn, M., Kraaykamp, G. (1996). Race, cultural capital, and schooling: An analysis of

trends in the United States. *Sociology of Education, 69*, 22-34.

Kingston, P. (2001). The unfulfilled promise of cultural capital theory. *Sociology of Education, 74*, 88-99.

Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city: Studies in the Black English vernacular. Pennsylvania*: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). The power of pedagogy: Does teaching matter? In W. H. Watkins, J.L. Lewis, & V. Chou (Eds.), *Race and Education: The roles of history and society in educating African American students* (pp. 73-84). MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching!: The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into practice, 34*, 159-165.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1992). Reading between the lines and beyond the pages: A culturally relevant approach to literacy teaching. *Theory into Practice, 31*(4), 312–320.

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Lee, C. (2001). Comment: Unpacking culture, teaching, and learning: A response to "the power of pedagogy." In W. H. Watkins, J. L. Lewis, & V. Chou (Eds.), *Race and Education: The roles of history and society in educating African-American students* (pp. 89–97). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Lee, C. (1995). A culturally based cognitive apprenticeship: Teaching African American high school students skills in literary interpretation. *Reading Research Quarterly, 30*, 608-630.

Levine, D. (1994). Instructional approaches and interventions that can improve the academic performance of African American students. *The Journal of Negro Education, 63*, 46-63.

Matthews, J.S., Kizzie, K.T., Rowley, S.J., Cortina, K. (2010). African Americans and boys: understanding the literacy gap, tracing academic trajectories, and evaluating the role of learning-related skills. Journal of Educational Psychology, 102, 757-771.

Morris, V., Taylor, S., Knight, J., & Wasson, R. (1996). Preparing teachers to reach out to families and communities. *Action in Teacher Education, 43*, 10–22.

Paul, D. (2000). *Raising Black children who love reading and writing: A guide from birth through age 6*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Perry, T., Steele, C., & Hilliard, A. (2003). *Young, gifted, and black*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Reid, D. K., & Hresko, W. P. (1980). A developmental study of the relation between oral language and early reading in learning disabled and normally achieving children. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 3*, 54-61.

Roberts, J., Jurgens, J., & Burchinal, M. (2005). The role of home literacy practices in preschool children's language and emergent skills. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 48*, 345–359.

Studer, J. R. (1993). Listen so that parents will speak. *Childhood Education, 70*, 74–77.

Tatum, A. W. (2003). All "degreed" up and nowhere to go: Black males and literacy education. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 46*, 620–623.

Thompson, G. (2004). *Through ebony eyes: What teachers need to know but are afraid to ask about African-American students*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Thompson, G.L., Shamberger, C.T. (2015). The gift that can save lives: teaching Black students to become good readers. *Journal of Research Initiatives, 1*, 1-10.

Toliver-Weddington, G. (1973). The scope of Black English. *Journal of Black Studies, 4*, 107-114.

Vaughn, S., & Klinger, J. K. (1999). Teaching reading comprehension through collaborative strategic reading. *Intervention in School & Clinic, 34*, 284–292.

Walker, E. V. S. (1992). Falling asleep and failure among African-American students: Rethinking assumptions about process teaching. *Theory into Practice,* 31, 321–327.

Warren, S. F., & Yoder, P. J. (1996). Enhancing communication and language development in young children with developmental delays and disorders. *Peabody Journal of Education, 71*, 118–132.

Washington, J. (2001). Early literacy skills in African-American children: Research considerations. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 16*, 213–221.

Washington, J. A., & Craig, H. (1998). Socioeconomic status and gender influences on children's dialectical variations. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 41*, 618–626.

Watkins, W. (2001). Blacks and the curriculum: From accommodation to contestation and beyond. In W. H. Watkins, J. L. Lewis, & V. Chou (Eds.), *Race and education: The roles of history and society in educating African-American students* (pp. 40–60). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

West, C. (1993). *Beyond eurocentrism and multiculturalism: Prophetic thought in postmodern times*: Maine: Common Courage Press.

West, J., Denton, K., & Germino, E. (2000). *America's kindergartners* (NCES 2000-070). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Wilson, A. (1991). *Awakening the natural genius of Black children*. New York, NY: \ Afrikan World Infosystems.

Wofford, J. (1979). Ebonics: a legitimate system of oral communication. *Journal of Black Studies, 9*, 367-382.

Wyatt, T. A. (1995). Language development in African-American English child speech. *Linguistics and Education, 7*, 7–22.

Yan, W. (1999). Successful African-American students: The role of parental involvement. *Journal of Negro Education, 68*, 5–22.

About the Author

Dr. Tiffany A. Flowers is an Assistant Professor of Education at Georgia Perimeter College. She is an Indiana Minority Faculty Fellow, Frederick Douglas Teaching Fellow, and an NCTE Early Career Award Leadership Award Recipient. Her research interests include African American Literacy Development, Literature, Diversity Issues in Education, Traditional Literacy, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Correspondence concerning this manuscript may be e-mailed to tflowers@gpc.edu.