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School Psychologists' Perspectives on School Based Factors
Contributing to the Academic Achievement of African American
Adolescent Males

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SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS' PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL BASED FACTORS
CONTRIBUTING TO THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN ADOLESCENT MALES

BY

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Abstract

The educational status of African American males is a common topic of discussion among educators and policy makers. Statistics pertaining to these students often illustrate poor educational outcomes including retention and dropout prior to earning a high school diploma. Although there are exceptions to these reports of failure, the research is scarce concerning the identification of factors that have assisted African American males in attaining academic success. Of particular interest are the factors or practices within a school's control that have positively impacted student performance. This study examined the views of school psychologists concerning the practices within their schools that coincide with previously researched factors believed to contribute to the academic success of African American males. The perceptions of African American school psychologists were compared to that of Caucasian school psychologists, as well as comparisons based on years of experience. Findings from this study suggested that the mean perceptions of African American and Caucasian school psychologists were similar; both groups reported observing teachers using specific strategies targeted at addressing the needs of African American adolescent males. Further, school psychologists in the field for longer durations were more likely to perceive African American males as having higher school support.

School Psychologists' Perspectives on School Based Factors Contributing to the
Academic Achievement of African American Adolescent Males

African American males are at a higher risk of dropping out of school before receiving a high school diploma and those who remain do so at poor levels of academic performance (e.g., low scores on high-stakes tests and failing grades) (Smith, Schneider, & Ruck, 2005). Thus, post high school education such as college, vocational school, and graduate school falls outside of their scope of attainment (Garibaldi, 2007). According to the 2002 Civil Rights Survey of the U.S. Department of Education, African American males make up 8.7% of the United States school population, while only 46.2% were reported to have graduated with a standard high school diploma in four years compared to the 72.3% of Caucasian males. In addition, African American males [AAMs] experience the highest rates of suspensions, expulsions, grade retention, and special education placement of any other group of students (Garibaldi, 2007). The long term consequences of such occurrences are the negative impact they have on, not only the individuals themselves, but also on the future of African-Americans as a whole. Future generations may be more vulnerable to poor educational outcomes than those whose predecessors experienced academic success (Smith et al., 2005; Stayhorn, 2009; Yeakey, 2006). Therefore, bridging the achievement gap that exists among AAMs and other racial groups should be one of the top priorities of politicians, policy makers, and educators (Garibaldi, 2007).

A large proportion of the statistics and studies reporting the state of AAMs educational outcomes have left key educational stakeholders in search of solutions to remediate such occurrences (e.g., Dulaney, Baenen, Banks, Yaman, & Burch, 2000;

Cross & Slater, 2000; Maryland State Department of Education, 2006; Howard, 2008). However, little research has been done to identify specific components that contribute to the success of these students. Specifically, the research is scarce concerning the identification of factors within the school's control that have assisted AAMs in attaining academic success (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006; Noguera, 2003).

Theoretical Explanations

The general strain theory and the social learning theory offer explanations as to the personality, behavior, and learning styles of many African American males (Denzine, 2008; Jang & Lyons, 2006). In efforts to accurately identify the contributing success factors and effectively implement methods based on these factors, it is essential to understand their theoretical foundation. The social theory emphasizes the role social interactions have on human behavior suggesting that individuals can learn by observing someone else being reinforced, either positively or negatively, for a behavior without requiring firsthand experiences (Denzine, 2008). This theory also suggests that the relevancy of the information being taught plays an important role in whether or not an individual learns (Denzine, 2008).

In addition to the emphasis placed on the social aspect of individual learning, Bandura expanded this theory to include self-efficacy, suggesting that learning is not only depended on social interactions, modeling, and vicarious learning experiences, but through one's belief in their own ability to carry out a certain behavior (Bandura, 1977; 1982). Many African American males have limited exposure to positive male models, particularly those raised by single mothers. According to the social learning theory,

humans innately seek models within their environment of whom they can emulate or learn vicariously. Models present within their environment that appear to be successful, as defined by monetary wealth and material possessions, often are living a lifestyle where “fast money” by any means is the path of choice (Gavazzi, 2011).

The strain theory defines strain as any stressor that causes inner or outer negative emotions (Jang & Lyons, 2006). According to Jang and Lyons (2006), African Americans face marked levels of stress due to racism, low socioeconomic statuses, increased health issues, and victimization. The impact of slavery and its aftermath of overt and covert racism, prejudice, and discrimination is said to increase the likelihood that African Americans will exhibit external behaviors such as accusing others to be the cause of problems and also partake in externalizing coping behaviors (i.e., drug use and/or violence) (Jang & Lyons, 2006). Similar to the social component of the social learning theory that emphasizes the impact that social environments have on the behavior and educational performance of AAAMs, the social learning theory also poses a supposition that highlights social influences on individual behavior. In the case of the African American experience, the strain theory and social learning theory appear to operate in circular manner, where one theory fuels the next. In many instances, the African American experience has been affected by negative societal factors (e.g., racism, poverty, single parent households, etc.) that have impacted generation after generation and the responses to such traumatic experiences may have been modeled by one generation and then repeated by the next.

Stride and Struggle

In order to understand the present state of AAAM educational status, one must keep in mind the strain theory's emphasis on the increased levels of stress due to historical and present happenings, as well as, social learning theory's emphasis on the impact that environmental models have on individual performance. Though AAAM who experience academic success at any period throughout their education possess protective factors their future success is uncertain because both high achieving and low achieving groups face similar risk factors (e.g., similar family or environmental backgrounds) (Mayer, 2008). The rate of graduation among African American students who attend 4-year colleges and universities is 20% lower than Caucasian and the lowest college graduation rates of any ethnic group (Cokley & Moore, 2007). Research (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Cokley & Moore, 2007; Williams, Davis, Cribbs, Saunders, & Williams, 2002) attributes such variance to the different educational experiences of the two genders. African American males receive harsher treatment for misbehaviors at school, are less likely to receive assistance and be called on, and are least likely to be included in activities by both peers and teachers, than any other race and/or gender (Harper, 2006). Further, African American adolescent males' reactions to such negative school experiences are believed to be more rash and are self-harming (e.g., acting "hard", "thuggish", or disinterested) (Harper, 2006).

According to the *Nation's Report Card*, efforts in closing the achievement gap among races have rendered some success, particularly in narrowing the reading performance gap between African American and Caucasian fourth grade students (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2010). Closer analysis of these

improvements reveals, however, another gap—gender. The academic performance of African American female students surpasses that of their African American male counterparts, resulting in a gap that is most evident beginning in middle school (Mickelson & Greene, 2006). Several factors were suggested by Williams et al. (2002) who found that African American female adolescents have greater intentions to complete school, less school suspensions, and higher GPAs than males. Possible explanations as to these findings are that (a) African American female and male adolescents from the same urban communities may have different experiences within school settings or (b) urban street culture may have greater influence on males than it does on females (i.e., more sensitive to neighborhood effects).

For nearly half a century, more African American women have been enrolling in and graduating from college than African American men (Cockley & Moore, 2007). There has been an overall increase in the enrollment of African-Americans in college; however, the increase is mostly due to African-American women. Of those enrolling in college, only 38% of them graduate (Cockley & Moore, 2007). When looking at the indicators relating to post high school educational achievement for African American and Caucasian students, Thompson, Gorin, Obeidat, and Chen (2006) found that gender was the strongest indicator of educational attainment.

Current research trends suggested that factors contributing to the high incidence of poor educational outcomes among African American males included: dysfunctional family structure, low socioeconomic status, limited perception of opportunities open to them, poor role models, and a self-fulfilling prophecy that results from the low expectations of society (Martin, Martin, Gibson, & Wilkins, 2007). It is a common

misconception that African American males have low educational expectations of themselves, in fact, the opposite is true, the majority of them expect to graduate high school (Garibaldi, 2007). Ninety-five percent of the over 2,250 African American males surveyed in the New Orleans school district expected to graduate, while 40% believed that their teachers did not set high enough goals for them; and 60% suggested that their teachers should challenge them more (Garibaldi, 2007).

Despite the fact that African American females graduate high school and pursue and complete education at a higher rate than African American males, African American males, on average, outperform them on the ACT and SAT (Garibaldi, 2007). The implication of this finding is that African American males are capable of meeting college demands as evidenced by performance on these predictor measures. However, media and statistical reports commonly reiterate poor academic performance among African American males, which encourages a victim role and robs them of the opportunity to define themselves when up against the odds (Garibaldi, 2007). Further, Garibaldi explained these reports often exacerbate the academic issues among African American males by promoting a hopeless attitude and an ideal environment to foster a self-fulfilling prophecy fueled by negative reports. With so much focus on the problem areas, little attention is given to the academic strides and triumphs of the African American male (Garibaldi, 2007).

The literature describes African American males in terms of their academic failures, which is a narrow depiction because not all African American males fit this mold (Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Instead of focusing on failures, more attention should be paid to those who are academically successful despite obstacles such as an enslaved

history and institutional racism, which may serve to provide better educational experiences for all youth (Matthews & Williams, 2007). The majority of research on the academic performance of adolescent African-American males focuses on matters related to failure citing such factors as dropout rate and underachievement as opposed the experiences of high achieving students (Cross & Slater, 2000; Garibaldi, 2007; Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003). This process of emphasizing the negative and ignoring the positive creates an incomplete picture of the African American male. Further, such information fails to provide educators with the necessary tools (e.g., interventions or strategies) to close the gap that exists between African American students, specifically African American males and their Caucasian and other minority counterparts (Matthews & Williams, 2007).

The enormous strides towards equality and opportunity for all that have taken place in American society are often overshadowed by the ever-present overt and covert existence of institutional racism (e.g., social, economic, and political) and structural deficits (e.g., family, neighborhood, and school) that continue to negatively impact African Americans, especially males (Swanson et al., 2003). In addition to the negative factors impacting the African American male, for those that do overcome these negative influences, their accomplishments are seldom celebrated. Thus, these individuals are denied a sense of accomplishment and other African American males are left without models of accomplishment and success (Swanson et al., 2003).

Academic Interruptions

Due to the cross-cultural and cross-gender similarities that occur in human development, research tends to use the predominant culture and gender developmental

patterns as the norm. However, Swanson et al. (2003) purported that differences exist in the “social ecology and normal developmental processes” of African American males (p. 614). Cognitive development occurs during the early years of a child’s life and is greatly impacted by the environment. The brain’s development during this time correlates with future academic performance; thus, the home environment is instrumental in a child’s future success. A large proportion of African American adolescents grew up in single parent, low socioeconomic households (Swanson et al., 2003). According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s (2011), report on *America’s Families and Living Arrangements*, approximately 38 percent of African American children grow up in two parent households. The role of the father is as essential as the role of the mother in academic performance. Further, socioeconomic status has a substantial impact on educational attainment. In concert, these factors have implications of negatively impacting future academic outcomes (Swanson et al., 2003) Moreover, adolescence is one the “most confusing and vulnerable periods of development experienced by human beings of the tremendous physical, cognitive, physiological and social change” that takes place (p. 617).

Despite the existence of literature that focuses on the “social pathology” of African American males (Littrell & Beck, 2000; Simons, Simons, Conger, & Brody, 2004), Stinson (2008) reported that as a Caucasian teacher at a predominately African American high school, he discovered that African American students performed as well as or better than Caucasian students academically, particularly in math. In spite of this, high performing, gifted African American students are commonly in classes with few, if any, peers who share their same racial identities. Therefore, they have few interactions

with other high achieving African Americans (Stinson, 2008). As a result, this may help to perpetuate the stereotype that African Americans are not as smart as Caucasian.

Further this may also serve to limit opportunities of social interactions among African American students and deter high achievements due to racial isolation (Matthews & Williams, 2007). Because of this racial isolation, there is a deficit in the presence of academically successful role models at school and within the community for African American males to emulate. Yet, some high achieving students change their view of negative role models from individuals they desire to become to examples of individuals not to emulate (Thompson & Lewis, 2005).

Students who have the potential to excel in academics often lose sight of this aim and their focus is redirected to more popular, socially expected and accepted focuses (e.g., being a rapper, athlete, gangster, etc.) (Mello & Swanson, 2007). A large number of African American males are vulnerable to the negative influences of the stereotypical role of the African American man, represented as a promiscuous, “dead beat” involved in criminal activity (Mello & Swanson, 2007). This susceptibility exists not only because of societal pressures and expectations, but also due to absent or uninvolved parents. These young men find role models in individuals who seem to be successful according to popular culture’s standards (e.g., appearance of “having it all”—money, women, clothes, cars, etc.) (Mello & Swanson, 2007).

These negative models of success may be involved in “easy money” schemes or criminal activities that include drugs and theft, resulting in “run-ins” with the legal system. They give young African American males false love and care that serves to feed the need of the absentee father or mother. This works to the “detriment of student

achievement” because students “embrace this image and regard it as positive” (Perrakis, 2008, p.15). However, Cunningham, Corprew, and Becker (2009) found that “students with high academic future expectations are less vulnerable to the influences of negative friends” (p.289). In fact, the authors explain that high future expectations, in general, foster an individual’s ability to overcome adverse experiences and high future expectations specific to academics are directly linked to improved school outcomes.

The athleticism of African American males is highlighted in popular culture, which inspires many youth to pursue this field because they have been taught to believe their talents and abilities exist in the sports arena (Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). While statistics and reports on the educational outcomes of African Americans, especially males, reflect a poor prognosis (Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). The result is that less emphasis is placed on excelling academically than on athleticism, which may play a role in the academic failures of African American males. They are given minimal opportunity to realize their potential in the academic arena and commonly receive coaching, support, and attention when dedicated to athletic achievement rather than academic achievement (Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006).

The perceived benefits (e.g., fame, economic advancement, travel opportunity/escape, “cool” persona, etc.) of excelling in sports may also overshadow academic pursuit. Moreover, the competitive nature of sports matches the competitive nature of males. With this factor in mind, a competitive approach applied to the classroom may serve to improve the participation and performance of African American males (Perrakis, 2008). Being a part of a competitive high-achieving group of same race

peers encourages and reminds African American males that an achieving African American is not an oxymoron (Stinson, 2008).

The available perspectives addressing factors within the student that impact their educational approach include sociological perspectives (“cool pose” or acting cool) and anthropological perspectives (the cultural-ecological notion of “oppositional identity”) (Cockley & Moore, 2007, p.171). To expand current literature that has minimally addressed the psychological and cultural factors that impact the academic outcomes of African American male students, Cokley and Moore (2007) proposed the perspective of psychological disengagement, evidenced through academic disidentification, as an explanation of the underachievement of African American male students. Psychological disengagement is believed to occur when an individual detaches their self-esteem from an outcome, so regardless of whether the outcome is positive or negative, self-esteem is not affected.

The social learning theory may be in effect when looking at the educational outcomes of African American males. This theory explains that behavior is reinforced socially through the direct teaching or observation of others (e.g., exposure to models, verbal discussions, and discipline moments). Consequently, peers and relatives who graduate from high school serve as reinforcements for students to stay in school, just as peers and relatives who do poorly or minimize the importance of education reinforce negative educational approaches (Williams et al., 2002).

The poor academic achievement of males is often cited as one of the major issues in education (Awad, 2007; Cross & Slater, 2000; Garibaldi, 2007; Martin et al., 2007; Matthews & Williams, 2007; Noguera, 2003). However, African American males

dedicate the majority of their efforts to overcoming the negative stereotypes and limits placed on them by society (Matthew & Williams, 2007). The perpetuation of the stereotypical African American male, for example, as a “jewelry-donned, baggy-clothed, player ‘thug’ who projected a nonchalant attitude toward school and academics” (Stinson, 2008, p. 991) can be attributed to its ever-present existence in the media and on television. With limited promotion of images of positive African American males, many people buy into this constructed figure of an African American male.

Cracks in the Infrastructure

Many theorists ascribe the existing chasm between African American students and students of other races (e.g., Caucasian, Asians, etc.) to the institutional racist infrastructure of the educational system (Mayer, 2008; Mickelson & Heath, 1999; Thompson & Lewis, 2005). School systems throughout the United States are structured in a manner that educates students according to their ability in primary grades and then according to academic tracking (e.g., nonacademic, low-achieving, high-achieving, college preparatory, etc.), based on their past achievement, in secondary grades. This system is believed to help students perform according to their highest academic potential since it is differentiated according to what they know and are capable of doing.

In practice, however, students who have limited formal and informal educational experiences are denied access to the information that will allow them to progress to a level that is equal to the academically advantaged (Mickleson & Heath, 1999). Furthermore, African American males who attend predominately African American elementary schools are assigned to lower educational tracks; thus, tracking and ability placement practices indirectly segregate students by race and negatively impact academic

achievement (Mickleson & Heath, 1999). Such practices perpetuate the achievement gap and counter the purpose of school desegregation (Mickleson & Heath, 1999).

African American males do well in reading and math when they are placed in advanced academic tracks and perform better in math when they attend schools with demanding academic climates (Mickelson & Greene, 2006). The implication of these findings is that more advanced classes and curriculum provide students with deeper and additional learning opportunities than the general education classrooms. Generally, teachers who have more experience teach advanced classes and the lessons they teach are more in-depth and require a deeper thought process. African American males, however, are commonly placed in lower educational tracks (e.g., special education or general education as opposed to college-prep or International Baccalaureate) and consequently are not exposed to enriched educational experiences (Mayer, 2008).

Within the educational system, African American males consistently face a myriad of negative impediments such as ridicule, disparate education, negative labels, erroneous classifications, and negative stereotypes (Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Their needs and achievements are frequently de-emphasized while their problems are highlighted (Thompson & Lewis, 2005). This educational structure maintains dominant culture ideological supremacy and contributes to the overall poor educational outcomes of African American males. This state of existence is internalized and validated within the African American community through the acceptance and maintenance of harmful views (e.g., unintelligent, uneducated, lazy, etc.). When any member of the community overcomes these ideologies, they face “criticism, attacks, or have unrealistic expectations” imposed on them (Harper, 2006, p. 338).

Teachers commonly have low academic expectations of their African American male students and have limited involvement in their lives, which may be reinforcing negative educational outcomes (Swanson et al., 2003). This reinforcement occurs if African American males “do not perceive the school environment as supportive to their individual goals and development they may elect to disregard school as a place to receive positive reinforcement for academic success” (Swanson et al., 2003, p.625). As African American males negotiate and find their positions in the world of academics, they may also attribute academic success to “acting Caucasian” since expectations of their academic achievement are low. Instead of striving to be academically successful, they seek to find their own identities within this world by believing themselves to be self-sufficient and self-educated, without the need to meet “Caucasian” academic expectations (Cockley & Moore, 2007).

Messages that depict African Americans as incapable and unintelligent have negative impacts on the academic interest of these adolescents because it removes hope and makes success unattainable (Neblett et al., 2006). Contrarily, Neblett et al. (2006) suggested that messages that depict African Americans as being as capable as individuals of other races levels the playing field and sparks curiosity in the academic arena. In addition to “low teacher expectations” and negative “societal messages” that may be internalized by many African American males and causes them to devalue educational achievement, African American adolescent males face being ostracized by their same race peers when they succeed academically (Harper, 2006, p. 338).

As a result of negative experiences, African American males may experience the effects explained by the strain theory, which suggests that when an individual realizes

that certain privileges in society are attainable for others but not them, a strain occurs (Ellis, as cited in Perrakis, 2008). In efforts to prevent this strain and reject acceptance of an inferior state of existence, some African American males respond by devaluing societal standards and ideals (Matthew & Williams, 2007). Because being Caucasian is associated with being dominant over the African American race, the label of “acting Caucasian” is given to African American students who dominate academically.

In keeping with the strain theory, as a result, some African American males begin working in opposition of the dominant culture. There are two outcomes that occur as a result of the “acting Caucasian” phenomenon; both have the underlying function of resisting. African American students will either resist by “refusing to comply with assignments” and failing or by “defying teachers’ low expectations and becoming academically successful” (Matthews & Williams, 2007, p.197).

A critical determinant of students’ academic achievement is their performance on high-stakes, standardized tests. These test scores determine promotion, placement, graduation, and college admission. Other factors, not accounted for by ability level or academic performance, that may influence educational outcomes, include: racial identity, academic self-concept, and self-esteem. Some African American students assume a bicultural posture as a solution, alternating between the assimilation into Caucasian culture and maintaining their own racial identity, as necessary (Perrakis, 2008). The results of studies on high racial identity of African American students have yielded both positive and negative effects on academic achievement. Some researchers (Matthew & Williams, 2007) have found that students who become “raceless” are able to excel

academically, while other researchers (i.e., Awad, 2007) found that high levels of racial identity serve to strengthen and affirm academic achievement.

Say it Loud, I'm African American and I'm Proud

African American adolescents rise to the occasion when they are in knowledge of existing racial barriers while still believing in their own abilities (Neblett et al., 2006). However, messages of racial pride may negatively impact the academic performance of African American adolescents and educators and parents should not assume that messages of racial pride will remediate the achievement gap issue. Experiences of racism and discrimination negatively impact students' educational experiences since they serve to diminish their interest in academics and general learning experiences. When African American adolescents are involved in programs or activities that incorporate African American culture, they are buffered from the negative impact of racial discriminatory experiences (Neblett et al., 2006)

Racial-ethnic identity (i.e., an individual's connectedness to their ethnicity and race) is said to play an essential role in the academic achievement of minority males (Neblett et al., 2006). African-American, adolescent males with darker skin tones exhibited higher academic performance and had stronger beliefs in their academic ability than African-American males who had lighter skin complexions (Oyserman, Brickman, Bybee, & Celious, 2006). The implication is that African American males of darker skin tones are more likely to have stronger racial-ethnic identities because having darker skin tone is believed to denote racial purity, while individuals with lighter skin tones may be of multiracial backgrounds (Oyserman et al., 2006).

African Americans who have “Eurocentric orientations” (e.g., deny connections to African American culture and assimilate into Caucasian culture) exhibit lower levels of academic achievement and lower self-esteem than those who have a proactive or internalized “Afrocentric orientation” (e.g., maintain cultural beliefs, values, and practices (Swanson et al. 2003). In contrast, Awad (2007) found that individuals who are familiar with and have interactions with different cultures and races performed better on standardized assessments than those that do not. African American males who desire to excel academically must balance their positions within the African American community and the desire for recognition within the dominant society. They also face the challenge of incorporating the social, racial, and academic aspects of their lives.

Grade point average and performance on the verbal section of standardized tests are most affected by academic self-concept (Awad, 2007). The implication of this finding is that students who have positive expectations of their academic ability perform better than those who do not. Academic self-concept refers to an individual’s belief about his or her own levels of academic skill and performance. High academic self-concept has been linked to high academic achievement (Awad, 2007). Though racial identity may not have a direct influence on academic achievement, it may directly impact academic self-concept.

An individual’s self-worth, as determined by positive self-talk, is linked to higher academic engagement and interest. Experiences of academic failure induce feelings of disinterest about that specific area (Neblett et al., 2006). Students may implement this self-preservation strategy in the area of academic achievement, which is called academic disidentification. Positive achievement outcomes (e.g., good grades and honor roll) are

correlated with academic identification since students who identify with academics have high self-esteem when they are academically successful. Nevertheless, the opposite is also true; self-esteem is negatively impacted when students perform poorly (Neblett et al., 2006).

To prevent the possibility of academic disidentification, students need to have experiences of success more often than that of failure. In efforts to identify factors reported to contribute to academic success, Stinson (2008) interviewed four African American men in their early 20s concerning their academic success, particularly in the area of mathematics when they were in elementary and secondary school. The factors that participants asserted contributed to their academic success were:

- (a) Observing or knowing family or community members who had benefited from formal education by achieving financial and societal success (provided proof that education pays), (b) experiencing encouraging and forceful family or community members who made expectations of academic (and mathematics) success explicit (frequent reminders of the importance of education), (c) encountering caring and committed teachers and school personnel who established high academic expectations for students in general and developed relationships with students that reached beyond the school and academics (contact with caring and committed educators), and (d) associating with high-achieving peer-group members who had similar goals and interests (p. 989).

African American males were found to be successful in mathematics partly due to a thorough understanding of its significance because knowing its importance inspired

participants to want to do well (Stinson, 2008). Since the mathematic classes were challenging, they reported having no choice other than to rise to the occasion. Realizing that their race was not a determining factor in learning mathematics motivated them to achieve. Further, knowledge of the historical and present struggles that the African American male faces and realization that most systems include innate prejudice, discriminatory practices, and institutional racism, played a positive role in affecting self-motivation and communal purpose amongst participants (Stinson, 2008).

Making Sense out of the African American Dollar

Wealth includes an individual's assets such as savings and homeownership. It delves deeper than socioeconomic status since it reflects an individual's overall security, not just economically, but socially, educationally, medically, and emotionally. Pre-slavery restrictions and post-slavery tactics to prevent wealth among African American s have successfully maintained the impoverished state of many African American people. This is evident in the fact that "in 1865 African Americans owned .5% of the total wealth of the United States and by 1990 it had rose to only 1%." (Easton-Brooks & Davis, 2007, p. 531).

Wealth impacts educational opportunity, just as education impacts wealth. The poor financial status of a large proportion of African American adolescent males contributes to the lack of educational and career opportunities available to them. By emphasizing academic success and focusing on college enrollment, African American males may begin to internalize its importance and link to long-term financial security and status (Matthews & Williams, 2007). African American adolescents who perform higher academically are well aware of the economic struggles of their race and its link to the

historical denial of educational opportunities. Consequently, the recognition of educational success and economic advancement are motivating forces in high academic attainment (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008).

Some studies have revealed socioeconomic status as an explanation to the educational outcome differences among races and ethnicities (Mello & Swanson, 2007; Thompson et al., 2006). However, others reveal no significant impact and in one case that compared low and high SES African American students, the low SES students had higher test scores (Easton-Brooks & Davis, 2007). When taking socioeconomic status into account, African American males from middle class homes still perform below what is expected based on income level. While African American males in primary and secondary schools (i.e., K-12) only make up 8.6% of the U.S. educational system, they account for 60% of imprisoned youth (Mickelson & Greene, 2006). The implications of this statistic include: decreased opportunities for educational experiences and a high propensity to lifelong crime and poverty (Mickelson & Greene, 2006).

The predominance of African American students as “at-risk” and underachieving is “related to the historical denial of resources (e.g., social, intellectual, and financial capital) as a legacy of slavery, Jim Crow policies, and more subtle institutional racism” (Easton-Brooks & Davis, 2007, p. 530). The differences between the financial statuses of African Americans and Caucasians includes: African Americans earn an average salary \$3,000 less than Caucasians, African Americans only have 12% of the wealth of Caucasians, and 52% of African Americans live below poverty compared to 26% of Caucasians (Easton-Brooks & Davis, 2007).

Latino and African American high school students from low socioeconomic backgrounds were surveyed to determine their perception of personal academic confidence, motivation to attend school, perceived family support, connections with teachers and peers, and exposure to violence (Solberg et al., 2007). The researchers found that individual (e.g., “self-efficacy, flexible coping strategies, and a sense of autonomy and responsibility”) and relational (e.g., “presence of at least one caring adult, stable and consistent care, and structure and supervision”) protective factors contribute to retention and academic achievement among these students (p. 313).

African American males integrate both European and African standards of masculinity into their life. Although their ethnic backgrounds can be traced back to African ancestry, their involuntary and gruesome relocation to the Americas required the removal of their native ideals and the marginal replacement of European ones. African American males are often considered “at-risk” (Matthews & Williams, 2007). Therefore, schools and educators must take responsibility for their role in promoting and assisting in their success, because “in reality, schools and society are “at-risk” of not realizing their [African American males] potential” (Matthews & Williams, 2007, p. 197). Swanson et al. (2003) reported that African American males are academically successful in primary grades, but their achievement plummets around fourth grade (i.e., 9 years of age). This decline in academic performance may be explained by the greater challenges they experience during adolescence because of additional stressors such as “negative stereotypes, scarcity of positive role models, lack of culturally competent instruction and direction, and problems associated with low socioeconomic status and high-risk neighborhoods” (Swanson et al., 2003, p. 625).

The ecological environments of African Americans differ from other races and ethnicities due to their experiences of racism and prejudice (Chavous et al., 2008). An individual's adolescent years often consist of self-discovery, self-consciousness, and a highlighted concern with others perception of them that may cause them to be more sensitive to racial oppression and racially based prejudice. Although they have matured to a level of sensitivity and identification, their ability to cope and function when facing these situations is still developing. Within the school setting, African-American students may have experiences with individuals who are prejudice and whose views have been shaped and supported by racial stereotypes and media images of African-American youth. In addition, many educators may not have adequate training in instructing multicultural populations (Chavous et al., 2008).

Some educators and researchers attribute the lack of academic achievement and the dismal life experiences of a large number of African Americans to their insufficient work ethic and irresponsibility. This viewpoint ignores the institutional obstacles and disadvantageous realities that they face and must overcome (Matthews & Williams, 2007). Other explanations of why African American male students are less likely than students of other races to excel academically include deficit models and cultural-ecological perspectives. Deficit models purport that deficits exist within these students due to genetics or life circumstances that negatively impact their ability to learn and succeed academically (Matthews & Williams, 2007).

The cultural-ecological perspective suggests that students are underachieving due to the "cultural contexts" in which they operate (Smith et al., 2005). Maton, Hrabowski, and Greif (1998), suggested other forces that play a role in the high incidence of

underachievement among African American males including, “ negative peer attitudes to achievement, difficult neighborhoods, and social forces such as stereotypes and racism...they undercut motivation, decrease opportunity, and provide constant psychological and social stressors...” (p.643).

Popular explanations as to the reason behind the academic struggles of African American males take precedence over more probable explanations and serve to limit possible solutions. These explanations commonly emphasize deficits within the African American male or within their culture. Focusing on deficits minimizes their broad backgrounds and experiences; and attempts to diagnose the problem as a single issue that can be remediated with a generic solution, while ignoring the actual needs of the student and structural deficits (Garibaldi, 2007). Further, it results in quick fix solutions that place emphasis on the individual and not the system as a whole (e.g., pedagogy and policy) (Garibaldi, 2007).

Intervention Implications

Statistics are necessary in order to create interventions or programs to remediate these issues; however, there is also a need for solutions. School-based leadership teams (i.e., teachers, administrators, school psychologists, guidance counselors, social workers, etc.) must take the next step and move from discourse to design by problem solving. The process of problem solving requires the following steps: “a) identify and articulate the known problem; b) identify and assess constraints which act on potential solution paths; c) design a model; d) implement, monitor, and validate the design” (Garibaldi, 2007, p. 326).

The most commonly proposed solutions are mentoring programs, whose aims are to assist students in conforming to and meeting societal or school expectations. These programs are designed to address issues within the student, but fail to “question or challenge the structures” (Garibaldi, 2007, p. 192). Therefore, a more inclusive explanation of the academic shortcomings of many AAAM might involve taking an ecological approach that considers the environment, curriculum, instruction, and the student or various interactions amongst them. Analysis of these areas will expand possible solutions aimed at improving the educational outcomes of African American adolescent males (Garibaldi, 2007).

A great deal of the research on the academic performance of adolescent African-American males focuses on factors related to failure like dropout rate and underachievement as opposed high achieving students. However, such widespread studies have not been successful in providing educators with the necessary information (e.g., strategies) to close the gap that exists between African American males and their Caucasian and other minority counterparts. According to Matthews and Williams (2007), school-based initiatives designed to improve the educational status of African American males

“must rest on the following propositions: (a) reject the deficit language of helplessness and despair popularly ascribed to African American men; (b) orient African American men to critically challenge and overcome structural barriers in school and society; (c) feature a culturally centered, multidimensional notion of masculinity centered on the following ideals: community leadership, economic viability, family responsibility, personal accountability, interconnectedness with

spiritual direction, and interconnectedness among men; (d) multidimensional constructs on African American masculinity and structural explanations rather than building from popular notions” (Matthews & Williams, 2007, p. 195).

Educators and student support staff must seek to control what is within their ability to control. High future expectations builds resiliency and provides students with the ability to overcome adverse experiences. School personnel have no control over the home environments or negative influences (e.g., negative friends, violence or crime within community, etc.) outside of school; however, they can impact student’s efficacy and future academic expectations by providing support and educational environments that promote positive outcomes (Cunningham, Corprew, & Becker, 2009). It is crucial for educators to try a variety of different strategies and interventions to find possible solutions. Teachers and student service professionals (e.g., school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, guidance counselors, social workers, etc.) must join forces and combine creativity in search of plausible solutions to support the educational success of African American males.

The cognitive functioning of adolescents has developed to a level where they are capable of looking to the future as opposed to the here and now vantage point of younger children. During this stage of development “they begin to perceive, interpret, and plan their futures with more detail” (Cunningham et al., 2009, p. 289). This future oriented mindset encourages positive attitudes, which in return promote positive behaviors toward goal attainment. The implications of such findings suggest that educators can positively impact students’ academic performance by assisting them in the development of high academic future expectations. If educators hold high expectations for student

achievement and instill such expectations in their students, the outcome of such high future academic expectations will have that much more impact on student performance.

Adolescents' self-concepts are often shaped by their academic performance, which in return impact their imagined possibilities. Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2006) refer to an individual's self-concept and future possibility as possible selves (PS). Positive PSs are defined as goals and negative PSs are defined as fears. They purport that students who have a balance of both positive PSs and negative PSs, are successful at self-regulating the academically relevant aspects of their lives (e.g., "set my alarm"; "go to class even if my friends skip" (p. 189). This success occurs because positive PSs set the bar for what the individual hopes to attain and negative PSs reveal what should be avoided.

Moreover, Oyserman et al. (2006) theorized that the development and maintenance of school related PSs are dependent on how they relate to social identities like racial-ethnic identity, how feasible the student believes attaining the PS is, and the social arena in which strategies to attain PSs are fostered and supported (e.g., socioeconomic status of home environment, level of educational emphasis, level of support, etc.). In order to be adequately prepared for high school, adolescents need to possess PSs that will help them maneuver through the halls of high school that require self-advocating and independence in order to succeed (e.g., attendance, engagement, studying, etc.) (Oyserman et al.). An intervention that includes school-related PSs or academic possible selves (APSS) within a clear and relevant context, adult models of successful PSs (e.g., pictorial representations of what adult success looks like), examples of positive and negative PSs, strategies to attain PSs, and application of these strategies through school related examples (e.g.,

academic issues, reaching high school graduation, etc.) was found to be successful in increasing APSs and self-regulatory behavior. Thus, thoughts about improving academic outcomes lead to behaviors that actually improved academic performance (e.g., “going to school rather than skipping, behaving and participating in class, and spending time on homework”) (p. 201).

Teachers should therefore provide students with opportunities for success so that students can see that they are capable of achieving and will be motivated to continue pursuing success. Students need to be highly confident in their abilities to achieve academically and public recognition of their academic success raises students’ confidence, both academically and overall. Consequently, students will have a desire to attain continued success (Thompson & Lewis, 2005). The notion of future expectations having a positive impact on current academic performance was expanded by Mello and Swanson (2007) who purposed that intervention include the identification of “positive life goals that focus on process, rather than outcome, of goal attainment” (p. 164). They suggested that students should explicitly map out the route that leads to the attainment of their future aspirations and the role that education plays in reaching their goals. Further, interventions should include a comparison of the students’ present behavior and behaviors necessary to attain goals.

In efforts to counteract oppositional and counterproductive behaviors, Matthew and Williams (2007) researched factors that facilitated the academic success of African American males. They proposed that schools include courses that focus on teaching students factors that contribute to academic success. The researchers also suggested that educators “focus on helping academically talented students develop healthy racial

identities and affirming relationships with their same-race peers” (p.340). In addition, intervention should incorporate African American history and social activities to “increase social knowledge and self-esteem and decrease social influences from peers” (Swanson et al., 2003, p. 610). The existing domains of the “schooling enterprise” (i.e., teaching, curriculum, and leadership) should be re-evaluated with the question of are we reaching African American males, with the current design, in mind (Matthews & Williams, 2007).

Because people are social beings, there is an innate need to interact and relate to others. This social desire is present in every aspect of human life, including education. Peer support is one way in which social needs are met and helps students feel encouraged and confident to excel. Mentorship was found to be beneficial for not only “at-risk” students, but also academically achieving students who may face criticism from peers who equate academic success to “acting Caucasian ” (Harper, 2006). Students do need role models to emulate, but of equal importance, is their need for someone who will advocate for them (Thompson & Lewis, 2005).

The Role of the School Psychologist

Historically, school psychologists have been the “gatekeepers” to special education services, driven by the discrepancy model that resulted in a “wait to fail” practice (Stevenson, 2008). School psychologists’ services did not intervene until academic or behavior performance was so dismal that remediation seemed impossible. Special education placement was seen as the only way for students who were struggling to receive the help that they needed. However, some students were found ineligible for

special education services when their performances on evaluation instruments did not yield a pattern of strengths and weaknesses, but instead yielded low academic and intellectual scores (Stevenson, 2008).

The former practice of special education placement was also flawed in that it perpetuated institutional racism resulting in an overidentification of African American students, specifically African American males (Kearns, Ford, & Linney, 2005). One reason for overidentification included cultural disadvantages such as low socioeconomic status that limits experiences and opportunities, both of which are linked to performance on intelligence and academic tests used to determine special education eligibility (Kearns et al., 2005). However, research suggests that the learning styles of African American students differ from that of Caucasians. African American students are said to acquire knowledge from a holistic standpoint, interpreting information in relation to other ideas versus the traditional way of teaching content in isolation (Kearns et al., 2005).

School systems have not been immune to the historical racist and stereotypical views that have inflicted American society and their remnants still remain. Racist occurrences have been evidenced in various aspects of school practices including the propensity for African American students to receive extreme disciplinary consequences for minor offenses when Caucasian students committing the same offenses receive less extreme punishments, which has been coined the “racial discipline gap” (Stevenson, 2008). Within the classroom setting, “teachers consistently report lower academic expectations, and lower personality, behavior, motivation to learn, and classroom performance outcomes for African American students” (Stevenson, 2008, p. 356).

Both the American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) “require school psychologists to respect ethnic and cultural differences and undertake activities that protect the rights of diverse populations”— Standard IV *Professional Practices: Working with Ethnically, Linguistically, and Culturally Diverse Populations*. The implications of this ethical charge are that in practice, school psychologists will work with clients and consultees who work with students of diverse backgrounds that may not fall within their realm of experience or training. Thus, it is crucial for school psychologists to partake in additional professional development to ensure their acceptance of and advocacy for students and families of diverse cultures, which can only be accomplished through increasing their cultural competency or accurate knowledge and understanding. In return, the school psychologists will be able to identify any existing cultural issues that may impede school personnel’s ability to effectively work with students from diverse backgrounds (Haboush, 2007).

School psychologists can help teachers who may experience strain in their relationships with their African American male students due to the existence of dynamics that may be interpreted as “disrespect” towards teachers and “hostility towards African American youth” (Stevenson, 2008, p. 356). During the process of consultation, school psychologists can help teachers develop strategies that allow them to “successfully exercise their authority and illicit cooperation in their classrooms, which is paramount in reducing the racial discipline gap” (p. 356). Teachers should be reminded of their role as authority figures and be warned of the detrimental impact that they can have on students of diverse cultures when they hold onto prejudices and stereotypes. The elimination of

racist views and stereotypes comes through acknowledgement of personal prejudices and stereotypes towards other cultures and commitment to disproving such views through multicultural education (Kearns et al., 2005). Further, teachers should be reminded that they have ultimate influence over the relationships they build with their students and they can eliminate “unsuccessful interactions” by avoiding “the misuse of authority” (Stevenson, p. 356).

The goal of school systems today is early identification and prevention of academic and behavioral problems through a problem solving process that is proactive in identifying problems and implementing targeted interventions. Coinciding with this educational systems change is the role of school psychologists, which has expanded from gatekeeper to include the utilization of their diverse set of skills where they are able to offer more services to communities, schools, students, and families (Gutow, Rynkewitz, & Reicher, 2009). One of the main services offered by school psychologists is consultation which calls for them to work with other school personnel, professionals, and parents in order to better meet students’ needs through the process of problem solving (i.e., problem identification, problem analysis, plan implementation, and program evaluation).

In order to appropriately problem solve, the process must be targeted from an ecological and multicultural perspective. This inclusive method extends the school psychologist’s scope of influence and increases the likelihood that that the problem will be identified accurately and consensus will be gained from those instrumental in implementing interventions and services (Davis, McIntosh, Phelps, & Kehle, 2004). Kearns et al. (2005) described school psychologists as problem solvers and suggested that

they must first gain an understanding of the functioning and practices of schools in order to positively impact students' academic and socioemotional growth, which will serve to "prevent abuse of the special education referral system" (p. 298). Therefore, school psychologists are in an ideal position to offer insight into current classroom practices and the impact these practices have on the success of African American adolescent male students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain objective information regarding the schooling practices impacting African American adolescent males (AAAM) from specialists with expertise in problem identification, data analysis, and conceptualization of interventions to match students' needs. Thus, the perspectives of school psychologists concerning components of the educational experiences of African-American adolescent males that positively impact their educational outcomes were examined. The following research questions will guide the investigation: (a) What strategies do teachers use to assist African American adolescent males in becoming academically successful? (b) Are educators adequately prepared to meet the needs of AAAM that will assist in their academic success? (c) Does the school environment facilitate academic success among African American adolescent males? There has been a recent increase in initiatives to improve cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity through professional development trainings and the inclusion of such trainings in teacher preparatory college courses for educators and support personnel (Cockley & Moore, 2007). However, school psychologists who have been in the field for many years rely on dated, if any, multicultural or diversity training experiences within their current practicing. Further,

though 41 percent of all children attending public school in U.S. are minorities, most school psychologists are Caucasian with different life experiences and perspectives (National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data, 2003-2004; Curtis, Lopez, Castillo, Batsche, Minch, & Smith, 2008). Thus, it is hypothesized that a) African American school psychologists will be less likely to report the existence of programs targeted to improve the success of African American males than their Caucasian counterparts and b) School Psychologists with more years of experience school psychologists will report higher levels of school support for African American adolescent males in comparison to school psychologists who have been practicing for shorter durations.

Method

Participants

The participation of five hundred randomly selected school psychologists and current members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) was requested via mail correspondence. Of this request, nine declined participation due to limited or no recent experience working with the targeted population (i.e., African American adolescent male students) and eight of the surveys were returned to the researcher as undeliverable. A total of 166 participants completed the survey; however, seven were excluded because they were not school psychologists at the time of the survey. Only participants who presently served in the capacity of a school psychologist in middle and/or high schools throughout North America were included. Thus, 159 subjects were included at a return rate of approximately 32 percent. Table one depicts participant demographic information.

Table 1
*School Level of Work Location, Total Number of Years Practicing School Psychology,
 School Psychology Degree held, and Participant Race*

| | N | Percent |
|------------------------------|----|---------|
| Level | | |
| | 32 | 20.1 |
| Middle/intermediate/junior | 28 | 17.6 |
| high | 56 | 35.2 |
| High | 43 | 27.0 |
| Both levels | | |
| Neither | | |
| Years as School Psychologist | | |
| 1-5 years | 47 | 29.6 |
| 6-9 years | 35 | 22.0 |
| 10-15 years | 21 | 13.2 |
| 16-20 years | 13 | 8.2 |
| 21+ years | 43 | 27.0 |
| Degree | | |
| MA/MS | 35 | 22.0 |
| EdS/SSP/M.ED | 68 | 42.8 |
| PhD/PsyD/EdD | 46 | 28.9 |
| Other | 4 | 2.5 |
| No Response | 6 | 3.8 |

Table 1. (continued)

| | N | Percent |
|--|------------|--------------|
| Race | | |
| African American/African American (non-Hispanic) | 15 | 9.4 |
| Caucasian /Caucasian (non-Hispanic) | 8 | 5.0 |
| Hispanic | 4 | .5 |
| Asian | 3 | 1.9 |
| Multicultural | 7 | 4.4 |
| No Response | | |
| Total | 159 | 100.0 |
| Measures | | |

Participants completed a 25-item, multiple-choice formatted survey designed by the researcher (Appendix A). Respondents selected the answer or answers that most closely represented their views. Five items collected demographic information of race or ethnic background, school level they work at, degree, and number of years practicing as a school psychologist. Twenty items assessed the views of school psychologists concerning the elements within a school's control that may contribute to successful educational outcomes for African American adolescent males. The questions were based on previously researched factors that fall within the scope of school's influence and contribute to academic success. The questions fell into the following five domains:

district or school directed initiatives (items 7, 11, 15, 20); school psychologist's role, experience, and training (items 4, 16, 18, 19); teacher training, expectation and support (items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14); and relevancy and inclusiveness of curriculum (items 8 and 17). The questionnaire was reviewed by professionals, who read the questionnaires for readability and content and face validity.

Procedure

The researcher first obtained permission from Barry University's Institutional Review Board to conduct this study and then submitted a "Request for Samples of NASP Members for Research Purposes" form and the corresponding documentation (i.e., proposal, memorandum of agreement, questionnaire, and cover letter) to NASP (Appendix B). *The NASP Research Committee reviewed and granted the researcher permission to recruit NASP members as research participants.* The researcher obtained the mailing addresses of 500 NASP members and mailed each a cover letter and survey.

The cover letter stated the purpose and known risks of the study, requested participation in the study, and informed the school psychologists that participation was voluntary and anonymous. Participants were free to decline participation or drop out of the study at any time with no adverse effects. The cover letter also informed participants that they could complete and return the paper copy of the survey or access it online. The cover letter described the anonymity of the study indicating that all information provided would remain anonymous and all collected data would be deleted from the researcher's computer and the paper copies destroyed one year after completion of the study. To increase the number of participants a cover letter was to school psychologists working in

a school district on the west coast of Florida a month following the surveys that were mailed.

The online survey was hosted by SurveyMonkey.com and a cover letter was sent via email to school psychologists in the aforementioned district. Similar to the mailed version of the cover letter, the cover letter for the online survey introduced the study, stated the purpose and known risks of the study, requested participation in the study, and informed the school psychologists that participation was voluntary and anonymous. It furthered explained to potential participants that although the research did not have access to their IP addresses, SurveyMonkey.com collected IP addresses for its own purposes. Further, participants were informed that the anonymous surveys would be deleted from the researcher's computer and the paper copies will be destroyed one year after completion of the study.

The district in Florida was selected in order to obtain a more racially diverse sample of participants due to the low percentage of non-Caucasian school psychologists (i.e., 23.3 percent) available in the sample obtained from NASP, as well as low percentage of non-Caucasian NASP members. According to NASP's membership database, nearly 93 percent of school psychologists are Caucasian, 3 percent are Latino, 1.9 percent are African American, 0.9 percent are Asian American/Pacific Islander, 0.8 percent are Indigenous American, and 0.8 percent are classified as Other (Curtis, Lopez, Castillo, Batsche, Minch, & Smith, 2008). However, even with the inclusion of the local district, there were still a low number of African Americans obtained through the sample respondents (9.4 percent). Therefore, the researcher matched the Caucasian participants to the demographic characteristics of the African American participants. The data

analysis comparing respondents by race (i.e., hypothesis a) includes the 15 African American respondents and 15 Caucasian respondents. Table two depicts the revised demographic information.

Table 2

Matched Sample of School Level of Work Location, Total Number of Years Practicing School Psychology, School Psychology Degree held, and Participant Race

| | N | Percent |
|---------------------------------|----|---------|
| Level | | |
| Middle/intermediate/junior high | 4 | 13.3 |
| High | 9 | 30.0 |
| Both levels | 5 | 16.7 |
| Neither | 12 | 40.0 |
| Years as School Psychologist | | |
| 1-5 years | 8 | 26.7 |
| 6-9 years | 7 | 23.3 |
| 10-15 years | 3 | 10.0 |
| 16-20 years | 5 | 16.7 |
| 21+ years | 7 | 23.3 |

Table 2. (continued)

| | N | Percent |
|--|-----------|--------------|
| Degree | | |
| MA/MS | 10 | 33.3 |
| EdS/SSP/M.ED | 14 | 46.7 |
| PhD/PsyD/EdD | 5 | 16.7 |
| Other | 1 | 3.3 |
| Race | | |
| African American/African | 15 | 50.0 |
| American (non-Hispanic) | 15 | 50.0 |
| Caucasian /Caucasian (non-Hispanic) | | |
| Total | 30 | 100.0 |

Data Analysis

The mean perceptions of African American school psychologists were compared to those of Caucasian American school psychologists concerning teacher preparedness to teach African American adolescent males. According to Ysseldyke, Burns, Dawson, Kelley, Morrison, Ortiz, et al. (2006), school psychologists reach the skill level of expertise after approximately five to 10 year of experience in the field. Therefore, assuming the maximum number of years of experience in the field to attain expertise status, a comparison of perceived school support as reported by school psychologists

practicing ten or more years will made to that of school psychologists practicing 9 years or less.

It was hypothesized that (a) African American school psychologists would be less likely to report that teachers were adequately prepared to teach African American males than Caucasian school psychologists and (b) school psychologists who had been practicing for more than 10 years would report higher levels of school support for African American adolescent males in comparison to school psychologists who had been practicing for shorter durations.

Results

Comparisons by Race

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test hypothesis a that African American school psychologists would be less likely to report that teachers were adequately prepared to teach African American males than Caucasian school psychologists. The results of this study yielded a statistically significant difference in the responses of African American and Caucasian respondents when asked if they felt most teachers were adequately prepared to work with African American adolescent males $F(28, 15.35) = 62.39, p=.000$. More Caucasian school psychologists (45%) than African American school psychologists (17%) indicated believing that teachers were adequately prepared to work with this population. Over half of school psychologists, both African American and Caucasian alike, denied having observed teachers using specific strategies to address the needs of African- American adolescent male students. Further, of the strategy options presented in the survey (i.e., *use of scenarios that they can relate to or that are of interest to them,*

allowing African American males classroom time to work on the computer or use other technology, providing them with choices as to which assignment they want to complete first) similar percentages of African American and Caucasian respondents reported observing teachers using these methods to assist African American adolescent males in becoming academically successful. When looking at socioemotional strategies used by teachers to encourage, push, and support African American adolescent males, the majority of African American (73%) and Caucasian (80%) school psychologists reported having observed this in the schools (see Table 3).

Table 3

Comparisons by Race of Observed Strategies Used by Teachers Working with African American Adolescent Males

| Strategies Used by Teachers | African American (%) | Caucasian (%) |
|---|----------------------|---------------|
| Use of scenarios population can relate to or that are of interest to them | 87 | 87 |
| Differentiation of instruction (e.g., providing them with choices and additional class time) | 87 | 100 |
| Encouraging, pushing, and supporting | 80 | 100 |

Table 3. (continued)

| Strategies Used by Teachers | African American (%) | Caucasian (%) |
|---|----------------------|---------------|
| Strategies to promote positive self-esteem (e.g., highlighting positive qualities, discussing/processing situations with students, and offering possible solutions) | 80 | 100 |
| Address cultural mismatch between teachers and students by having open discussions about culture | 20 | 30 |
| Address cultural mismatch between teachers and students by attending in-service trainings on multicultural issues | 33 | 48 |
| Address cultural mismatch between by reading relevant books/articles | 7 | 17 |

Table 4

Comparisons by Race of Educators' Preparedness to Work with African American Male Students

| Educators' Preparedness | African American (%) | Caucasian (%) |
|---|----------------------|---------------|
| Teachers are adequately prepared to work with this population | 80 | 100 |
| Impediment to the relationship teachers form with their African American male students due to discomfort due to limited experience working with this population | 47 | 43 |
| Impediment to the relationship teachers form with their African American male students due to stereotypes/prejudice/racist views | 60 | 28 |

Table 4. (continued)

| Educators' Preparedness | African American (%) | Caucasian (%) |
|---|----------------------|---------------|
| Impediment to the relationship teachers form with their African American male students due to fear/intimidation | 47 | 20 |
| School psychologists' graduate coursework sufficiently prepared them to consult with teachers who had concerns working with this population | 20 | 40 |

Table 5

Comparisons by Race of Practices in School Environment to Improve Educational Outcomes of African American Males

| School Environment | African American (%) | Caucasian (%) |
|--|----------------------|---------------|
| District or school offered professional development on multicultural education | 40 | 54 |

Table 5. (continued)

| School Environment | African American (%) | Caucasian (%) |
|---|----------------------|---------------|
| District or school implemented mentoring | 40 | 39 |
| Inclusion of relevant topics as an initiative to reduce negative influences | 20 | 54 |
| Assembles featuring positive African American males | 0 | 21 |
| Clubs for Africans males to congregate | 0 | 12 |
| Use of books targeting African American males' success | 13 | 15 |
| Trips to museums or exhibits pertaining to African American history and contributions | 7 | 15 |
| Additional learning: | | |
| Extended day | 27 | 43 |
| Study hall | 20 | 39 |
| Weekend schools | 33 | 10 |

Table 5. (continued)

| School Environment | African American (%) | Caucasian (%) |
|--|----------------------|---------------|
| Academic/behavior | 73 | 65 |
| problems of this population more commonly discussed than their successes | | |

Table 6

Comparisons by Race of School Psychologists' Perceptions of Their Role in Improving Educational Outcomes of African American Males

| School Psychologists' | African American (%) | Caucasian (%) |
|--|----------------------|---------------|
| Providing teachers/school personnel with training on multicultural education | 53 | 36 |
| Assess current practices to ensure that African American adolescent males are not being over identified | 53 | 50 |

Table 6. (continued)

| School Psychologists' | African American (%) | Caucasian (%) |
|---|----------------------|---------------|
| Hosting support groups or mentorship groups for this group | 27 | 16 |
| School psychologists cannot address this group in isolation | 27 | 16 |

Table 7

Comparisons by School Psychologists' Race Concerning Schools' Efforts to Minimize Institutional Racism and Students' Experiences of Racism and Prejudice

| School Efforts | African American (%) | Caucasian (%) |
|---|----------------------|---------------|
| In-services or professional development workshops that emphasize the importance of multicultural education and ways to implement it | 43 | 47 |

Table 7. (continued)

| School Efforts | African American (%) | Caucasian (%) |
|--|----------------------|---------------|
| Elimination of academic tracking all students are challenged and exposed to challenging material | 13 | 33 |
| Building prior knowledge by exposing all students to novel lessons/activities | 20 | 57 |

Comparisons by Years of Experience

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test hypothesis b, school psychologists with more years of experience will report higher levels of school support for African American adolescent males in comparison to school psychologists who have been practicing for shorter durations. This hypothesis was accepted. There was a statistically significant difference $F(28, 139.94) = 4.86, p = .029$ in the perceptions of school psychologists with 10 or more years of experience in comparison to those with nine or fewer years of experience regarding the adequate preparation of teachers to work with African American adolescent males. A higher percent of those with 10 or more years of experience (45%), in comparison to those with 9 or fewer years of experience (29%), felt *most teachers are adequately prepared to work with African-American males*. Similarly, a statistically significant difference $F(28, 68.89) = 6.84$ was found regarding the observation of incidences where teachers encouraged this population. A higher percentage of school

psychologists with 10 or more years of experience (90%) than those with 9 or fewer years of experience (70%) reported to have observed *specific incidences of teachers encouraging, pushing, and supporting African-American male adolescents*. See Table 8 for a comparison of School Psychologist's years of experience and observations of teacher strategies, see Table 9 for comparisons by school psychologists' according to years of experience concerning educators preparedness to work with African American Male students, see Table 10 for comparisons by school psychologists' years of experience concerning the efforts schools make to minimize institutional racism and students' experiences of racism and prejudice, and see table 11 for comparisons by years of experience of school psychologists' perceptions of their role in improving educational outcomes of African American males.

Table 8

Comparisons by Years of Experience of School Psychologists Using Specific Strategies to Address the Needs of African- American Adolescent Male Students

| Strategies Used by Teachers | Years of Experience | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| | Five or Less (%) | Six to Nine (%) | 10-15 (%) | 16-20 (%) | 21 or more (%) |
| Interesting scenarios | 66 | 54 | 71 | 65 | 54 |

Table 8. (continued)

| Strategies Used by Teachers | Years of Experience | Strategies Used by Teachers | Years of Experience | Strategies Used by Teachers | Years of Experience |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Direct/explicit instruction, self- directed projects, relationship building techniques, presence of African American role models, providing outlets, and African American History week) | 28 | 26 | 43 | 23 | 28 |
| Choices in assignment completion | 30 | 23 | 19 | 28 | 31 |

Table 8. (continued)

| Strategies Used by Teachers | Years of Experience | Strategies Used by Teachers | Years of Experience | Strategies Used by Teachers | Years of Experience |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Use the computer or other classroom technology during classroom time | 43 | 31 | 14 | 16 | 28 |
| Differentiating instruction | 28 | 14 | 26 | 13 | 28 |
| encouraging, pushing, and supporting | 75 | 66 | 81 | 92 | 98 |
| Strategies to promote positive self-esteem | 51 | 34 | 62 | 60 | 40 |
| Address cultural mismatch between teachers and students w/ open discussions about culture | 33 | 8 | 38 | 23 | 35 |

Table 8. (continued)

| Strategies Used by Teachers | Years of Experience | Strategies Used by Teachers | Years of Experience | Strategies Used by Teachers | Years of Experience |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Address cultural mismatch between teachers and students by attending in- service trainings on multicultural issues | 35 | 39 | 38 | 77 | 65 |
| Address cultural mismatch between by reading relevant books/articles | 11 | 17 | 29 | 8 | 26 |

Table 9

Comparisons of School Psychologists by Years of Experience Concerning Educators' Preparedness to Work with African American Male Students

| Educator Preparedness | Years of Experience | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| | Five or Less (%) | Six to Nine (%) | 10-15 (%) | 16-20 (%) | 21 or more (%) |
| Teachers adequately prepared to work with African-American males | 38 | 20 | 57 | 39 | 40 |
| Impediment to the relationship teachers form with their African American male students due to discomfort from limited experience working with this population | 47 | 33 | 33 | 39 | 54 |
| Impediment to the relationship teachers form with their African American male students due to stereotypes/prejudice/racist views | 28 | 29 | 23 | 30 | 40 |

Table 9. (continued)

| Educator Preparedness | Years of Experience | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| | Five or Less (%) | Six to Nine (%) | 10-15 (%) | 16-20 (%) | 21 or more (%) |
| Impediment to the relationship teachers form with their African American male students due to fear/intimidation | 21 | 20 | 14 | 15 | 28 |
| School psychologists' graduate coursework sufficiently prepared them to consult with teachers who had concerns working with this population | 51 | 63 | 57 | 69 | 65 |

Table 10

Comparisons by Years of Experience Concerning Schools' Efforts to Minimize Institutional Racism and Students' Experiences of Racism and Prejudice

| School Efforts | Years of Experience | | | | |
|--|---------------------|-------------|-------|-------|------------|
| | Five or Less | Six to Nine | 10-15 | 16-20 | 21 or more |
| | (%) | (%) | (%) | (%) | (%) |
| In-services or professional development workshops that emphasize the importance of multicultural education and ways to implement it district or school offered professional development on multicultural education | 49 | 37 | 57 | 77 | 61 |

Table 10. (continued)

| School Efforts | Years of Experience | | | | |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| | Five or Less (%) | Six to Nine (%) | 10-15 (%) | 16-20 (%) | 21 or more (%) |
| District or school implemented mentoring programs | 38 | 26 | 33 | 62 | 51 |
| Inclusion of relevant topics as an initiative to reduce negative influences | 53 | 37 | 48 | 39 | 61 |
| Assembles featuring positive African American males | 21 | 9 | 24 | 15 | 23 |
| Clubs for African males to congregate | 11 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 19 |
| Use of books targeting African American males' success | 19 | 14 | 19 | 0 | 23 |

Table 10. (continued)

| School Efforts | Years of Experience | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| | Five or Less (%) | Six to Nine (%) | 10-15 (%) | 16-20 (%) | 21 or more (%) |
| Trips to museums or exhibits pertaining to African American history and contributions | 15 | 14 | 10 | 15 | 14 |
| <i>additional learning:</i> | | | | | |
| Extended day | 38 | 31 | 29 | 39 | 65 |
| Study hall | 43 | 23 | 24 | 54 | 49 |
| Weekend schools | 11 | 14 | 10 | 15 | 14 |
| Summer camps | 17 | 20 | 10 | 10 | 9 |
| Academic/behavior problems of this population more commonly discussed than their successes | 75 | 63 | 57 | 69 | 65 |

Table 11

Comparisons by Years of Experience of School Psychologists' Perceptions of Their Role in Improving Educational Outcomes of African American Males

| School Psychologists' Practices | Years of Experience | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| | Five or Less (%) | Six to Nine (%) | 10-15 (%) | 16-20 (%) | 21 or more (%) |
| Providing teachers/school personnel with training on multicultural education | 47 | 37 | 33 | 21 | 42 |
| Assess current practices to ensure that African American adolescent males are not being over identified | 40 | 51 | 52 | 77 | 61 |
| Hosting support groups or mentorship groups this group | 23 | 17 | 10 | 31 | 21 |

| School Psychologists' Practices | Years of Experience | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| | Five or Less (%) | Six to Nine (%) | 10-15 (%) | 16-20 (%) | 21 or more (%) |
| School psychologists cannot address this group in isolation | 11 | 14 | 10 | 31 | 21 |

Discussion

The results suggested that the mean perceptions of African American and Caucasian school psychologists concerning the efforts made at the systems level (e.g., district- and school-wide) and on a smaller scale (e.g., within the classroom by individual teachers) were similar. Most African American and Caucasian school psychologists indicated that they had observed teachers using specific strategies targeted at addressing the needs of African American adolescent males. Both races reported observing teachers differentiating instruction for this population through various strategies (i.e., use of relevant scenarios, class time to use technology, choices in assignment completion order). These findings imply that teachers do not have strategies reserved for specific cultures, but instead use similar methods cross culturally. Further, the majority of both African American and Caucasian respondents reported observing specific incidences where teachers encouraged and pushed their African American male students, as well as, using strategies to do this (i.e., highlighting positive qualities, discussing/processing situations, and offering possible solutions).

The majority of school psychologists, regardless of race, believed that most teachers were not adequately prepared to work with African American male students and attributed teacher discomfort to limited experience working with this population. Although fewer African American school psychologists than Caucasian reported that their graduate training adequately prepared them to consult with teachers concerning this population of students, most African American and Caucasian school psychologists reported that their graduate coursework was not sufficient in this area. The differences in views of adequate preparation may be due to the fact that African American school psychologists may more easily recognize the limitations of their training and what more would be needed to adequately fulfill the needs because of the connectedness to their own culture. African American (40%) and Caucasian (54%) school psychologists reported that their districts and/or schools offered trainings on race relations and/or multicultural education, which were found to be the most common method teachers used to alleviate cultural mismatch between themselves and their African American male adolescent students. Further, 53 percent of African American participants and 33 percent of Caucasian s believed that providing multicultural education training to teachers was an important role of the school psychologists in order to improve educational outcomes for African American males.

Although the majority of respondents, both African American (73%) and Caucasian (65%), reported that problems evidenced by African American adolescent males, academic and/or behavioral, are more commonly discussed than their successes, 73 percent of African American and 62 percent of Caucasian school psychologists feel celebrating success has the most positive impact on educational outcomes.

Approximately half of both African American and Caucasian respondents believed that the role of school psychologists in improving the educational outcomes of African American males is to assess current practices to ensure that they are not being over identified for special education services.

The results analyzed by age yielded differences in perceptions of those with 10 or more years of experience in the field of school psychology as compared to those with 9 or fewer years of experience. School psychologists in the field for longer durations were more likely to perceive African American males as having higher school support (i.e., belief that most teachers are adequately prepared to work with this population and observations of incidents where teachers encourage and push these students). Such findings may be indicative of the fact that those who have been in the field longer have had more opportunities to observe the changes that have occurred over time with the current state of race relations and opportunities in the nation improved in comparison to when they first began.

Multicultural education is being increasingly used to prepare educators to work with diverse student populations (Cockley & Moore, 2007). The results of the present study highlight the dependency of both teachers and school psychologists on multicultural education as a means to improve the educational outcomes of African American male students, a population infamous for being at-risk of poor educational outcomes. The implication of this finding is the need for increased opportunities for educators to continuously receive such trainings during pre-service and in-service preparation. Training should be presented in such a way that acknowledges the great strides that have already taken place in the field of education (e.g., improved reading

scores on high stakes test nationwide for African American males), yet inform educators of the growth still necessary to equate performance across races (e.g., gap still exists). According to Shapiro, Prinz, and Sanders (2007), the key components of effective training are: “didactic instruction, modeling by the instructor, videotaped examples of discrete skills, small group exercise for active practice, and group discussions of key issues” (p.458). In addition, at the end of training, the trainee should evidence competency of the essential components of the training (e.g., proficiency on a written quiz). Further, following training, interventionists should evidence competency of essential program features.

Therefore, effective multicultural education training should expand from simple presentations of various ethnic and racial cultural patterns to include a needs assessment of the school or group receiving training, teaching effective strategies and interventions for diverse populations modeled by trainer, opportunity to practice the strategies under supervision of trainers during session, group discussion of the training components, constructive feedback provided to trainees, and periodic follow-up and/or consultation provided to trainees following training.

A major limitation of this study is its non-experimental design due to the inability to randomly assign participants to a racial group. However, the random selection of participants increases the external validity of the study and the likelihood of similar findings being replicated with a different sample of participants. A second limitation of this study is the low number of African American participants, which could limit the generalizability of findings. However, although, only nine percent of the sample participants were African American, Curtis et al. (2008) found that less than two percent

(i.e., 1.9%) of NASP membership were African American. Thus, the percentage of African American participants in this sample is greater than those represented in NASP membership. A third limitation of this study is concerning participants who completed the electronic version of the survey via SurveyMonkey. On Item 17, they were forced to select one item when the directions said to select all that apply. This limits the experiences to one selection, when in fact multiple experiences may have occurred. However, it is assumed that because participants were forced to select one option, they picked the most relevant one.

A fourth limitation of the study is its design. First, the survey required participants to share their opinions on controversial issues pertaining to race and racism, which may have been impacted by response bias (e.g., participants responding in what they believed to be the most socially acceptable way as opposed to what their actual experiences or beliefs were) (Furnham, 1986). Second, the quantitative nature of the design limited the access of current practices to preconceived factors proposed by the literature, with the ability to obtain new information limited to the few items that provided opportunity for qualitative data (i.e., other).

One recommendation for future research is to obtain data pertaining to the areas addressed in the present study via surveys of students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Such a design would include objective and subjective data that could be compared and analyzed for commonalities and discrepancies in experiences of these key stakeholders. Future directions could also include qualitative approaches such as direct observations of the interventions and strategies used by teachers working with African American adolescent males, and interviewing the aforementioned stakeholders, focus

groups with stakeholders with the purpose of gaining further insight into the identification of additional practices that contribute to the success of our targeted population.

The implications of the main findings suggest that the majority of the perceptions of school psychologists concerning current practices used by teachers and schools educating African American adolescent males do not differ significantly between African American and Caucasian participants. Thus, race did not appear to impact the participants' ability to identify the various components of the educational process that serve to impede or enhance the educational experiences of the targeted population. Conversely, the years of experience individuals have working in the field of school psychology appear to influence their perceptions of the educational experiences of African American adolescent males as well as the practices of teachers who work with these students. The results of this study can be applied to current training practices of school psychology programs and districts employing school psychologists through increasing the opportunity for pre-service and in-service school psychologists to receive training experiences that allow them to increase their awareness of the unique (and not so unique) needs of these students, increase their comfort in working with them through training that allows for role play, feedback, modeling, mentoring, and internship and practicum experiences in settings serving high percentages of this population.

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Appendix I Cover Letter

August 30, 2010

Dear Research Participant:

Your participation in a research project is requested. The title of the study is “School Psychologists’ Perspectives on Practices that Contribute to the Academic Achievement of African American Adolescent Males”.

The research is being conducted by Coretta Dennie, a student in the School Psychology Program in the Department of Education at Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida. The purpose of the research is to examine and compare the perspectives of school psychologists concerning the practices within their schools that coincide with previously researched school related factors believed to positively impact the educational outcomes of African American adolescent males. Five hundred participants are anticipated to be studied.

Your consent to be a research participant is strictly voluntary and should you decline participation or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects as the survey is anonymous.

There are no known risks to you for involvement in this study. Although there are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study, your participation will contribute to research in the area of education and school psychology.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Barry University. Further, *the NASP Research Committee has reviewed this study and granted the researcher(s) permission to recruit NASP members as research participants.*

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to complete a 25-item survey designed by the researcher that will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. You may complete and return the enclosed survey or access it online at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/M7359WZ>.

If you choose to participate in this study, the information you provide will remain anonymous, that is, no names or other identifiers will be collected on any of the surveys used. SurveyMonkey.com allows researchers to suppress the delivery of IP addresses during the downloading of data, and in this study no IP address will be delivered to the researcher. However, SurveyMonkey.com does collect IP addresses for its own purposes. If you have concerns about this you should review the privacy policy of SurveyMonkey.com before you begin. The anonymous surveys will be deleted from the researcher’s computer and the paper copies will be destroyed one year after completion of the study.

By completing and submitting the electronic or paper copy of this survey, you are acknowledging that you voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact me, Coretta Dennie, at (813) 270-4147, my supervisor, Dr. Agnes Shine, at (305) 899-3991, or the IRB point of contact, Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Coretta A. Dennie

School Psychology Graduate Student

Appendix II Survey

1. Are you a School Psychologist?
 - Yes
 - No

2. Do you currently work in a middle, junior high, intermediate, or high school?
 - Yes, middle/intermediate/junior high school
 - Yes, high school
 - Yes, both levels
 - No

3. How long have you been a practicing school psychologist?
 - 1-5 years
 - 6-9 years
 - 10-15 years
 - 16-20 years
 - 21+ years

4. What school psychology degree do you hold?
 - MA or MS
 - Ed.S. or SSP
 - Ph.D. or equivalent (PsyD, EdD)
 - Other, please specify: _____

5. Which racial or ethnic background do you most closely identify with?
 - African American or African American (non-Hispanic)
 - Caucasian or Caucasian (non-Hispanic)

- Hispanic
- American Indian
- Asian
- Multiracial
- Other, please specify: _____

Please answer the following questions based on your current or previous experiences working with African-American adolescent males (ages 11-18) in the role of School Psychologist.

1. From your experience working with African-American adolescent males, which of the following school based factors do you consider to have the most positive impact on their educational outcomes? (select all that apply)
 - high teacher expectations
 - inclusive curriculum and environment (e.g., stories/lessons include African-American characters/heroes/heroines, culturally relevant scenarios, pictorial representations of African-Americans)
 - celebrating their successes (academic or nonacademic)
 - encouraging their participation
 - teacher's expression of love and care
 - clear explanations and reminders of the relevance and necessity of education in relation to future attainment
 - review of African American history and the implication that past struggles and triumphs have on future goals and expectations to uphold and gain further victories

2. Do you believe that African-American adolescent males need to be provided with different approaches to instruction and curriculum in order to be successful in the general education classroom?
 - Yes
 - No

3. Prior to entering middle and high school, do you believe that African-American adolescent males have received adequate support and training from their elementary schools in order to be successful in middle and high school?
 - Yes
 - No

4. What has been your experience working with African-American male adolescent students?
 - Individual evaluation (I.Q., academic, behavioral)
 - Problem solving with team
 - Group therapy
 - Mentoring
 - Club sponsor
 - Other, please specify: _____

5. Do you feel most teachers are adequately prepared to work with African-American males?
 - Yes
 - No

6. Which of the following ways have the teachers in your school(s) attempted to overcome any existing cultural mismatch between themselves and their African-American male students?
- Openly discussing stereotypes and uncertainties they may have with their students
 - Attending in-service trainings that address multicultural issues
 - Reading books or scholarly articles that address the African-American male experience
 - None of the above
 - Other, please specify: _____
7. Does your district or school offer professional development or in-service trainings on multicultural education and/or race relations?
- Yes
 - No
8. Of the African-American male adolescent students you have worked with who are from low socioeconomic or otherwise underprivileged home environments and still achieve academic success, which of the following components do you attribute to their performance?
- Teacher(s)/school personnel that have taken them under their wing
 - Inclusive and relevant curriculum and instruction
 - Celebrations of their success on an individual basis
 - Rewarding improved or high performance
 - Other, please specify: _____
9. In what ways have you observed teachers differentiating instruction to reach African-American male adolescent students?
- Using scenarios that they can relate to or that are of interest to them (e.g., if they enjoy basketball, including it as the subject of a word problem in math)
 - Providing them with choices as to which assignment they want to complete first
 - Allowing them classroom time to work on the computer or use other technology
 - Other, please specify: _____
10. Have you observed teachers using specific strategies to address the needs of African-American adolescent male students? If yes, please specify what was used?
- Yes, please specify: _____
 - No
11. Which of the following initiatives are offered at your school(s) to minimize the influence of societal stereotypes and negative models of success and to support the education of African-American adolescent males? (If more than one, pick the most common or popular choice)
- mentor program
 - assemblies that feature positive African-American males
 - promotion of books specifically targeted at reaching African-American males and address being successful (e.g., Letters to a Young Brother by Hill Harper)

- required study hall or community service for students
 - clubs for African-American males to congregate
 - field trips to museums or exhibits on African American history or contributions
 - inclusion of interesting/ relevant topics or areas of interests in school/class activities)
 - Other, please specify: _____
12. Which of the following do you think most impedes the relationship that teachers form with their African-American adolescent male students at your school?
- fear/intimidation
 - stereotypes/ prejudice/racist views
 - discomfort due to limited experience working with this population
 - nothing/not applicable
 - other, please specify: _____
13. Have you seen specific incidences of teachers encouraging, pushing, and supporting African-American male adolescents?
- Yes
 - No
14. Which of the following strategies to improve or maintain self-esteem have you seen employed in your schools by teacher and other school personnel when interacting with African-American male students? (check all that apply)
- encouraging, modeling, providing personal examples of overcoming failure
 - highlighting positive qualities
 - discussing/processing situations with students—e.g., bad grade, misbehavior, frustrated/overwhelmed by an assignment
 - offering possible solutions
15. What opportunities for additional learning are offered at your school (check all that apply)?
- Extended day
 - Study hall
 - Weekend school
 - Summer camps
 - None of the above
 - Other, please specify: _____
16. Do you feel your coursework in graduate school prepared you to adequately support/consult with teachers who have concerns working with this population?
- Yes
 - No
17. Which of the following methods do you believe schools can use to help improve the educational outcomes of African-American adolescent males? (If more than one, select the choice that you believe would be most helpful)

- Explicitly connecting academic performance to future success and financial stability
 - Inclusion of popular culture in the classroom/school (e.g., rapping times tables, planets, countries, etc.)
 - Inviting successful African American men to talk to class/school about their careers and what led up to it
 - Other, please specify: _____
18. Are the problems (academic and behavior) evidenced by African-American adolescent males talked about more frequently than their successes?
- Yes
 - No
19. What do you believe the role of the school psychologist is in improving the educational outcomes of African-American adolescent male students? (If more than one, select the role that you believe to be most important)
- Providing teachers/school personnel with training on multicultural education
 - Assessing current practices to ensure that African -American adolescent males are not being over identified
 - Hosting support groups or mentorship groups for African-American adolescent males
 - The school psychologist cannot address this group in isolation
 - Other, please specify: _____
20. Which of the following efforts have been made by your school(s) to minimize institutional racism and students' experience of racism and prejudice?
- In-services or professional development workshops that emphasize the importance of multicultural education and ways to implement it
 - Elimination of academic tracking so that all students are challenged academically and exposed to challenging material
 - Building prior knowledge by exposing all students to novel lessons/activities/subjects and not assuming they have been exposed
 - Other, please specify: _____