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The Effect of an Academic Intervention on the Reading
Achievement of Black Males in Middle School

Derek J. Hall

THE EFFECT OF AN ACADEMIC INTERVENTION ON THE READING
ACHIEVEMENT OF BLACK MALES IN
MIDDLE SCHOOL

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
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Barry University

by

Derek J. Hall, B.S., MAT, Ed.S.

* * * * *

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Areas of Specialization: Reading, Language and Cognition &
Culture, Language and Literacy (TESOL)

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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF AN ACADEMIC INTERVENTION ON THE READING ACHIEVEMENT OF BLACK MALES IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Derek Jon Hall

Barry University, 2012

Dissertation Chairperson: Dr. Nancy B. Maszta

Research has shown Black males in the United States have been recognized as one of the lowest academically performing demographic groups. The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the effect of a socioconstructivist guided Tier-2 academic intervention on the reading achievement of Black males attending an urban middle school. Specifically, the purpose of this research was to determine whether Black male students who are in grades 6, 7 and 8 in an urban school and who attend school regularly would benefit academically from a Tier-2 intervention that provided a learning environment based on the socioconstructivist pedagogical framework.

Quantitative methodology was used for analyzing the data and the causal-comparison approach was used to examine mean gains in the test scores of the comparison and intervention groups. The instrument that was used to collect the data—test scores in reading—was the Benchmark Assessment System. Test data from archival district files were provided by the testing coordinator with no student names attached. Therefore, the study was completely anonymous. The independent variable was the Tier-2 academic intervention and the dependent variable was reading achievement. Each student was pretested and posttested. Reading achievement was measured by the mean

gain from pretest to posttest for the students in the intervention and comparison groups. Independent *t*-tests at the .05 level of significance were used to test the null hypotheses. Also, a one-way ANCOVA was performed to account for any initial differences which may have existed between the groups.

Evidence from this study suggested that a Tier-2 academic intervention does not have a statistically significant effect on the reading achievement of Black males in middle school. While there was no statistical significance in all three grades, the intervention group scored higher by a minimum of 14.64 points. While statistical differences were not quantitatively significant, anecdotal evidence provided support on the growth and development of the affective domain of students who participated in the intervention. Therefore, the effect of the Tier-2 academic intervention on reading achievement of Black males in middle school cannot be overlooked. With this in mind, the findings from this research have implications for educators working to enhance the reading achievement of Black males. Future research is recommended with a larger sample size and a longer time frame participating in the intervention to better determine if there is a relationship between a socioconstructivist guided Tier-2 intervention and reading achievement in the general population of Black males.

Furthermore, the examination of an affective pedagogy, research-based pedagogical practices, and socioconstructivist principles may prove to be one manner of highlighting and understanding the continuum between theory and practice that may enable curriculum and instructional models that will positively influence the literacy growth and development of Black middle school males.

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DEDICATION

First and foremost to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I never would have made it without your presence, power, and promise! Through continuous pitfalls of people, places, friends, and family you kept me steadfast in my goals. This doctorate degree is a true testimony that with God all things are possible, if we faint not (Isaiah 40:31).

To the loving and heartfelt memory of my grandmother and best friend Roberta M. Hall: you were truly the wind beneath my wings. It was you who prophetically said, “Baby, you always wanted to be a teacher.” Later, even before I completed the degree, you had begun calling me Dr. Hall and sharing my pending accomplishment with your friends, safe in the knowledge that I would complete my degree. As I complete the final stages of this dissertation journey, I am certain that my grandmother is looking down from above with that same confidence exclaiming, “Baby, I knew you could do it!” Thank you for all your sound advice, moral and ethical teachings, and your willing heart. I am who I am because you believed in my ability and encouraged me. The closeness we shared was a true blessing from God. Your wisdom surpassed all understanding. Your energy, love, sharp mind, and insight into life were unsurpassed. I will always hold you close in my heart, mind, and spirit.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Background of the Problem

A central tenet of the American dream is the promise that the United States is largely a meritocratic society where people enjoy an equal opportunity to achieve their goals through education (Mickelson & Greene, 2006). Unfortunately, this dream may elude people who do not respond to traditional education. One of the most important educational challenges facing the United States today is elimination of the education achievement gap among the nation's racial, ethnic, and gender groups (Bok, 2003; Boyd-Franklin & Franklin, 2000; Planty et al., 2008; Snipes et al., 2002; Wirt et al, 2003). This achievement gap occurs in cities, suburbs, and rural school districts.

Today, Black students academically perform at lower levels than their racial peers on standardized tests, continue to withdraw from school at high rates, and are disproportionately labeled and placed in special-education courses. Statistics are most demonstrative for Black males (Anyon & Greene, 2007; Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003; Haskins & Rouse, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; V. E. Lee & Burkam, 2003; Orfield & Lee, 2006; Planty et al., 2008).

Literacy underachievement among males continues to garner significant attention and has been identified by journalists, educational policymakers, and educational researchers as a cause for much concern. According to the National Assessment of Education Progress [NAEP] (2009) report, female students consistently outperform males, on average, in both reading and writing. This trend is supported internationally by test results from the 2007 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and

the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development research reports. In 2006, the largest gender gap was found in reading. Females, on average, outperformed males in all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (2007). Like all students, Black males' school performance ranges from exemplary to weak. Moreover, parents, policymakers, and educators are keenly aware that Black males' academic achievement is, on average, lower than those of other ethnic groups (Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009). The within-race gender gap among Blacks increasingly garners attention because although the race gap is closing, persistent lower performance is particularly evident among males (Boyd-Franklin & Franklin, 2000; Chubb & Loveless, 2002; Hale, 2001; Howard, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2003; Planty et al., 2008; Polite & Davis, 1999; Tatum, 2000, 2005). These test scores and achievement gaps warrant a moral alarm concerning male literacy achievement and engagement. This moral alarm must come in the form of research-based instruction, interventions, programs and curriculum aimed at closing the achievement gap.

Despite several decades of school reforms, on average, Black students' school performance continues to lag behind White students' performance, and Black males are the most affected by this gap (Ascher & Branch-Smith, 2005; Bakari, 2003; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2004b; R. Ferguson, 2003). Even middle-class Black males perform lower than expected, given their families' socioeconomic levels (Chubb & Loveless, 2002; Hale, 2001; T. Howard, 2001, 2002, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

Black males are likely to attend schools that are majority-minority; enroll large number of students on free and reduced-price lunch programs; and employ a greater

proportion of teachers on provisional licenses, the majority of whom may teach outside the subject in which they earned a college degree (Chubb & Loveless, 2002; R. Ferguson, 2003; Hale, 2001; Howard, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 2003; Ogbu, 2003).

The disproportionate failure of Black males in the educational system has been identified as a major cause for their overrepresentation in the criminal-justice system and high-unemployment rate (Brozo, 2005; R. Ferguson, 2003; Hale, 2001). Additionally, Black males experience lower rates of parental involvement and often attend urban schools that are poorly funded (Anyon, 1997; Gutman & Miggely, 2000; Hale, 2001; Maynard, 2002). For example, Black males represent approximately 8.6% of the nation's K-12 public school enrollment, but make up about 60% of all incarcerated youth (T. Howard, Dresser, & Dunklee, 2009; NAEP, 2009; R. Smith, 2005; Tatum, 2005). Indeed, these statistics illustrate the need for additional research on Black males' academic achievement in an effort to increase their academic success.

This study sought to add to the understanding of the effects of a Tier-2 intervention on the reading achievement of Black male middle school students as demonstrated by their performance on the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS). Specifically, this study sought to examine Black male students in grades 6, 7 and 8 who participated in the school's Tier-2 academic intervention to discern if students' participation in the academic-intervention provided would have an effect on their reading achievement on the Benchmark Assessment System.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of a socioconstructivist guided intervention on the reading achievement of Black middle school male students. If this practice is deemed successful, it could suggest that this type of intervention might lessen the number of Black males withdrawing from school, decrease the incarceration rates, and increase the number of Black males in higher-education programs and in the U.S. workforce.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this research was based on socioconstructivist pedagogy as it relates to student achievement and on the premise that academic intervention can make a difference in the reading achievement of students.

Socioconstructivists view each learner as a distinctive individual with unique needs and backgrounds (Vygotsky, 1962, 1994; Vygotsky, Reiber, & Carton, 1987; Woolfolk, 2001). Under a socioconstructivist worldview, the learner is seen as multifaceted. Social constructivism not only acknowledges the uniqueness and complexity of the learner, but actually encourages, uses, and rewards the learner's uniqueness as an integral part of the learning process (C. Banks & Banks, 1995; Gardner, 1999; Greene, 1996; Liu & Matthews, 2005; Nieto, 2004; E. Smith, 2009; Wertsch, 1997).

Social constructivism encourages the learner to arrive at his or her version of the truth, influenced by his or her background, culture, or embedded perspective (Greene, 1996; Kim, 2005; Vygotsky & Luria 1994; Vygotsky et al., 1987; Wertsch, 1997).

According to socioconstructivists, historical developments and symbol systems, such as language, logic, and mathematical systems, are inherited by the learner as a member of a

particular culture and these are learned throughout the learner's life (T. Howard, 2001, 2002, 2003; Kim, 2005; Tatum, 2005; Vygotsky, 1962, 1994; Vygotsky et al., 1987; Vygotsky & Luria, 1994; Wertsch, 1997). This viewpoint stresses the importance of the nature of the learner's social interaction with knowledgeable members of the society. Without social interaction with other more knowledgeable people, it is impossible to acquire social meaning of important symbol systems and learn how to use them (Gardner, 1999; Greene, 1996; ; Vygotsky, 1962, 1994; Wertsch 1997). From the social constructivist viewpoint, it is important to take into account the background and culture of the learner throughout the learning process, as this background also helps shape the knowledge and truth the learner creates, discovers, and attains in the learning process (C. Banks & Banks, 1995; Gardner, 1999; Greene, 1996; Liu & Matthews, 2005; McCaslin & Hickey, 2001 Nieto, 2004; Noguera, 2003).

Learners are believed to be encultured into their learning community and gain appropriate knowledge, based on their existent understanding, and through their interaction with the immediate learning environment (Gardner, 1999; Greene, 1996; Hale-Benson, 1986; T. Howard, 2003, 2008; Pitri, 2004). Learning in this instance is considered to be a largely situation-specific and context-bound activity (McInerney & McInerney, 2002; Pitri, 2004).

The theoretical framework of the socioconstructivist curriculum takes into account the diverse learning styles of Black males to counteract the academic-achievement gap. Socioconstructivist pedagogy is an emerging discipline with the major aim to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups (Gardner, 1999; Greene, 1996; T. Howard, 2001; 2002,

2003; Nieto, 2004; Noguera, 2003, 2008). Socioconstructivist ideas about education offer new perspectives on helping students and teachers become skilled problem solvers, critical thinkers, and proficient learners (Liu & Matthews, 2005; McCaslin & Hickey, 2001; Pitri, 2004). One of the goals of socioconstructivism is to help all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good (T. Howard, 2003; Nieto, 2004; Vygotsky, 1962, 1994; Vygotsky et al., 1987; Wertsch, 1997).

Education founded on the principles of socioconstructivism works to reflect the growing diversity of America's classrooms and the diverse learning styles in them; many programs move beyond curricular revisions to specifically address the academic needs of carefully defined groups of students, often minority students (T. Howard, 2001, 2003; Kim, 2005; Nieto, 2004). Although curricular programs attempt to increase the body of knowledge about different ethnic, cultural, and gender groups, student-oriented programs are intended to increase the academic achievement of these groups; however, these programs do not involve extensive changes in the content of the curriculum (J. Banks, 1995b; T. Howard, 2001, 2003; Tassoni & Thelin, 2000). Socioconstructivist intervention programs are designed not to transform the curriculum or the social context of education, but to help culturally or linguistically different students make the transition into the educational mainstream through specialized academic support in smaller class settings (T. Howard, 2001, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Tatum, 2005). To achieve this transition, intervention programs often draw on the varied linguistic and cultural

backgrounds of their student bodies. As a result, student-oriented programs can, themselves, take on many forms, most of which are categorized as socioconstructivist forms of education (Ladson-Billings, 2002; Pitri, 2004). As a result of this variety, and because they attempt to help students make the transition into the mainstream, many student-oriented programs can be viewed as compensatory in nature. In fact, they can often be nearly indistinguishable from other compensatory programs that may be socioconstructivist based in their emphasis, and can be seen as beneficial to all students.

Several scholars have posited similar theories to explain how a school's environment, pedagogy, and practice impact its students' learning and achievement (T. Howard, 2001, 2002, 2003; Martino, 2008; Nieto, 2004; Noguera, 2003, 2008; Pitri, 2004; Tatum, 2004). These theories view schools as the environment in which the academic and social components of the school impacts students' achievement or failure. Students enter school with their own personal characteristics (language, gender, race, ethnicity, learning differences, and socioeconomic status) and intermingle with other students and, most importantly, with teachers (Dyson, 2001; T. Howard, 2001, 2002, 2003; Kunjufu, 2005a; Martino, 2008; Nieto, 2004; Noguera, 2003, 2008; Ogbu, 2003, 2004; Pitri, 2004). According to these researchers, one of the most important academic "modules" of the school is the students' interactions and relationships with the teacher that include learning experiences that take into account the students, their culture, gender, and learning-style differences. In conclusion, the theoretical basis for this research provides a framework for interventions that provide curriculum and instruction utilizing a socioconstructivist approach in an effort to meet the academic needs of all students.

Significance of the Problem

Education in America continues to fail to live up to its promise to prepare all students to meet the academic standards required to become productive citizens. This study is significant because it addresses the current needs in education related to the educational-achievement gap (Tatum, 2000, 2005) and the issues related to underachievement of males, in particular, Black males (Darling-Hammond, 2004b; T. Howard, 2001, 2003, 2010; Kunjufu, 2005a). This study purports that socioconstructivist pedagogical methodology, specifically of Black middle schools males, is a successful alternative to traditional corrective literacy practices. This study also provides both theoretical and practical significance for audiences beyond those participating specifically in this research: students, staff, faculty, administrators, theorists, and researchers interested in the improvement of reading interventions and achievement of Black middle school males. This study contributes to the body of literature on the environment in which middle school Black males learn literacy skills, expands our understanding of the role schools play in the evolution of literacy learning for the Black male student, and offers solutions to their academic plight (J. Banks, 1995b; Hale, 2001; Kunjufu, 2008; Tatum, 2005).

Intervention programs are designed to meet the academic needs of at-risk students in selected schools. Under the umbrella of at-risk programs, which deem to provide literacy interventions, many programs are designed to meet the various literacy needs students. These programs include dropout-prevention and early-intervention programs, full-service schools (FSS), public-choice charter schools, teenage-parent programs, second-chance schools, English for speakers of other languages, language-immersion

schools, and Federal Title I programs. FSS provide a range of services and programs for students who are considered academically at-risk. Students may be considered at-risk due to a number of factors, such as chronic truancy, reading and mathematics assessment showing achievement below grade level, and lack of success in core academic classes. Public schools are required to provide programs and services that meet the needs of such students. Intervention programs thus have the common goal of reducing risk and maximizing the student's opportunity for educational success.

The FSS program brings together leading practices from the fields of education and mental health, with the mission of academic success for all students. The goal of FSS is to provide secondary schools with a special alternative program that meets the academic and social skills of students who exhibit behaviors that might lead to academic difficulties and may ultimately lead to withdrawing from school.

The Response-to-Intervention (RtI) process is the current multistep approach with increasing levels of intensity aimed at providing services and interventions to students who struggle with learning (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010). The progress students make at each stage of intervention is closely monitored. Results of this monitoring are used to make decisions about the need for further research-based instruction and/or intervention in general education, special education, or both (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2006). The response component of RtI requires data-based decision making; it is essential also to have the other three components: screening, progress monitoring, and multilevel instruction. In this model, students' individual needs are addressed rather than using a standard treatment protocol. Students in Tier 1 work to achieve proficiency in the general-education classroom, using the core curriculum.

Students who are struggling with the core curriculum are referred to the Tier-2 intervention by the general-education teacher. The overall purpose of the Tier-2 intervention is to improve educational opportunities for students who are not meeting the standards of the regular school or classroom setting by providing a more student-centered environment. Meeting the needs of these students will help them become successful academically, and allow them to grow and flourish in a supportive, smaller than usual, learning environment. The neighborhood school where this research was conducted is an FSS school.

Minority students, particularly Black male students, withdraw from schools at a higher rate than other students and are overrepresented in special education and underrepresented in advanced-placement and gifted courses (Holzman, 2004, 2010; T. Howard, 2008, 2010; Kozol, 2005; Kunjufu, 2005a, 2005b; Ladson-Billings, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 2005, 2006, 2009). The school is the vehicle for students' success and teachers are the agents to change a system that has failed to recognize the learning styles of diverse students. Educators must ensure equity and excellence for all students in attaining academic success (G. Howard, 2006; T. Howard, 2002).

The educational system requires significant changes in its structure to meet the needs of Black students. The first change must take place in the research of effective intervention programs that may be successful in meeting the needs of Black males. Current research implies that teachers of one ethnic group may have limited knowledge of the culture their students' different ethnic group, thus impacting their pedagogical practices, expectations of student behavior and ultimately, impacting student learning

(Bakari, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2001; G. Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billing, 2001; Mickelson & Greene, 2006). This information may sometimes distort their views on race and the ways in which students learn. If teachers ignore the ethnicity, culture, and gender differences of students in the classroom, students will fail (Gay, 2000, 2002; Haberman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2001, 2002, 2009; Sleeter, 2005). If academic interventions are not in place to meet the diverse needs of learners, students will fail. If teachers are not better pedagogically prepared and effective research-based interventions are not valued and put into practice, then the education system of the United States has failed (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006). Educators should embrace the students' strengths and address the diverse learning needs of an increasingly changing multicultural, multilingual student population (Bakari, 2003). This requires a major transformation of current school practices. These transformations should include interventions which can aid in establishing learning environments that promote a successful educational system benefiting all students, and in particular Black male students. The implementation of a culturally responsive curriculum may decrease the overrepresentation of Black male students in special-education programs, underrepresentation in gifted programs, and overrepresentation in the number of students withdrawing from high school before completion (Bauman et al., 2005; Bernard, 2003; Bok, 2003; Brown, 2007; Carter, 2000; Cohen, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Post, 2000; T. M. Eitle, 2002; Hale, 2001; Jordan & Cooper, 2001; Kafele, 2009).

Socioconstructivist-based instructional practices and effective learner-centered pedagogy may allow students to develop the skills to help them reach their potential. Furthermore, education can be used as a tool of liberation and an approach to diminish

cultural and societal oppression (Anyon & Greene, 2007; J. Banks, 2004; Freire, 1993). Therefore, the significance of the study is that education is the key to liberating the Black male middle school student, in particular and the overall student population.

Research Question

This study employed a quantitative methodology. Quantitative data were generated by a mean pretest posttest reading score on the BAS. The research question for this study was, What effect will a Tier-2 academic intervention have on the reading achievement of Black males in middle school? The following null and alternate hypotheses were tested:

Ho₁: There is no difference in the reading achievement of sixth-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ha₁: There is a difference in the reading achievement of sixth-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ho₂: There is no difference in the reading achievement of seventh-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ha₂: There is a difference in the reading achievement of seventh-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ho₃: There is no difference in the reading achievement of eighth-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ha₃: There is a difference in the reading achievement of eighth-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Definition of Terms

Academic Achievement. In this study, academic achievement was defined as a score on the reading component of the Benchmark Assessment System.

Academic Intervention. In this study, academic intervention referred to the degree of teacher-student interaction. The students in the intervention received additional time and resources in reading within a smaller (<10 students), socioconstructivist learning environment.

Socioconstructivist Learning Environment. In this study socioconstructivist learning environment referred to teaching and learning practices that encourage more social interaction, the honoring of cultural backgrounds in the classroom and within the contextual learning of curriculum material.

Assumptions of the Study

It was assumed that the Tier-2 intervention provided in this research was the only intervention the students received. It was further assumed, based on the information provided by the publisher, that the BAS is considered valid and reliable for its intended use. Additionally, it was assumed that the teachers of the intervention and nonintervention groups were equally well prepared and motivated. Finally, it was assumed that the students in the intervention and nonintervention groups were equally well-motivated.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited in several ways. First, the students were assigned to groups based on collaboration of the general education classroom teacher and the academic resource teacher rather than through randomization, thereby possibly affecting the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, there were six schools in the district that were FSS offering the Tier-2 intervention. However, only one school offered the intervention described in this document. Therefore only that one school is used in this study, which could also affect the generalizability of the results.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of a Tier-2 academic intervention guided by socioconstructivist pedagogy on student achievement as it related to the reading achievement of sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade Black male students. The study addressed the educational-achievement gap that exists between gender and along racial lines, specifically for Black males. The theoretical framework was based on Vygotsky's perspective of social-constructivist theory and on the premise that academic intervention tailored to student needs and delivered in a leaning environment founded on a socioconstructivist theory can make a difference in the achievement of students (Vygotsky, 1962, 1994; Vygotsky et al., 1987).

The research was quantitative in nature. The study focused on the effect of a Tier-2 academic intervention on the reading achievement of Black middle school male students, compared to Black male students who did not participate in this Tier-2 intervention. Reading achievement was the dependent variable and the Tier-2 intervention was the independent variable. A quantitative research question was used to

examine the null hypotheses. Limitations and assumptions of the study were discussed. Key terms of the study were also outlined.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background of the problem. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used to guide this research. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research. Chapter 5 presents the discussion of the findings and their ramifications, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature pertinent to socioconstructivist pedagogical principles, the learning styles of Black males, effective academic interventions at the state and local levels, and also describes the framework for Response-to-Intervention (RTI). Supporting research and studies were incorporated that related to supporting the academic lives of Black males. Finally, the significance of socioconstructivist theory in the development of pedagogy and practice aimed at enhancing the literacy development of this group of students was also included.

Socioconstructivist Pedagogical Principles and Purpose

Social constructivism asserts that individuals are born into “a system of intelligibility” (Crotty, 2003, p. 54) containing universal signs and symbols which are culturally mediated and provide meaning (Bruner, 1996; Schwandt, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). The philosophy of social constructivism views knowledge as created by the interchange between social subjects and objects in the world (Crotty, 2003; Schwandt, 2000).

One of the primary purposes of socioconstructivist pedagogical principles is to provide a learning environment in which students learn transferable knowledge. This occurs when knowledge may be applied to multiple experiences in a holistic sense. Karpov (2003), concludes that both procedural and conceptual knowledge, known in Vygotskian terms as scientific knowledge, are worthwhile goals for student learning, otherwise, students acquire a large amount of random knowledge as well as useless

procedures (p. 68-69), “rote skills are meaningless and nontransferable, and pure verbal knowledge is inert” (p. 70). He argues for this combination to promote, “a high level of mastery, broad transfer, and intentional use by students” (p. 69). A learner’s prior knowledge is another critical element of socioconstructivism and is a powerful factor in student learning to extending and building knowledge (Richardson, 2003). The overarching purpose in socioconstructivism lies in the holistic nature of learning and transferability of knowledge used to develop students as well-rounded individuals and contributing members of their communities.

The social or situational context and a student’s prior knowledge are important elements in a socioconstructivist environment. Moreover, socioconstructivism, with its emphasis on knowledge construction, is considered to foster democratic learning situations where individuality and culture are supported. The true origins of socioconstructivism lie in constructionist epistemology and the philosophy of knowledge with the assumption that all knowledge is created via engagement with the human mind in meaningful, personally engaging learning environments (Karpov, 2003). Socioconstructivist pedagogy emphasizes both popular and theoretical knowledge as well as the need for learning to be relevant, engaging, and to prepare students for active participation in the community. The multiple benefits of pursuing socioconstructivist principles in the classroom, such as improved student learning of academic material and social interaction, embracing culture and diversity, and authentic assessment are beneficial to pedagogical research with the goal of understanding the literacy development of Black males.

Black Males Left Behind

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), a significant demographic conversion is on the horizon for the United States. Recent research exposes concerns about education and employability for young Black men (Akos, 2002; Ascher & Branch-Smith, 2005; Bok, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2004b; T. Howard, 2002, 2008; Kunjufu, 2005a; Martino, 2008; Noguera, 2003, 2008; Tatum, 2000, 2005). Recent education and labor statistics report that only half of Black men aged 16 to 24 who are out of school are employed at any given time (Holzman, 2010; Livingston & Wirt, 2005; Planty et al., 2008; Rampey et al., 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011; Wirt et al., 2001; Wirt et al., 2003). Depending on which states' statistics one uses, between 30% and 50% of Black men do not finish high school. About one-third spend time in prison before their 35th birthday. Among high school dropouts, approximately 57% are incarcerated (Schiraldi & Ziedenberg, 2002). Although young Black women have been achieving higher levels of education and incomes, the education and income of Black men continues to decline (Bakari, 2003; Coley, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2004b; T. Howard, 2002, 2008; Martino, 2008; Noguera, 2003, 2008; Steele, 2003; Strayhorn, 2007; Tatum, 2000, 2004, 2005). The academic and social challenges that confront African American males in classrooms suggest a pressing need for systematic interventions on the part of educators (Darling-Hammond, 2004b; Edelman, Holzer, & Offner, 2006; Grantham, 2004; T. Howard, 2002, 2008; Kitwana, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Noguera, 2003, 2008; Tatum, 2000, 2004, 2005).

Although much of America's educational community is discussing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), little research has been conducted that addresses the

achievement gap and the overall success of Black males (Akos, 2002; Bakari, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2004b; T. Howard, 2001, 2003, 2010; Kunjufu, 2005a; Tatum, 2000, 2005). In short, Black males are failing to thrive in many school settings. Young Black males rank highest among students who choose to leave school; are suspended or expelled; score poorly on tests; have low GPAs and high rates of referral and placement in special education; and are underrepresented in academically rigorous education settings such as advanced placement, gifted, and honors learning environments (Anyon & Greene, 2007; Craciun & Snow-Renner, 2002; Livingston & Wirt, 2005; Rampey et al., 2009; Tatum, 2000, 2005; Titus, 2004; Whiting, 2006, 2009; Wirt et., 2003).

Although elementary school aged Black males are those referred to primarily in the data referenced above, the data hold most true for Black males in middle and high schools (Dynarski & Gleason, 2002; Livingston & Wirt, 2005; Planty et al., 2008; Rampey et al., 2009; Schinke, Cole, & Poulin, 2000; Wirt et al., 2001; Wirt et al., 2003). As Black males proceed through the educational system, they appear to become less engaged academically (R. Ferguson, 2003; Hale, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Tatum, 2005). They seem to have learned to underachieve (Ford, 1996), to devalue school and academics (T. Howard, 2001, 2002, 2003; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ogbu, 2003, 2004; Tatum, 2005), and to reject school as a place to develop their sense of identity, particularly self-worth and self-efficacy (Connor, 2003; T. Howard, 2002, 2003, 2008; Kitwana, 2002; Kunjufu, 2005a; Tatum, 2000, 2005).

Efforts by educators and educational researchers can and must play a pivotal proactive role in promoting developmental initiatives at both the elementary and secondary levels for Black males (R. Ferguson, 2002; T. Howard, 2010; Tatum, 2005).

Such initiatives must focus on helping Black males develop the attitudes, behaviors, and values necessary to function at optimal levels at school and in the world (Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; C. Lee, 1991, 2006; Polite & Davis, 1999; Tatum, 2005). School reforms that will impact the academic community as a whole are seen by many educational researchers as way to substantially change the outlook of Black males in public schools (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Archer & Yamashita, 2003; Aronson & Good, 2002; Bok, 2003; Brozo, 2005; Coley, 2001; Curran, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2001; T. Howard, 2001, 2002, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Tatum, 2000, 2004, 2005).

Educational scholars are seeking ways to transform the curriculum and structure of the American educational system to address the diversity of students (Hale, 2001; Kitwana, 2002; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Polite & Davis, 1999; Tatum, 2005). Literacy development researcher Cummins (2001) presented a theoretical framework for analyzing minority students' school failure and the relative lack of success of previous attempts at educational reform. Cummins suggested that these attempts have been unsuccessful because they have not significantly altered the relationships between educators and minority students and between schools and minority communities. Still other educational researchers pointed out that, as a result of lack of representation of Black male role models in their classrooms, coupled with the overrepresentation of female teachers who do not effectively teach literacy in boy-friendly ways, Black male students' voices and identities are silenced in the classroom (Ferguson, 2001; Fine & Powell, 2001; Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Hale, 2001; Hass Dyson, 2003; T. Howard, 2001,

2002, 2003, 2010; Kitwana, 2002; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Martino et al., 2004; Tatum, 2000, 2005).

Few schools in the United States provide curricula designed to meet the needs of Black male students (Akos, 2002; Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Bakari, 2003; Boyd-Franklin & Franklin, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2004b; Delpit, 1995; Hale, 2001; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2009; E. Smith, 2009; R. Smith, 2005; Strayhorn, 2007; Tatum, 2005; Titus; 2004). The scholars referenced above suggest the use of curriculum and methods of instruction that take into account and honor students' culture and previous knowledge. They also suggest that educators differentiate instruction to take into account the diverse learning styles of boys of all races. As a result of what the scholars refer to as a cultural and pedagogical disconnect between teacher and learner, many Black students do poorly. These authors express that students' identities must be an integral part in their educational process. However, the educational system does not provide opportunities for minority students to articulate their identities (Blake & Van Sickle, 2001; Brown, 2007; Coley, 2001; Cummins, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2004b; Davis, 2003; T. Howard, 2002, 2008; Kitwana, 2002; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Tatum, 2005).

In current educational reforms, many school districts miss the opportunity to allow teachers time to enhance practice and pedagogy through meaningful professional development aimed at closing the achievement gap between Black males and their peers (Shippen et al., 2006; Simpson & Schnitzer, 2005; Sleeter, 2005). Administration at the district level and instructional coaches at the school level must consider that text selection along with social and cultural context heavily influences interpretation and adds personal

meaning to learning (Resnick & Glennan, 2002). This is especially important when considering the needs of Black males. Unfortunately, this is not the current state of education in most urban districts. Consequently, minority students' self-advocacy should force educators to reexamine the curriculum and make the needed changes (T. Howard, 2002, 2008). The increasing cultural diversity of the student population in the United States has led to a need for greater multiculturalism training so teachers are better prepared to be culturally sensitive and responsive to a diverse student population (J. Banks & Banks, 2001; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Martino, 2008; Martino & Kehler, 2007; Martino, Kehler, Weaver-Hightower, 2009; Rowan et al., 2002; Skelton, 2001; Titus, 2004; Younger & Warrington, 2005).

The Learning Styles and Culture of Black Males

Psychologists, researchers, and educators have found that a large percentage of Black males are abstract random learners (Blake & Van Sickle, 2001; Delpit, 2003; Hale, 2001; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003; Merida, 2007; Ogbu, 1991, 2002b, 2003, 2004; Tatum, 2000, 2005; White, 2007; Whiting, 2006, 2009). Learning-styles research illustrates that abstract random learners work best when they (a) can work and share with others; (b) have open communication with others; (c) have a noncompetitive atmosphere; (d) have a personally satisfying environment; (e) have social activities to balance work; and (f) have freedom from control by others (Butler & Pinto-Zipp, 2005; Gardner, 1983, 1993, 2000; Reijo, 2000; Veenman, Prins, & Verheij, 2003; Zwanenberg, Wilkinson, & Anderson, 2000).

Black educational researchers concur with Butler's findings that Black males fit into this abstract-random mode of learning (Hale, 2001; T. Howard, 2001, 2002, 2008,

2010; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Tatum, 2005). These students are like puzzle pieces; they bring their own unique abilities to the group to form a puzzle. Freire (1993) posited that the education of students in their social and cultural settings becomes a tool of liberation. To this end, pedagogical practices that fail to acknowledge a child's culture, language, and/or identity may lead to academic problems as well as social problems in the community.

McCaslin and Hickey (2001) believed, "Learning, motivation, and identity are closely bound to context, specifically to participation in the activities of a community where learning is practiced and valued" (p. 137). When students are engaged in a discussion free of constraints, they become critical thinkers and take an active role in their learning process; when teachers become facilitators, the responsibility for learning is put in the hands of the students (Freire, 1993; Hale, 2001; Kitwana, 2002; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Tatum, 2005).

The socioconstructivist pedagogy seeks to provide students with a sense of self-worth and pride in their efforts to educate themselves. A socioconstructivist classroom environment also allows students to build relationships among themselves and gain invaluable interpersonal skills (T. Howard, 2002, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2002). In a technologically advancing environment, these skills of collaboration are required to work with others and be successful (Urda & Midgley, 2003).

Most secondary schools in the United States operate in a traditional way. In the traditional school setting, the goal is to transmit to the next generation those skills, facts, pieces of information, and standards of moral and social conduct that adults deem to be necessary for the next generation's academic, financial, and social success (Babkie, 2006;

Kleibard, 1995; Pitri, 2004; Richardson, 1997). As beneficiaries of this traditionalism, which educational progressivist Dewey (1938) described as being “imposed from above and from outside” (p. 18), the students are expected to docilely and obediently receive and believe this transfer of information (Dewey, 1938).

Most socioconstructivists agree that this model of instruction promotes neither the interaction between existing and new knowledge nor the conversations and interactions necessary for internalization or deep understanding (Dewey, 1938; T. Howard, 2010; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ogbu, 2003; Richardson, 1997; Tatum, 2005). These pedagogical understandings cause educational researchers to speculate that Black males face academic obstacles in classrooms where teachers have authoritarian personalities and where the students are made to sit docilely without kinesthetic interactions or opportunities to apply and learn abstract reasoning (Darling-Hammond, 2001; T. Howard, 2002, 2010; Kitwana, 2002; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Tatum, 2005). An underlying cause of schooling disconnection is that Black males are often not armed with the social norms to adjust to the traditional schooling environment; this social disconnection sometimes hinders them from achieving because they are not acquiring the skills necessary to be successful socially and academically (Hale, 2001; T. Howard, 2010; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Tatum, 2005). According to these authors, the learning styles of Black male students are often overlooked in schools, suggesting that school environments and classroom instruction requires restructuring.

Ladson-Billings (1994) affirmed that Black parents want their children to be successful, but not at the price of losing their culture. Hale-Benson (1986) stated, “Black

children need an educational system that first recognizes their abilities and their culture, that draws upon these strengths and that incorporates them into their learning process” (p. 4). According to Hale-Benson (1986), the culture of the students plays an important role in their learning process and their socialization. Social scientists offer the rationale that Black culture is incompatible with the schools and causes Black males to face unnecessary learning challenges in school (Fine & Powell, 2001; Hale, 2001; T. Howard, 2001, 2008, 2010; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Tatum, 2005). In order to counter these challenges, teachers must become personally invested in their Black male students in ways that move beyond the existing curriculum. Teaching and learning must take place in responsive environments where the literacy of Black males will flourish (Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010).

Hale-Benson (1986, 1988) explained the cultural style of Black males, arguing that the schools must be able to understand the Black culture in order to relate to them. For example, Hale-Benson stated: “Black people tend to prefer novelty, freedom, and personal distinctiveness” (p. 42). Hale-Benson’s examination of secondary schools showed that this key element of Black males’ culture must be taken into account when addressing their academic needs (Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Ogbu, 2003, 2004; Tatum, 2000, 2005). If this is excluded, many Black males will face difficulty in achieving at a high level.

In addition, Black males in many cases communicate through a different language or dialect called Black English or Ebony Phonics (Ebonics) as well as through nonverbal gestures. This nontraditional language creates a barrier in the literacy-skills development of Black males (Baugh, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Rahman, 2008). It also makes it

difficult for Black males to achieve and perform well on standardized reading-achievement tests because they often lack the literacy and writing skills necessary to be successful (Hale, 2001; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Younger & Warrington, 2005).

In this light, Black males are seen as slow learners and tracked into the lower ability groups (T. Howard, , 2008, 2010; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Tatum, 2000, 2005). Tatum (2005) argued that this happens to a great extent in the secondary schools. The teachers' failure to recognize the uniqueness of Black males' culture sends a message and perpetuates the stereotype that Blacks are intellectually inferior to Whites (Hale, 2001; T. Howard, 2001, 2008, 2010; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Sommers, 2000; Tatum, 2005). That failure also reinforces the social and economic stratification that is already prevalent in society.

According to Tatum (2005), many Black males realize this form of mistreatment in the schools and it contributes to their disruptive behavior (Franklin, 2004; Kitwana, 2002; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ogbu, 2003; Tatum, 2000, 2005). A literacy and cultural researcher, T. Howard (2001, 2002), interviewed Black males and came to the conclusion that their experiences were similar across schools. Most of them were tracked into the lower classes because of their disruptive behavior in the classroom due to their unwillingness to conform to the educational system, or they withdrew from school (Hale, 2001; T. Howard, 2001, 2002; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Ogbu, 2003; Sommers, 2000; Tatum, 2005).

Academic Intervention: A Framework to Improve Schools

NCLB requires states and school districts to act aggressively to turn around failing schools. “NCLB includes 31 different interventions of varying degrees of rigor available to state and local policymakers when faced with schools whose students fail to make adequate yearly academic progress” (Brady, 2003, p. vii). Including but not limited to instituting a new curriculum, extending the school day or year, and providing professional development for teachers and school leaders. The act also sets forth a scope and sequence by which the interventions and programs are to be put into practice (Brady, 2003; Malen, Croninger, Muncey, & Redmond-Jones, 2002).

According to research conducted by the Ford Foundation in 2003, as of August 2002, 38 states had some form of accountability system for schools, and since 1989 at least 30 jurisdictions across 22 states have sought to intervene in failing schools (Brady, 2003). Such well-intended efforts begin with a contradiction in terms. Extensive research has been done about how effective schools work; but, it is far less clear how to move an ineffective school from failure to success (M. Baker & Foote, 2006; Carter, 2000; Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center, 2006; Craciun & Snow-Renner, 2002; Duke, 2007; Graczewski, Ruffin, Shaumbaugh, & Therriault, 2007; Kannapel & Coe, 2000; Murnane, 2007; Roderick, Easton, & Bender-Sebring, 2009).

Several lessons can be learned from America’s previous practice with state and district-level interventions into failing schools: (a) Many decision makers are more inclined to accept failing schools than to intervene; (b) Some mitigation efforts have improved some schools, but success is not the norm; (c) No particular intervention appears more successful than any other; (d) Interventions are uneven in their

implementation and difficult to sustain; (e) It is nearly impossible to determine which interventions are most effective because they are attempted in significantly different situations; and (f) School leadership is a common thread in most successful efforts (Brady, 2003; Malen et al., 2002; Marks & Nance, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

School leaders faced with failing schools should not feel encumbered by the number of intervention strategies that may lie at their disposal. Rather, they should know that the specific strategy they select is less important than the right mix of people, supportive energy, and instructional timing (Brady, 2003). Instructional leaders should also resist passing quick decisions when making instructional- and curriculum-related decisions, as it may be several years before a successful intervention shows results (Brady, 2003; Kannapel & Coe, 2000; Malen et al., 2002).

NCLB may expect too much too fast, but instructional leaders should know the environment of their school and make adjustments to meet student needs accordingly. Keeping in mind that even the strongest interventions specified in NCLB are not likely to cause some schools to successfully mitigate the problem, policymakers and instructional leaders need to consider a variety of research-based options for children in failing schools with an understanding of the demographics of the school and its distinctiveness (Kessler, 2000; Orfield & Lee, 2006).

Some educators argued that student success is directly related to prior academic achievement and school resources (Akos, 2002; Cartledge, Sentelle, Loe, Lambert, & Reed, 2001; Graziano, Reavis, Keane, & Calkins, 2007; Jensen, 2005; Marks, 2000). These educators posited that students' prior achievement provides a foundation for future

learning. Many education researchers suggested that the elementary-to-middle school transition plays an important role in the developmental trajectory of students (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Emmons & Baskerville, 2005; Fenzel, 1989; Franklin, 2004; Gibbs, 2009; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; T. Howard, 2002, 2010; Schacter, 2003; Urdan & Midgley, 2003).

Extensive educational research has examined the effects of the contradiction between Black educational ideologies and the actual benefits Blacks tend to recognize from education (J. Banks, 2006; Brown, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2004a; Davis, 2003; Hooks, 2004; T. Howard, 2008; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Martino et al., 2009; Noguera, 2003, 2008; Steele, 2003; Tatum, 2005). This contradiction in belief affects Black youths' school behavior, which, in turn, affects their academic achievement (Aronson & Good, 2002; Boyd-Franklin & Franklin, 2000; Hale, 2001; Hooks, 2004; T. Howard, 2002, 2008; Kunjufu, 2005a, Ladson-Billings, 2002; Ogbu, 2004, Tatum, 2005, Young, 2007). On the one hand, Blacks understand that a quality education is the best means for social and economic mobility. On the other hand, life experiences can paint a mixed picture. Many Black males are oftentimes socialized to believe that opportunities sometimes do not exist equally for Black people; therefore, they believe they have to be better than their White counterparts to be considered academically equal (Hale, 2001; T. Howard, 2002, 2010; Kozol, 1992, 1995; Kunjufu, 2005a, Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2009; Ogbu, 2004, Tatum, 2005). At the same time that Black male students are keenly aware of this contradiction, they also proclaim their belief in education being a principal factor in their social success.

Ogbu's (2003) controversial theory of an oppositional cultural framework proposes that certain minority youth refrain from activities that lead to academic achievement. Activities such as speaking standard vernacular English, associating with primarily White peers, doing homework, and participating in class can be seen as ethnically inauthentic and can promote social problems in peer relationships (Archer & Yamashita, 2003; Ascher & Branch-Smith, 2005; 2000; Brown, 2007; Davis, 2003; Delpit & Dowdy, 2002; Dyson, 2001; Edelman et al., 2006; A. Ferguson, 2000; Hale, 2001; Hooks, 2004; Horvat & O'Connor, 2006; T. Howard, 2002; Johnson, Crosnoe & Elder, 2001; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ogbu, 2004; Tatum, 2005). To avoid losing one's identity, some students avoid such behaviors. Ogbu (2003) suggested that some Black males adopt an oppositional attitude toward school success. The concept of an oppositional cultural framework is one element of a larger theoretical construct Ogbu noted as "community forces" (Ogbu, 1999, p. 156). Ogbu emphasized that this framework, together with structural forces (like unequal schooling, discrimination in the economy and policy) and community forces, form a cultural ecological model of minority underachievement, specifically among young Black males.

The controversy surrounding Ogbu's work is tied to criticisms that it deemphasizes the structural contributions to minority underachievement, ignores variations among Black students' responses to schooling and peer pressure, and essentially lays primary responsibility for poor grades and tests on students' oppositional academic and cultural frameworks and views of successful academic achievement. These scholars convey that Black students develop an oppositional toward academic achievement (Archer & Yamashita, 2003; J. Banks, 2004, 2006; Bok, 2003; Brown, 2007;

Coley, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2001, 2004b; Dyson, 2001; Horvat & O'Connor, 2006; Kunjufu, 2005a; Tatum, 2005; West, 1993). Perhaps the most controversial variant of this theory proposes that Blacks who do well in school may be ostracized by peers who accuse them of acting White (Franklin, 2004; Gay, 2000; T. Howard, 2002, 2003; Ogbu, 2003; 2004; Tatum, 2000, 2005; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009; Tileston & Darling, 2008). Furthermore, the tension between peer acceptance and high academic achievement is even more critical for males.

Educational theorists and researchers suggested that Black males develop a mechanism of disengagement that helps them cope with the stresses of being young and Black (Archer & Yamashita, 2003; Aronson & Good, 2002; Brown, 2007; Noguera, 2008; Ogbu, 2003, 2004; Oyserman, Harrison & Bybee, 2001; Payne & Slocumb, 2010; Tatum, 2000, 2005; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009). They proposed that Black males learn to develop a distinctive style of coolness that encompasses variations in styles of dress, communication, walk, and presentation of self (Davis, 2003; T. Howard, 2008; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ogbu, 2003, 2004; Payne & Slocumb, 2010; Rahman, 2008). Finding the balance between social acceptance and academic achievement requires a special skill these students do not value as having social significance (Boyd-Franklin & Franklin, 2000; Kunjufu, 2005a; Tatum, 2000, 2005; Whiting, 2009). New programs that require secondary schools to seek ways to personalize the secondary school experience are instrumental in circumventing this mentality and providing these students with venues for success in secondary school and college (Hale, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2002; C. Lee, 2001; Tatum, 2005; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009; Whiting, 2006, 2009).

Additionally, consideration of the Black–White test score gap indicates the need for academic enrichment, interventions, and support to counteract the deficiencies that many Black males presently encounter (Barton, 2004; Blake & Van Sickle, 2001; Chubb & Loveless, 2002; Cummins, 2001; Curran, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Edelman, 2006; Ellison, Boykin, Towns, & Stokes, 2000; Gibbs, 2009; Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002; McWhorter, 2003; Noguera, 2002, 2003, 2008; Tatum, 2005). Clearly, the push for results-based accountability did not start with NCLB. Its genesis can be found in the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report and the subsequent establishment of national education goals in 1990 (Bernhardt, 2003). These mandates prompted states to establish curriculum standards and testing and accountability systems to ensure that schools teach to these standards. This process was further encouraged by the 1994 amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Goals 2000 program, both of which provided targeted financial support to improve low-performing schools.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act provided substantial funds for the overall improvement of low-performing schools throughout the United States. In contrast, under the Goals 2000 initiatives, Congress appropriated \$105 million in 1994 to provide grants, each year until the new millennium, to school districts that established a framework in which to identify world-class academic standards, measure student progress, and provide the support that students may need to meet the standards (Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center, 2006; Olson, 2002).

Innovative Academic Interventions Models at the State Level

The academic achievement gap between high- and low-performing students remains large, and a substantial number of schools continue to perform at low levels.

Moreover, low-income and minority students are disproportionately represented in these low-performing schools. Davis (2003) discussed the importance of education reform and Black male students. In observing two broad components of effective programs, Davis discovered that there are two components of effective programs: (a) these schools function as caring, cohesive communities, and (b) they operate using cultural norms, policies, and practices. Ideas and resources must be sought to determine what makes a school a caring community and what the characteristics of high-reliability schools are. In FSS schools, students are given more personalized attention that takes into account community and cultural norms. These schools operate through practices and policies that work with families to create cohesive, equitable learning communities, inside and outside the school building.

The Tennessee State Board of Education adopted rules in 2008 that encourage schools to use students' eighth-grade state assessment scores and other informal assessments to identify unprepared ninth-grade students and to step in with assistance (Holzman, 2004; Marks & Nance, 2007). Schools were required to experiment with ways to accomplish this task, including establishing an accelerated program to bring middle school students up to grade level (Cartledge et al., 2001; Christie, 2006; Holzman, 2004). The state of Washington instituted *Project Graduation*, which identifies eighth-grade students needing help and offers a 4- to 6-week summer program for incoming freshman identified with reading and mathematics deficiencies, lower teacher–student ratio in middle grades, and the best teachers for middle school (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Heppen & Thierrault, 2008).

Hawaii's 2006–2010 P-20 strategic plan included a recommendation to ensure that middle school students receive the instructional and support services necessary for successful completion of high school (M. Baker & Foote, 2006; Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center, 2006; Linn, 2000; Olson, 2002). Thus, the intervention experience to date results mainly from states and districts acting on their own, not waiting for federal mandates. Louisiana's Commission on High School Reform suggested the state should focus first developing its middle school grades by putting practices and structures into place that will create more personalization of academics, as well as provide better, differentiated instruction for students who are behind (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center, 2006).

FSS is a District of Columbia school-reform model for restructuring programs addressing middle school students with persistent truancy, discipline problems, and poor student achievement, measured by the district's high-stakes assessment instruments. The goal of FSS is academic success for all students; social, emotional, and behavioral well-being for all students; strong partnerships between families and schools; and coordinated and effective delivery of services and supports. The model includes both structural and curriculum reforms and inclusion of an assistant principal of intervention, Department of Mental Health worker or clinician, a wrap-around care coordinator, and an academic resource teacher. It also calls for schools to reorganize into small learning communities to reduce student isolation and social anonymity.

Full-Service Schools

The FSS program brings leading practices from the fields of education, mental health, and social services into a local school with the goal of ensuring academic, social,

and cultural success for all students (R. Lee, 2005). In each FSS, there is an assistant principal of intervention, a Department of Mental Health clinician, a Wrap Care coordinator, two instructional coaches for teacher professional development, a student family-care coordinator, a Five-to-One mentor, and, for students identified as needing academic support, an Academic Resource Teacher. These social and academic clinicians work with school staff, students, and families toward implementation of the four essential elements of the model: (a) positive behavior support, (b) strategic design for student achievement, (c) systems of care, and (d) inquiry- and research-based decision making.

Considering the current achievement gap, there is a great need to understand and address the needs of Black males. The early identification of Black males at risk of academic failure is critical to their educational success. Research has been conducted on alternative learning programs in urban school settings in the United States (Cummins, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Gay, 2000, 2002; Grantham, 2004; Haberman, 2005; Hale, 2001; T. Howard, 2002, 2003, 2008, 2010; Kozol, 2005; Martino, 2008). In recent research funded by the Schott Foundation for Public Education and conducted by Holzman (2010), it was revealed that nationally, between 15% and 30% of students will withdraw before they finish high school. This figure is significantly higher for Black and Hispanic students and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds and is more prominent among males in each of the aforementioned categories.

Specific objectives must be established to address the academic and social demands of these students, ranging from low self-esteem to poor academics and attendance. Providing Black male students with a safe and nurturing environment, where they can be successful without giving up their cultural and social norms, can lead to their

overall success (T. Howard, 2002, 2003, 2008, Maynard, 2002; Noguera, 2003; Tatum, 2000, 2005; Whiting, 2009; Zuljan, 2007). The nation must radically transform the centerpiece of these boys' educational lives in the public school system. Although this country's entire education system needs to be reformed, the schools serving poor minority male children are in the most urgent need of reinvention (Holzman, 2010; Tatum, 2004; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009; Titus, 2004).

Intervention: An Aid to Closing the Achievement Gap

There is a long history of structural inequality in high-minority schools; these inequalities include, for example, academic-tracking practices, inadequately trained teachers, and unacceptable levels of academic progress (Akos, 2002; Ascher & Branch-Smith, 2005; Barton, 2004; T. Howard, 2010; Kozol, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2004, 2006; O'Connor & DeLuca, 2006; Ogbu, 2002a; Payne, 2003; Ravitch, 2000; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Recent research indicates a correlation between low levels of achievement and socioeconomic status (Chubb & Loveless, 2002; Coley, 2001; M. Corcoran, 2001; E. Ellison et al., 2000; Hale, 2001; NAEP, 2009; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009; Ogbu, 2002b, 2003, 2004). According to this research, the highest number of students who are identified as at risk of academic failure are Black male children living in low socioeconomic environments who face low levels of achievement. At-risk students must be identified early to prevent academic failures and to close the academic achievement gap. Providing assistance to students once they have encountered problems can lead to learning opportunities for Black males that all children deserve (Kitwana, 2002; Kozol, 2007; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 2002a, 2003, 2004; Tatum, 2005; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009). It is much

easier to edify a child than it is to reeducate an adult. With this philosophy in mind, strategies must be in place early to help students succeed.

In public education, the needs of all students must be met, which involves a restructuring schools across the nation (Ginwright, 2004; Graczewski et al., 2007; Holzman, 2010; G. Howard, 2006; Kim, 2005; Kim & Crasco, 2006; Kleiner et al., 2002; Knight, 2003; Kozol, 2005; Pollock, 2004, 2008). For Black males growing up in environments where adult males around them have not completed their education, the value of school to their future is seen as a false promise (Archer & Yamashita, 2003; Boyd-Franklin & Franklin, 2000; Davis, 2003; Dyson, 2001; Ogbu, 1991; Tatum, 2005). These young men further resist the idea that schooling has value, particularly if the literacy instruction in their schools leaves them with a feeling of invisibility (Ginwright, 2004; Hooks, 2004; T. Howard, 2001, 2002; Johnson et al., 2001; Jordan & Cooper, 2001; McEwan, 2002; Noddings, 2000; Noguera, 2002; Rosenblatt, 2004). Creating and maintaining a safe, nurturing environment for all students who are at-risk of academic failure in a broader scope will assist in meeting the needs of Black male students (Davis, 2003; Nasir, McLaughlin & Jones, 2009; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009).

In today's society, there is an urgent need to meet all educational goals and expectations for all students. This is especially true for Black males in today's public schools. With school violence at an all-time high, intervention programs and strategies must be employed to provide a safe educational environment (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). In recent years, the percentage of Black students in secondary schools has changed. Black students are the second highest ethnic group to drop-out of

school, following American Indians (Holzman, 2010; Livingston & Wirt, 2005; NAEP, 2009; National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

Drop-out and graduation rates, however, are only two lenses through which to view the educational outlook of Black male students. NAEP (2009) measures student achievement at various grade levels in reading and mathematics. According to this data, the percentage of Black male students meeting academic proficiency in Grade 8 reading is 15% in Kentucky and New Jersey. The majority of other participating states reported single-digit percentages (Holzman, 2010).

The silencing of Black males' voices in schools causes them to become bored and to feel disenfranchised, and is a contributing factor to their counterproductive behavior in the classroom, poor academic achievement, and growing school withdrawal rates (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Davis, 2003; A. Ferguson, 2000; Hooks, 2004; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Nieto, 2004; Noguera, 2003, 2008; Ogbu, 2003, 2004; Payne, 2003, 2008; Payne & Slocumb, 2010; Tatum, 2005). According to the research, Black males reported that teachers often did not allow them to share their opinions and placed little value on the knowledge and behavioral norms that these students brought to the learning community. It seems that for these students to be successful, they have to leave the norms that make them successful outside the school (Connor, 2003; Curran, 2004; Dyson, 2001; Hale, 2001; T. Howard, 2002, 2003, 2008). Conversely, strong educators of Black males try to situate learning activities to create meaning and engage these students in the thinking and doing process that empowers them in their learning and academic development. These educators also encourage their social development to include who they are outside the school setting (Noguera, 2002, 2003; Ogbu, 2003, 2004;

Osterman, 2000; Oyserman et al., 2001; R. Smith, 2005; Sommers, 2000; Steele, 2003; Tatum, 2000, 2004, 2005; Whiting, 2009).

Curriculum and instruction for Black males must have value in their current life and space if it is to attract and sustain their attention. Pedagogical practices must address their academic issues and concerns in a way that will lead them to examine their own lives, academic achievement, social growth, and development (Kalekin-Fishman, 2004). Teaching and learning for Black males must help them understand that their academic success will provide them with greater opportunities to participate in all the good that America has to offer. While current curricula and learning plans have fallen short of addressing the academic, cultural, emotional, and social needs of Black males, many of them have not given up the hope that their academic success is a viable tool that will lead them out of the clutches of poverty (Harper, 2007; Obama, 2006; Orfield & Lee, 2005; Powell, 2008; Tatum, 2005).

One of the major goals of an intervention program is to provide students who are at risk of academic failure with research-based pedagogy, practice, and professionals prepared to help them achieve academically at high standards (Allington, 2001; Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Marzano, 2004; Mason & Schumm, 2003; McEwan, 2002). These programs should also take into account students' learning styles. Based on their academic achievement, it is imperative that interventions are put in place to assist Black males in dealing with the academic, social, and emotional stressors of school (Kessler, 2000).

In the framework of a socioconstructivist intervention, Black males work collaboratively in the learning community to build learning bridges that embrace the academic, cultural, and linguistic norms of these students (Cartledge et al., 2001; Cohen,

2001; Cummins, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2001, 2004a, 2004b; Davis, 2003; Gay, 2000; Gayles, 2005; Ginwright, 2004; Tatum, 2000, 2004, 2005; Tileston & Darling, 2008). Furthermore, through collaborative inquiry and as active participants in the learning community, Black males gain opportunities to discuss and learn how language, literacy, and culture are essential to their academic and social success within and outside the classroom (Bernard, 2003; Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; Blake & Van Sickle, 2001; Brozo, 2002, 2005; Carter, 2000; Franklin, 2004; Gay, 2000, 2002; T. Howard, 2001; Knight, 2003; Kozol, 1992, 1995, 2005; Whiting, 2006, 2009; Young, 2007; Younger & Warrington, 2005; Zweig, 2003). Interventions that incorporate the values, culture, and norms of the community in their efforts to enhance children's well-being are most likely to be successful because newly learned behavior is easier to implement in a culturally familiar and supportive environment. In a broader perspective, by bringing cultural and gender issues to the curriculum, educators encourage opportunities to "interrogate essentialist understandings" (Watson, Kehler, & Martino, 2010, p. 357) of what it means to be a Black male and to create learning environments in which children of all ethnic groups are free to engage and improve their academic and social skills without fear of social, cultural, or academic repercussions (; J. Banks, 2004; Hale, 2001; Harper; 2007; T. Howard, 2002, 2008; Kunjufu, 2002, 2005; Ladson-Billing, 2009; Noddings, 2000; Ogbu, 2002a, 2003; Powell, 2008; Tatum, 2004, 2005; Watson, 2010).

Response to Intervention

Full Service Schools' (FSS) use a Response-to-Intervention (RtI) framework, which means school leaders and teachers use individual student achievement and behavior data to identify the support students need to achieve and meet grade-level

expectations. Frequent and ongoing assessments help determine the instructional approaches best suited to meet each student's needs (Berkeley, Bender, Gregg-Peaster, & Saunders, 2009; Buffen, Mattos, & Weber, 2008; Collier, 2010). Instead of providing isolated support services to students, services and support are fully integrated and available to all students at FSS.

The Response-to-Intervention (RtI) process is a multistep approach to providing services and interventions to students who struggle with learning at increasing levels of intensity (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010). The progress students make at each stage of intervention is closely monitored. Results of this monitoring are used to make decisions about the need for further research-based instruction and/or intervention in general education, special education, or both (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2006). The response component of RtI requires data-based decision making; it is essential also to have the other three components, screening, progress monitoring, and multilevel instruction. All components should be implemented using culturally responsive and evidence-based practices (Collier, 2010; National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010; see Figure 1).

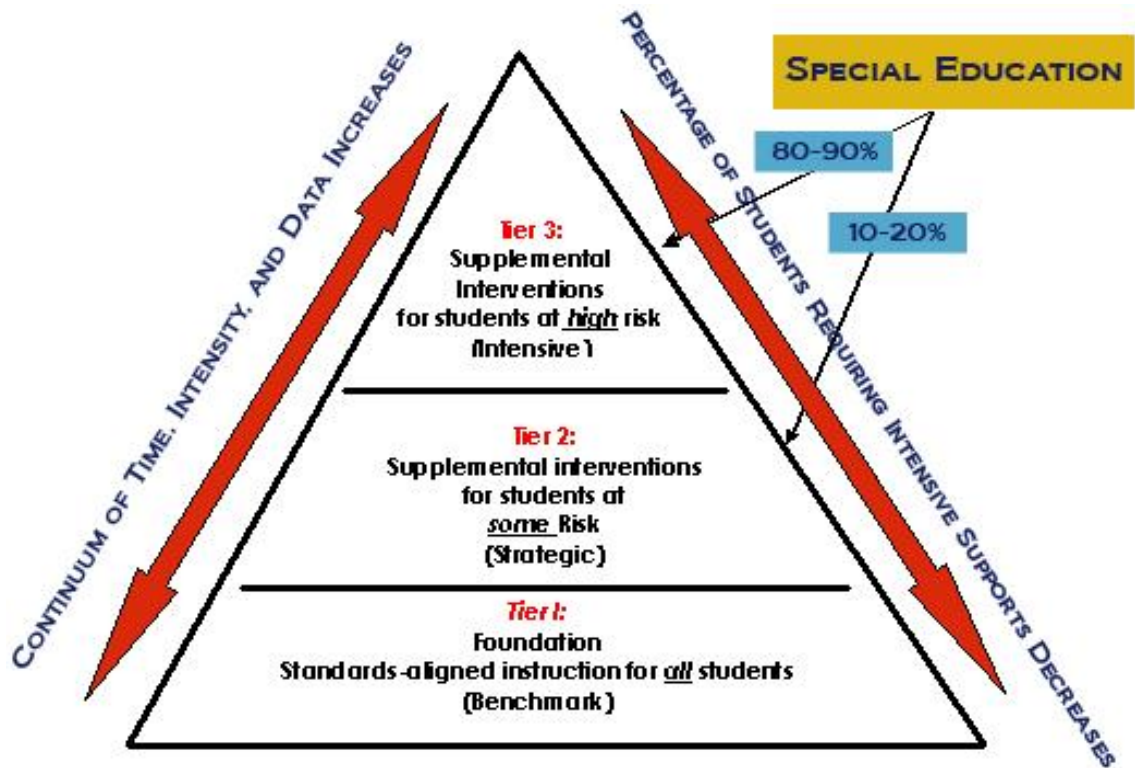


Figure 1: Organizational model of school for tiered instruction.

Note: From Tiered Instruction and Intervention in a Response-to-Intervention Model, by E. S. Shapiro, 2008, *RTI Action Network*. Retrieved from <http://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/tieredinstruction/tiered-instruction-and-intervention-rti-model>. Copyright by The National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Educators are likely to encounter struggling students in middle, junior, and high schools who have missed the academic-achievement target mark; that is, students who did not meet discrepancy criteria for learning-disabilities identification in elementary school and who are now having academic difficulty in a secondary school setting. Based on this, every district should establish a scientific process that provides support for students who require additional instructional or behavioral interventions throughout the K–12 system (Scherer, 2010). In the RTI approach, students who need high-quality, scientifically based instruction might be sufficiently assisted with interventions in general education and may not need special education.

The FSS model uses the three-tiered problem-solving model of RtI. In this model, students' individual needs are addressed rather than using a standard treatment protocol. Students in Tier 1 work to achieve proficiency in the general-education classroom, using the core curriculum. Students who are struggling with the core curriculum are referred to the Tier 2 intervention by the general-education teacher. The students are assessed using informal assessments to identify possible deficiencies in literacy development. These students receive small-group, differentiated instruction four times a week for 45 minutes in Tier 2 in addition to Tier-1 instruction in the regular classroom with the general-education teacher. Students who do not show academic progress or gains on the BAS in the Tier-2 intervention will receive additional support four times a week for 9 weeks and may be recommended for the Tier-3 component of RtI. Tier 3 is intensive one-on-one instruction to support students' individual needs. Students in Tier-3 may also be referred to special education to ensure that the instruction matches their needs and that additional academic support is provided at all three levels of intervention.

The Tier-2 intervention researched in this study is intended to serve students who would benefit from additional academic support in reading and mathematics. As presented by Scherer (2010), RtI can address both academic and behavioral concerns, can be applied to general- and special-education students, can be adapted to address student-specific needs, and will look different in every school. Researching culturally integrative intervention programs can provide beneficial insight into whether school reforms that include intervention programs can make a difference in the academic achievement of Black male students who are at risk of academic failure.

Supporting Academic Excellence in the Lives of Black Males

National reports and research overwhelmingly reinforce the well-known and unfortunate reality that Black males face academic barriers as they strive to achieve success in school and social settings (Brown, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2001, 2004a; Darling-Hammond & Post, 2000; Davis, 2003; Emmons & Baskerville, 2005; Grantham, 2004; Haberman, 2005; Hale, 2001; Harper, 2007; Holzman, 2010; T. Howard, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008, 2010; Kozol, 2005; Kunjufu, 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Ladson-Billing, 2002, 2009; National Center for Education Statistics, 2005, 2006, 2009; Noguera, 2002, 2003, 2008; Ogbu, 2002b, 2003, 2004; Powell, 2008; R. Smith, 2005; Steele, 2003; Tatum, 2000, 2005; Whiting, 2006, 2009, Young, 2007). One of the most compelling and persistent barriers is that of academic injustices, which effectively undermines Black males' potential, self-perception, and opportunity to achieve in academic settings (Darling-Hammond, 2001, 2004b; Gay, 2000, 2002; Haberman, 2005; Kunjufu, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Lopez, 2003; Noguera, 2008; Ogbu, 2002b). To counteract this obstacle and to support the process of image building among gifted Black males, educators must recognize the importance of how having a scholar identity can improve the motivation, achievement, and aspirations of these students. In this regard, scholarly identity is one in which Black males have the self-efficacy, academic capacity, and motivation to be successful in school settings (Long et al., 2007; Whiting, 2006). Ample data documents the academic disenfranchisement of Black males in all economic, social, and academic areas. Black males are overrepresented in special education, underrepresented in gifted education, overrepresented among dropouts, overrepresented among students who are underachievers, and overrepresented among students who are

unmotivated and choose to disengage academically (Darling-Hammond, 2004a; T. Howard, 2008; Kozol, 1992, 2005; Kunjufu, 2002, 2005b; Ladson-Billings, 2009; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009; Noguera, 2008; Payne & Slocumb, 2010). These realities hold true at all levels of the educational pipeline, from preschool to college, and they hold true for Black males at all levels of academic ability or skill (Kunjufu, 2011; Ogbu, 2003).

The academic and social challenges that confront Black males in classrooms suggest a pressing need for programmed or systematic interventions on the part of educators to address their needs and counteract the achievement gap (Ascher & Branch-Smith, 2005; Bernard, 2003; Bohanon et al., 2006; Borman et al., 2000; Brady, 2003; Carter, 2000; T. Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001; Cummins, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Duke, 2007; Gayles, 2005; T. Howard, 2001; Jordan & Cooper, 2001; Kleiner et al., 2002; Kunjufu, 2005b, 2008; Noguera, 2002, 2003; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; R. Smith, 2005; Steele, 2003; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009; Zweig, 2003). Efforts by educators can and must play a proactive role in promoting academic developmental initiatives at both the elementary and secondary levels for these students. Such initiatives must focus on helping Black males develop the attitudes, behaviors, and values necessary to function at the most advantageous levels in the school setting and in the world (Bernard, 2003; Bok, 2003; T. Howard, 2002, 2003, 2008; Noguera, 2003, 2008; Ogbu, 2002a, 2003, 2004). These initiatives must also take into account Black males as unique learners (Tatum, 2005). At the heart of an academic support system, must be a focus on acknowledging, accepting, embracing and, in some instances, changing Black male's current self-perception, self-esteem, self-concept, and cultural

identity in academic and social settings to promote their academic achievement (Brozo, 2002; Davis, 2003; Ginwright, 2004; Grantham, 2004; Hale, 2001; T. Howard, 2006, 2008; Kunjufu, 2005a, 2005b; Martino, 2008; Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 2002b, 2003, 2004; Steele, 2003; Tatum, 2005).

Several dimensions of the school environment contribute to students' success or failure: school funding; teacher attitudes, qualifications, and expectations; a school's academic climate; the demographic mix of the student body (especially, socioeconomic-status and special-education populations); school leadership; and racial composition (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Anyon, 1997; Ascher & Branch-Smith, 2005; Bakari, 2003; Baugh, 1999; Carter, 2000; Cartledge et al., 2001; Darling-Hammond & Post, 2000; Duke, 2007; T. M. Eitle, 2002; Fleming et al., 2005; Fullan, 2000; Henson, 2003; Kozol, 2005; NICHHD, 2000). These school dynamics have also been shown to be a mechanism that can stifle the academic and social opportunities for Black males in the classroom.

Although all districts have developed and implemented curriculum and instructional documents that were intended to improve alignment of instruction with state standards and assessments and to increase consistency of instruction across classrooms and schools by specifying districtwide guidelines for the scope, pacing, and content of curriculum, few districts have implemented policies and practices specifically aimed at meeting the academic needs of Black males (Council of the Great City Schools, 2004; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Tatum, 2005; Zuljan, 2007). Moreover, districts have invested significant resources in developing and monitoring teachers' professional development, but few have implemented training on effective research-based instructional methods and information on research aimed at closing the achievement gap

for Black males (M. Baker & Foote, 2006; J. Banks, 2006; Bernard, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Payne & Slocumb, 2010; Roach, 2003; Zweig, 2003).

If all children are to be effectively taught, schools must be prepared to address the substantial diversity in experiences children bring with them to school, including the wide range of languages, cultures, exceptionalities, learning styles, talents, and intelligence (Anyon, 1997; Bakari, 2003; Kim & Crasco, 2006; Kozol, 1992, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Sommers, 2000). In addition, teaching for universal learning demands a highly developed ability to discover what children know and can do, as well as how they think and learn, and to match learning and performance opportunities to the needs of all children (Ogbu, 1992). This type of teaching and learning framework also emphasizes high academic standards and provides all students with a well-rounded academic curriculum which is considerate of and adaptive to all learning styles (Ginwright, 2004; NICHD, 2000; Zweig, 2003).

Students at risk of academic failure must still be seen as significant members of the school environment. Moreover, Black males are also accountable for their academic growth and development and cannot allow the widespread academic and social stigmas to hinder their academic progress (Cartledge et al., 2001; Cummins, 2001; Davis, 2003; Franklin, 2004; Gayles, 2005; Grantham, 2004). The same expectations that are set for all students should be applied to Black males with extra academic support and effort provided to ensure their distinctive needs are met. In their mission statements, all schools hold high expectations for all students; however, what is professed is not always what is practiced. In all schools, teachers profess to maintain uniformly high expectations for all students. However, in reality many have great expectations for particular segments of the

student populations, but minimal expectations for others (Bakari, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Post, 2000; G. Howard, 2006; Kozol, 2005; Kunjufu, 2002) .

All students, regardless of their culture, ethnic group, or gender, should be held accountable to high standards to motivate them and increase their academic achievement. There are many alternative- and intervention-program models available to reach Black males; however, many have been developed from a one-size-fits-all approach. The urban school district this study seeks to examine is in a unique position because it is able to offer a wide array of mental, social, and academic support services to meet the needs of Black male students at risk of academic failure with the goal of ensuring they are successful and also held accountable and responsible for their own academic development and growth.

It is apparent that success in the middle school years requires enactment of a variety of coping strategies to meet new social, academic, and environmental challenges (Akos, 2002; Akos & Galassi, 2004; Cohen, 2001; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Wampler, Munsch & Adams, 2002). Black children are generally more kinesthetic and have a higher level of motor activity. Based on their learning styles, Black children, particularly boys, should not be required to sit for long periods of time without an opportunity to expend energy. Learning activities should be designed to enable these students' opportunities to move as they learn. Teachers must be trained and enculturated to be patient with the rambunctious and outgoing nature of Black males. Conceptualizing these behavioral styles as normal will correct present tendencies to define the behavior of Black males as pathological, needing medication and special-education placement for

emotional and psychological disorders (T. M. Eitle, 2002; Hale-Benson, 1986, 1988; T. Howard, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2008; Kunjufu, 2005a, 2005b).

Socioconstructivist Theory

This research study was designed using the theoretical framework of socioconstructivism. The planning and delivery of the academic-intervention instruction for the Tier-2 students in this study fall in the framework and philosophy of socioconstructivism.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning describes learning as a social process and the origination of human intelligence in society or culture. The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky believed everything is learned on two levels. First through interactions with other, and then integrated into the individual's mental structure. Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people and then inside the child (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57). The implications of Vygotsky theory are that learners should be provided with socially rich environments in which to explore knowledge domains with their fellow students, teachers and outside experts.

Socioconstructivism may be traced from its grounding roots in philosophy through various theoretical tenets and conceptions and, finally, to its practical use in the classroom by teachers and students. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, socioconstructivist thought has developed and become accepted as a viable learning theory, ripe for adaptation to pedagogical principles (Fosnot, 2005; Richardson, 2003). Socioconstructivist lessons are actively and interactively authentic, foster critical-

thinking skills, deep learning, and affective involvement on the students' part (Applefield et al., 2000; Henson, 2003; Richardson, 2003; Shulman, 2000; Sullivan, 2005; Terhart, 2003). In a socioconstructivist classroom, students contribute to the learning situation by drawing on previous knowledge, strengths, and talents while improving individual areas of weakness (Applefield et al., 2000; Henson, 2003; Palinscar, 1998; Terhart, 2003). Formal socioconstructivist pedagogical systems and techniques have emerged and are gaining credibility as empirical studies increase in number and rigor (Richardson, 2003). Thus, Richardson (2003) provides a summary of pedagogical practices that make up the characteristics necessary for classification of a learning environment that can be viewed as socioconstructivist in practice and pedagogy.

Characteristics include the following:

1. attention to the individual, respect for students' backgrounds, and developing understandings of and beliefs about elements of the domain (this could also be described as student-centered);
2. facilitation of group dialogue that explores an element of the domain with the purpose of leading to the creation and shared understanding of a topic;
3. planned and often unplanned introduction of formal domain knowledge into the conversation through direct instruction, reference to text, exploration of a Web site, or some other means.
4. provision of opportunities for students to determine, challenge, change, or add to existing beliefs and understandings through engagement in tasks that are structured for this purpose; and

5. development of students' meta-awareness of their own understanding and learning processes. (Richardson, 2003, p. 1626)

These characteristics provide guidelines for the practical use of socioconstructivism in the classroom, in identifying and developing socioconstructivist learning interventions. Socioconstructivist lessons nurture cooperation with others, in and outside the classroom community (Moll & González, 2004; Prawat & Floden, 1994; Shulman, 2000). Socioconstructivist practice is democratic and inclusive, providing for student direction of the curriculum and encouraging personal responsibility for learning while enforcing the academic skills necessary for content integration and knowledge construction (Donlevey, 2000; A. Shapiro, 2000).

Content integration deals with the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, generalizations, and issues in their subject area. The knowledge-construction process describes how teachers help students comprehend, examine, and decide how the biases, frames of reference, and perspectives in a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed in it (J. Banks, 1996). Moreover, a pedagogy of equity exists when educators adjust their teaching in ways that will aid the academic achievement and success of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social-class groups (C. Banks & Banks, 1995). Additionally, programs and interventions must be culturally compatible with students' cultural values, beliefs, and practices; it is through socioconstructivist activities that Black males will learn to internalize academically productive values, beliefs, and roles that will enhance their academic, social, and emotional development (J. Banks, 2004, 2006; Bok, 2003; Brown, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2004a; T. Howard, 2001,

2002; Kunjufu, 2008; Tatum, 2005). Research indicates that academic achievement of Black male students is increased when a pedagogy of equity exists along with cooperative teaching activities and strategies rather than competitive ones (Carter, 2000; Coley, 2001; Cummins, 2001; Hale, 2001; Kunjufu, 2008; R. Smith, 2005; Tatum, 2005).

The nature of our national composition requires the multicultural preparation of teachers. An empowering school culture and social structure is produced when the culture and organization of schools are transformed in ways that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and gender groups experience equality and equal status, and are given equitable opportunities for academic success (M. Baker & Foote, 2006; J. Banks, 1995a, 2004; Franklin, 2004; Ginwright, 2004; Schinke et al., 2000). The implementation of this type of inclusive restructuring requires reform of the entire environment of the school, including the attitudes, beliefs, and action of teachers and administrators, the curriculum and course of study, assessment and testing procedures, and the pedagogical practices used by teachers (Bakari, 2003; Bernard, 2003; Haberman, 2005; Zuljan, 2007).

To implement socioconstructivist education effectively, teachers and administrators must adhere to each of the five dimensions of education previously outlined. Educators should use real-world application and content from diverse groups when teaching concepts and skills (Algozzine, et al., 2002). This will aid students in understanding how knowledge in the various disciplines is constructed; it will also help students develop positive intergroup attitudes and behaviors. As teachers begin to modify their teaching strategies to support students from different racial, cultural, and social-class groups, all students will experience equal learning opportunities. The total environment and culture of the school will be transformed so that students from diverse

ethnic, economic, and cultural groups will be exposed to equalized educational opportunities and experiences. Although the five dimensions of a socioconstructivist education are highly interrelated, each requires deliberate attention and focus.

Socioconstructivist education assumes a comprehensive school-reform effort rather than superficial additions to the curriculum or annual professional-development activities about diversity, such as workshops for teachers or assembly programs for students (Kim, 2005; Richardson, 1997, 2003). As such, the socioconstructivist perspective can serve as a lens to view conditions for systematic school reform that can improve the learning of all students. Socioconstructivist education and pedagogy highlight seeing, thinking, reading, writing, listening, and discussing in ways that critically confront and bridge social, cultural, and personal differences (J. Banks, 2004, 2006; Curran, 2004; T. Howard, 2003; Kim, 2005; Liu & Matthews, 2005; McCaslin & Hickey, 2001; Richardson, 2003; Taylor, 2004). This type of educational structure goes beyond a superficial view of cultures and encourages engagement with cultural issues in all content areas and in all classrooms (Pederson, 2000; Thorne, 2002).

Chapter Summary

Minority students, particularly Black male students, withdraw from schools at a higher rate than other students and are overrepresented in special education and underrepresented in advanced-placement and gifted courses (Holzman, 2004, 2010; T. Howard, 2008, 2010; Kozol, 2005; Kunjufu, 2005a, 2005b; Ladson-Billings, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). There are many American youths in our secondary schools who are receiving a deficient education that will not prepare them to effectively enter a global society. Effective reforms must be implemented to meet the

demands of effectively teaching culturally diverse students in our educational system (T. Howard, Dresser, & Dunklee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2001). Socioconstructivist-based instructional practices and effective learner-centered pedagogy may allow students to develop the skills to help them reach their potential.

The school is the vehicle for students' success and teachers are the agents to change a system that has failed to recognize the learning styles of diverse students. Educators must ensure equity and excellence for all students in attaining academic success (Horvat & O'Connor, 2006; G. Howard, 2006; T. Howard, 2002). The educational system requires significant changes in its structure to meet the needs of Black students. The first change must take place in the research of effective intervention programs that may be successful in meeting the needs of diverse learners. Many teachers have limited knowledge of race and draw on their own experiences to understand race, culture, and gender-based norms (Bakari, 2003; C. Banks & Banks, 1995; Cummins, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2001; G. Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billing, 2001; McWhorter, 2003; Mickelson & Greene, 2006). This information may sometimes distort their views on race and the ways in which students learn. Therefore, teachers should be required to take several courses in multicultural education, gender differences, and ways to effectively deal with gender and cultural differences in the classroom (Bakari, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Martino, 2008; Murnane, 2007; Nasir et al., 2009; Nieto, 2004, 2009; Noddings, 2000; Noguera, Ayers, Ladson-Billings, & Mitchie, 2007; Thorne, 2002). Educators must be prepared with the appropriate pedagogical skills and techniques to teach Black male students because the same styles of teaching and learning do not

work for all students. This will provide teachers with the cultural background knowledge and pedagogy to teach successfully in diverse classrooms.

If teachers ignore the ethnicity, culture, and gender differences of students in the classroom, students fail (Gay, 2000, 2002; Haberman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2001, 2002, 2009; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 2001, 2005). If academic interventions are not in place to meet the diverse needs of learners, students will fail. If both of these do not happen, then the education system of the United States has failed (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006). Educators should embrace the students' strengths and address the diverse learning needs of an increasing multicultural, multilingual student population (Bakari, 2003). This requires a major transformation of current school practices. These areas of curriculum and instruction methodologies, put into practice, can aid in establishing learning environments that promote a successful educational system benefiting all students, in particular Black male students. In fact, implementing a culturally responsive curriculum may decrease the overrepresentation of Black male students in special-education programs, underrepresentation in gifted programs, and overrepresentation in the number of students withdrawing from high school before completion (Bauman et al., 2005; Bernard, 2003; Bok, 2003; Brown, 2007; Carter, 2000; Cohen, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Post, 2000; T. M. Eitle, 2002; A. Ferguson, 2000; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Hale, 2001; Jordan & Cooper, 2001; Kafele, 2009, Sleeter, 2005). Furthermore, education can be used as a tool of liberation and an approach to diminish cultural and societal oppression (Anyon & Greene, 2007; J. Banks, 2004; Freire, 1993).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The primary focus of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology, the research question with the null hypotheses, population, sampling procedures, instrumentation, and design of the study, procedures for data-collection methods, and data-analysis procedures. The causal-comparison research methodology (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000) and the quantitative paradigm (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2003) were used to conduct this study.

Research Design

This quantitative research study employed a causal-comparison design to investigate if there were differences in student reading achievement between the group of students receiving the Tier-2 academic intervention and the comparison group that did not receive the intervention. The instrument used to collect data was the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), a standardized test measuring reading comprehension, with subtests measuring language development, as well as literary and informational text. Reading achievement was the dependent variable and the Tier-2 intervention was the independent variable. The independent variable in this study was the intervention provided by the Academic Resource Teacher, a male with 12 years of teaching experience. This academic intervention allowed the sixth, seventh and eighth grade Black males' opportunities to self-reflect, receive academic support to meet their academic needs in a smaller, nonthreatening environment, and work on correcting academic areas of concerns.

Table 1 describes the components and reading instructional activities during the intervention period. The instruction in the academic intervention described in this document reflected the position of the socioconstructivist framework. Social constructivists view learning as neither exclusively intrinsic nor purely extrinsic. In a socioconstructivist environment learning is viewed as a process that exists each time people willfully and meaningfully interact with each other and the world around them. A socioconstructivist framework is one in which learning is manifested in the intellectual aptitude, cognitive strategies, motor skills, and social dispositions students develop while working toward a goal in a community of others. Effective socioconstructivist learning environments of all kinds are supportive of participants as each becomes part of a community of practice through communication and coconstruction (Bronack, Riedl, & Tashner, 2006).

Description of the Intervention

Table 1

Description of Tier 2 Intervention Activities for 45Minute Blocks

| Monday and Wednesday | | | |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Description of activity | Duration (minutes/day) | Teacher:Student ratio | Reading skill |
| Students complete a dialogue journal writing on literature circle text | 10 | Independent | Writing, Comprehension, Vocabulary |
| Students complete informational text reading activity | 10 | Independent | Comprehension, Vocabulary |
| Teacher-read aloud with guided questions | 20 | 1:10 | Comprehension, Vocabulary |
| Exit slip/reflection writing | 5 | Independent | Writing |
| Tuesday | | | |
| Web-based supplement to instruction | 25 | Independent | Student-directed skill deficiency areas |
| Oral Fluency Building | 5 | 1:1 | Fluency |
| Literature circle activities | 10 | Cooperative groups | Vocabulary, Comprehension, Writing |
| Exit slip/reflection writing | 5 | Independent | Writing |
| Thursday | | | |
| Word Building Game | 10 | 1:10 | Word attack strategies |
| Teacher-read aloud with guided questions | 15 | 1:10 | Comprehension, Vocabulary |
| Literature circle activities | 15 | Cooperative groups | Vocabulary, Comprehension, Writing |
| Exit slip/reflection writing | 5 | Independent | Writing |
| Total minutes of instruction per week | 135 | | |
| Total number of weeks | 25 | | |

Note: Fridays were used for academic resource teacher planning and professional development.

Dialogue Journals

Journal writing was completed for 10 minutes in a dialogue journal. The objective of the dialogue journal was to allow the students opportunities for reflection. The goal of the lesson was to allow literature to be relevant to the students' lives, and make it possible for multiple interpretations to be accepted, rather than just one correct interpretation. The dialogue journal activity included several opening prompts from which the students could select to begin their journal writing, based on the previously read text. Students were also allowed to make journal entries via poetry or to record them on an iPod as a Podcast. The teacher's role in this interrelationship was to encourage students to share their individual responses to what they had read through guidance and support that focused on the students' construction of meaning from text, scaffolding the students' voice in the dialogue writings (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Guthrie & Anderson, 1999).

Content Area Informational Texts

This activity teaches the essential skills and techniques needed to organize, understand, and apply information in four general categories: the humanities, social studies, and mathematics, while expanding their nonfiction reading skills. During this 10 minute instructional interval, students independently, silently read and completed the accompanying assessment, which focused on main idea and details, conclusions, clarifying devices, and vocabulary in context. Student-monitored progress also included weekly student tracking sheets, monthly vocabulary and comprehension-progress sheets, and a visual charting tool to assess fidelity.

Teacher Read-Aloud/With Guided Questions

A read-aloud is a planned oral reading of a book or print excerpt, usually related to a theme or topic of study. The read-aloud can be used to engage the student listener while developing background knowledge, increasing comprehension skills, and fostering critical thinking. A read-aloud can also be used to model the use of reading strategies that aid in comprehension. A think-aloud involves the teacher explicitly sharing his thinking process during the reading process. Additionally, the teacher models explanations of the reasoning involved in reading, enabling students to model strategies on their own. This 20 minute lesson included guided questions either provided by the publisher, or developed by the teacher using Bloom's taxonomy of questions in order to build rigor into the lesson while also scaffolding the student's reading strategy and critical thinking skills. Many of the books read to the students had moral/prosocial themes (e.g., patience, self-confidence, responsibility), all included male protagonists, and all were written by Black authors. Effective literacy programs provide activities that support learning, and research has proven that reading aloud to children constructs a valuable link to becoming literate (Allen, 2000; Allington, 2001; Trelease, 2006). When teachers model oral reading, they help children understand the structure of written language, expanding their knowledge of words, and enabling them to learn new ways to use language. The goal of this lesson was to provide the basis for literature circle activities and dialogue journal-writing interactions.

A Commercially Prepared Web-Based Standards Mastery Program

During this weekly 25 minute activity, students used a commercially prepared standard mastery-based program designed to provide reading/literacy remediation or

practice at lower levels. Through weekly assessment reviews and collaboration with the teacher, students developed a customized and personalized learning experience based on demonstrated needs. In this activity, if students did not reach the requisite proficiency level on a specific objective, the program cycled students down to lower levels to give students practice at levels that are building blocks for higher level skills. Once students demonstrate proficiency at a lower level, the program cycles students back up to the higher level. Through this process, the program created individual learning trajectories for students to follow and addressed their learning deficiencies, while allowing students to play games that also enhanced their literacy development.

Oral Fluency Building

This 5 minute lesson activity involved speed games that promote reading fluency. During speed games student partners were required to read a previously unseen grade level passage during a 1 minute probe. Each reader accurately recorded the number of correctly read words in the minute. After both readers read, the teacher read the passage; fluency, prosody, and any revisions in mispronunciations and errors were recorded. The number of words correct and student progress were documented and monitored weekly and monthly to determine fluency progress. The object of each trial was to beat the student's previous best time. Students documented their growth over time using a motivational chart provided with the curriculum.

Literature Circles

In this abbreviated version of literature circles, intervention groups choose a collaborative-group reading book. During the teacher read-aloud time span, the teacher focused on a specific theme, literary strategy, or genre of literature. As students read

along silently, they were encouraged to take notes in written or graphic form on ideas or topics that they wanted to discuss with their group or in their dialogue journals. In their cooperative groups students had different roles as they openly discuss their literature (Ford et al., 2000). The roles include discussion director, graphics guru, connector, and word wizard. The discussions were informal, and, upon completion of the discussion, students wrote or illustrated individual reflections in their literacy-response notebooks. The students selected and read series books from the author, D. Goines. Additionally, students read short stories that took into account their outside worlds. Titles included “The Watsons go to Birmingham—1963” by Christopher Paul Curtis; “145th Street Short Stories,” “Monster,” “Lockdown,” “The Glory Field,” “Jazz,” and “Shooter” by W. Myers; and “You Don’t Even Know Me: Short Stories and Poems About Boys” by S. Flake. Assessments were based on group projects including graphic organizers, as well as the individual student’s literacy-response notebook.

Word Building Game

The teacher developed lesson was comprised of a 10 minute word building activity that involved phonological awareness and decoding. It involved explicit, direct instruction of phonological awareness by having the student decode, pronounce, and explore new words. Word lists taken from an Informal Reading Inventory were provided and included a variation of words including consonant/vowel/consonant, constant blends, consonant digraphs, compound words, and words with different vowel combinations. The teacher first read the words aloud and clarified any mispronunciations and definitions. The ensuing decoding activity follows a clear scope and sequence that drew from the ideas of direct instruction. Using personal flash cards and letter manipulatives, students

identified sounds for letters, used previously learned sounds to make words, recognized common nondecodable sight words, and eventually read sentences containing previously learned words. The activity was presented in the form of a game and could be modified to the needs of each individual student. The activity helped the student recognize that sounds can be blended and segmented to create new words by changing a sound. The students also created a personal dictionary to explore new vocabulary words further.

Exit Slip/Reflection Logs

In order to engage students in summarizing, synthesizing, and evaluating their learning they completed a daily exit slip or weekly reflection log. This essential component of comprehension and synthesizing involved processing a message so that it had personal meaning. The last 5 minutes of each lesson incorporate opportunities for students to reflect on their learning. Students were provided with a variety of prompts that encouraged revisiting their learning. The prompts used included:

- Write one significant thing you learned today on the front of the card and one question you still have about the material on the back.
- If you share one thing you learned in our class today, what would it be and why does it strike you as important?
- Write one thing in particular about today's reading or lesson that you think might be confusing to a lot of people (even yourself) and comment on what might make it confusing.
- Select a quote from your reading that you feel is worthy of discussion, and on the back of the card briefly mention why it is worthy of discussion.

Exit slips/reflection logs are also a great way to assess pedagogy and practice. They often indicate whether students understood the presented material. When used to pose a question, they provide discussion questions for the next day's lesson. Additionally, the students would gain extra credit for this assignment if they brought back a signed copy of the reflection log. By doing this, the students also actively engaged with a parent or guardian about their learning for the day.

The Tier-2 instructional intervention as presented in Table 1 and discussed in the body of the text was provided within a learning environment reflective of a socioconstructivist perspective. Specifically, it included cooperative groups, which allowed students to read and work in groups that took into account their personal interests and skill sets. This also allowed students to work autonomously to construct their own learning, culminating in realistic, student-generated products. Additionally, the teacher-student relationship was one in which the teacher acted as a guide, which emphasized communalism and the personal expertise of the students. Moreover, the learning and studying environment supported emerging learning skills, problem-solving skills, and the skills of self-directed learning. Finally, reflection and revisiting learning goals were a collaborative personal effort between the teacher and student. Through this interaction, learners expressed what they had learned and examined the thinking processes and decisions required by the learning process in order to adjust current learning goals and possibly implement new ones.

Comparison Group Instruction

Students in the comparison group were taught in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade subject area classes. The sixth grade English/Language Arts (ELA) teacher had 6 years of teaching

experience. The seventh grade ELA teacher had 1 year of teaching experience. The 8th grade ELA teacher had 3 years of teaching experience. The sixth grade comparison class had 14 Black males who ranged in age from 9-11. The seventh grade comparison class had 24 Black males who ranged in age from 10-14. The eighth grade comparison class had 15 Black males who ranged in age from 12-15. The only students to leave the classroom for instruction, are children who received additional support from the Speech Pathologist. The physical environment in each ELA teacher's classroom was conducive to direct teacher instruction and small group student directed work. Additionally, each of the ELA teachers incorporated technology into her classroom instruction, including an overhead projector, a portable laptop station, and SmartBoard used for interactive teaching.

Research Question

The research problem was posed as a question that served as the focus of the researcher's investigation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005). Because the research question was the focus of the research investigation, it was particularly important that the question be clearly stated to indicate what was being investigated (Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005; Gall et al., 2003). The research question for this study was, What effect will a Tier-2 academic intervention have on reading achievement of Black males in middle school? The following null and alternate hypotheses were tested:

Ho₁: There is no difference in reading achievement of sixth-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ha₁: There is a difference in reading achievement of sixth-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ho₂: There is no difference in reading achievement of seventh-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ha₂: There is a difference in reading achievement of seventh-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ho₃: There is no difference in reading achievement of eighth-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ha₃: There is a difference in reading achievement of eighth-grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

The population for this study consisted of 93 Black male students in a metropolitan neighborhood middle school who qualified for the Tier-2 intervention. A nonrandom sample of 40 students received the Tier-2 academic intervention and 53 students, who did not receive the intervention, were in the comparison group. There were three classes of students in the comparison and three classes in the intervention group including one class each from sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.

Convenience sampling was used to select the participants. Convenience sampling is used when the researcher must use intact groups of individuals who (conveniently) are available for study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005). The class size for the intervention, in alignment with school requirements, consisted of no more than 10 students per class. The students received individual and small group tutelage in the area of reading for a minimum of 45 minutes per day, four times a week for 25 weeks. On Fridays, the Academic Resource Teacher planned for the upcoming week and students were allowed to complete any assignments not completed during the week or catch up on their

literature circle reading. In the initial weeks of the class, students were informally assessed to determine if there were additional literacy deficiencies that were impeding their reading achievement.

The class size for the group of students was a maximum of 10. The students received tutelage in their areas of reading deficiency based on the data received from the BAS pretest.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this study was the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS). The BAS tests student's achievement level in Grades 3 through 8 for reading/language arts and mathematics. The BAS is an indicator of student success on the school district's high-stakes assessment, the Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS). The proficiency levels for BAS and CAS achievement are Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The BAS measures students' overall reading comprehension with subtests that measure student reading achievement in the areas of language development (vocabulary), literary, and informational text. The BAS has 43 items and students were allowed 2 hours to complete the assessment. The percentage of items per reporting category on the BAS correlates to the percentage of items per standard, identified on the blueprint system for the CAS, the district's high-stakes achievement assessment. Two important considerations in the choice of instrument to be used in research are reliability and validity. All items on the BAS were reviewed by the CTB-McGraw Hill test developers. Individual score reliability was estimated using internal consistency coefficients that are computed on all student responses in each grade and content area of the BAS. A Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is frequently used to assess internal

consistency. This measure is used when both multiple choice and constructed-response items are on a test. The internal reliability estimates for these strand scores, which included as few as 6 and as many as 24 items, ranged between 0.31 and 0.85. The internal reliability for the BAS ranged between 0.77 and 0.87. Data regarding content validity was not provided by the publisher (National Center on Response to Intervention, n.d.).

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection and analysis section delineates the structure of both the research problem and the plan of investigation used to obtain the empirical or observed evidence of the problem (Creswell, 1998; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The data collection and -analysis section has two basic purposes: to provide answers to research questions and to control variance. The data collection and analysis help the researcher to obtain answers to the questions of research and also to control the experimental, extraneous, and error variances of the research problem under study (Creswell, 2003; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Patton, 2002).

The data collection and analysis also serve as a basis of the study that implies how the study is controlled, as well as how the data will be analyzed (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The design is embedded with the paradigms, or world views, of differences in the basic set of assumptions that guide the way researchers approach their investigation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005; Slife & Williams, 1995).

To ensure the best possible data gathering for the research question, the design selected was a causal-comparison design (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005). Causal-comparison research attempts to determine the cause or consequences of differences that already exist between or among groups of individuals (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005). Causal-comparison

research is sometimes viewed along with correlation research as a form of associational research, since both describe conditions that already exist (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005). Basic casual-comparison design involves selecting two or more groups that differ in a particular variable of interest and comparing them on another variable or variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005). The group of students who were receiving the intervention were compared to students who did not receive the intervention.

The independent variable was participation in the Tier-2 academic intervention. The dependent variable in the study was reading achievement. Reading achievement was measured by scores on the pretest and posttest of the BAS.

Test data from archival district files were provided by the testing coordinator with no student names attached. Therefore, the study was completely anonymous. Each student was pretested and posttested and the gain for each student was calculated by subtracting the pretest from the posttest. Mean gain scores were then analyzed using independent *t*-tests at the .05 level of significance. Also, to account for any initial differences between groups, a one-way ANCOVA was utilized.

Ethical Considerations

The idea of ethics refers to the questions of right or wrong (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005). There are a number of ethical considerations that all researchers should note and apply to their study. These include protecting participants from physical or psychological harm. Participants in this study were anonymous and only archival test data provided by a third-party testing coordinator were used in the data collection and analysis of this study.

The following considerations of participants' assurances are noted below and were used for this research:

- This research with “human subjects” was conducted under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board of Barry University with permission given to conduct this research on May 29, 2011 (Appendix A).
- The archival data was provided, with no student names attached, by a school site testing coordinator who signed a third-party confidentiality agreement (Appendix B).
- The data were used, stored, and disclosed in a way that ensured the privacy of individual research participants according to the Institutional Review Board protocol outlined by Barry University.
- The reported conclusion was based on accurately recorded data revealed in the study.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine a Tier-2 academic intervention in reading which was planned and implemented with a socioconstructivist perspective in the classroom and what effect this curriculum and instructional model had on the academic achievement of Black males. The procedural and operational details of the study were presented and justified in this chapter. Additionally, the guidelines, which were used for maintaining quality research and analysis, were provided.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of this study. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of a Tier-2 academic intervention on the reading achievement of Black middle school male students. Reading achievement was the dependent variable and the Tier-2 academic intervention was the independent variable. A quantitative approach was utilized to analyze the data.

The research was evaluated using the mean gain score on the difference between the pretests and posttests reading scores of students who participated in the intervention compared to similar students who did not participate in the intervention. Independent *t*-tests at the .05 level of significance were used to test the null hypotheses.

The research question for this study was, What effect will a Tier-2 academic intervention have on reading achievement of Black males in middle school? This study examined the following hypotheses:

Ho₁: There is no difference in reading achievement of sixth grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ha₁: There is a difference in reading achievement of sixth grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ho₂: There is no difference in reading achievement of seventh grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ha₂: There is a difference in reading achievement of seventh grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ho₃: There is no difference in reading achievement of eighth grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Ha₃: There is a difference in reading achievement of eighth grade Black male students in the academic-intervention program and those who are not.

Research Method

Description of Participants

This study consisted of 93 Black male students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades who ranged in age from 9 to 16 and who attended a neighborhood metropolitan school. Of these 93 Black males, 53 were in the comparison group and 40 were in the intervention group who participated in the Tier-2 academic intervention. The researcher used groups that were already in place and did not have any personal involvement as to how students were placed in the intervention or comparison groups. The researcher used archival data provided by a testing coordinator for determining the statistical significance of the intervention.

Statistical Analysis of Data

The study was conducted using the BAS in reading created by CTB/McGraw-Hill. The instrument was administered to both the intervention and the comparison group as pretests and posttests. The BAS provided the academic achievement data for this study using scaled scores for reading in the areas of language development, literary text, and informational text. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 12.0 (SPSS 12) was used to analyze the data in this study. Mean gain scores were calculated for each group. Independent *t*-tests at the .05 level of significance were used to test the hypotheses. Also, a one-way ANCOVA was performed to account for any initial differences which may

have existed between the groups. With two observations for each participant, the difference score is a natural estimate of the amount of true change regardless of the form of the growth curve. Ragosa (1995) stated that the difference score is reliable when individual differences in true change exist. Moreover, other researchers have concluded that difference scores provide unique information on individual change (Ragosa & Willett, 1983; Zimmerman, Brotohusodo & Williams, 1981).

Results

The results and findings are presented based on the null and alternate hypotheses of this study. Academic reading achievement was measured by an increase in the mean score from the pretest to the posttest on the BAS reading assessment.

Findings

Null Hypothesis 1. There is no difference in reading achievement of sixth grade Black male students in the academic intervention program and those who are not.

Students were given a pretest and a posttest using the BAS in reading. Reading achievement was measured by the mean gain from pretest to posttest for the students in the intervention and comparison groups. The total number of sixth grade students completing the pretest and posttest in reading was 25, of which 11 were in the intervention group and 14 were in the comparison group. Mean gains for each group (see Table 2) were conducted. The mean gain for the sixth grade comparison group was 36.86 and the standard deviation was 60.14. The mean gain for the sixth grade intervention group was 44.82 and the standard deviation was 46.86. The range of scale scores for the sixth grade students was between 1280 and 1650.

Table 2

Benchmark Reading Descriptive Statistics Sixth Grade

| Descriptive statistics section | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-----------|--------------------|----------------|
| Group | Count | Mean gain | Standard deviation | Standard error |
| Intervention | 11 | 44.82 | 46.86 | 14.13 |
| Comparison | 14 | 36.86 | 60.14 | 16.07 |

An independent samples *t*-test (see Table 3) was calculated comparing the mean gain score of the sixth grade intervention and comparison groups. No significant difference was found between the two groups ($t(23) = 1.714, p > .05$). The mean of the intervention group ($M = 44.82, SD = 46.86$) was not significantly different than the mean of the comparison group ($M = 36.86, SD = 60.14$). Therefore, based on the analysis, the first null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 3

Independent Samples t-Tests Sixth Grade Comparison and Intervention Groups

| | t-test for Equity of Means | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | <i>t</i> | <i>Df</i> | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean difference | Standard error | 90% LCL of mean | 90% UCL of mean |
| Equal variances assumed | 1.71 | 23 | .72 | 7.96 | 22.06 | -45.77 | 29.85 |

Note: LCL = Lower Control Limit; UCL = Upper Control Limit.

A one-way ANCOVA (see Table 4) was calculated to examine the effect of a sixth grade reading intervention on posttest reading scores, covarying the effect of pretest scores. The main effect for the intervention was not significantly related to posttest reading achievement ($F(1,22) = 1.971, p > .05$). The mean scale score for the comparison group was 1,500.39 and the mean for the intervention group was 1,525.23.

Table 4

Sixth Grade Posttest Descriptive Statistics

| Group name | N | Mean | Std. error | 95% confidence interval | |
|--------------|----|----------|------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | | | Lower bound | Upper bound |
| Comparison | 14 | 1,500.39 | 11.55 | 1,476.45 | 1,524.33 |
| Intervention | 11 | 1,525.23 | 13.07 | 1,498.12 | 1,552.33 |

Null Hypothesis 2. There is no difference in the reading achievement of seventh grade Black male students in the academic intervention program and those who are not.

Students were given a pretest and a posttest using the BAS in reading. Reading achievement was measured by the mean gain from pretest to posttest for the students in the intervention and comparison groups. The total number of seventh grade students completing the pretest and posttest in reading was 42, of which 18 were in the intervention group and 24 were in the comparison group. Mean gains for each group (see Table 5) were conducted. The mean gain for the seventh grade comparison group was 40.38 and the standard deviation was 36.35. The mean gain for the seventh grade intervention group was 47.78 and the standard deviation was 50.96. The range of scale scores for the seventh grade students was between 1400 and 1710.

Table 5

Benchmark Reading Descriptive Statistics Seventh Grade

| Descriptive statistics section | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-----------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| Group | Count | Mean gain | Standard deviation | Standard error | |
| Intervention | 18 | 47.78 | 50.96 | 12.01 | |
| Comparison | 24 | 40.38 | 36.35 | 07.41 | |

An independent samples *t*-test (see Table 6) was calculated comparing the mean gain score of the seventh grade intervention and comparison groups. No significant difference was found between the two groups ($t(40) = 1.684, p > .05$). The mean of the intervention group ($M = 47.78, SD = 50.96$) was not significantly different than the mean of the comparison group ($M = 36.86, SD = 36.35$). Therefore, based on the analysis, the second null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 6

Independent Samples t-Tests Seventh Grade Comparison and Intervention Groups

| | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>t</i> -test for equity of means | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------|------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean difference | Standard error | 90% LCL of mean | 90% UCL of mean |
| Equal variances assumed | 1.68 | 40 | .59 | 7.40 | 13.46 | -30.07 | 15.26 |

Note: LCL = Lower Control Limit; UCL = Upper Control Limit.

A one-way ANCOVA (see Table 7) was calculated to examine the effect of a seventh grade reading intervention on posttest reading scores, covarying the effect of pretest scores. The main effect for the intervention was not significantly related to posttest reading achievement ($F(1,39) = .155, p > .05$). The mean scale score for the comparison group was 1,581.39 and the mean for the intervention group was 1,575.84.

Table 7

Seventh Grade Posttest Descriptive Statistics

| Group name | <i>N</i> | Mean | Std. error | 95% confidence interval | |
|--------------|----------|----------|------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | | | Lower bound | Upper bound |
| Comparison | 24 | 1,581.39 | 8.36 | 1,564.12 | 1,597.95 |
| Intervention | 18 | 1,575.84 | 9.74 | 1,556.14 | 1,595.54 |

Null Hypothesis 3. There is no difference in the reading achievement of eighth grade Black male students in the academic intervention program and those who are not.

Students were given a pretest and a posttest using the BAS in reading. Reading achievement was measured by the mean gain from pretest to posttest for the students in the intervention and comparison groups. The total number of eighth grade students completing the pretest and posttest in reading was 26, of which 11 were in the intervention group and 15 were in the comparison group. Mean gains for each group (see Table 8) were conducted. The mean gain for the eighth grade comparison group was 11.87 and the standard deviation was 60.56. The mean gain for the eighth grade intervention group was 14.64 and the standard deviation was 65.12. The range of scale scores for the eighth grade students was between 1390 and 1770.

Table 8

Benchmark Reading Descriptive Statistics Eighth Grade

| Descriptive statistics section | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-----------|--------------------|----------------|
| Group | Count | Mean gain | Standard deviation | Standard error |
| Intervention | 11 | 14.64 | 65.12 | 19.63 |
| Comparison | 15 | 11.87 | 60.56 | 15.64 |

An independent samples *t*-test (see Table 9) was calculated comparing the mean gain score of the eighth grade intervention and comparison groups. No significant difference was found between the two groups ($t(24) = 1.711, p > .05$). The mean of the intervention group ($M = 14.64, SD = 65.12$) was not significantly different than the mean of the comparison group ($M = 11.87, SD = 60.56$). Therefore, based on the analysis, the third null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 9

Independent Samples t-Tests Eighth Grade Comparison and Intervention Groups

| | <i>t</i> | <i>Df</i> | t-test for equity of means | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean difference | Standard error | 90% LCL of mean | 90% UCL of mean |
| Equal variances assumed | 1.76 | 24 | .91 | 2.77 | 62.50 | -45.22 | 39.68 |

A one-way ANCOVA (see Table 10) was calculated to examine the effect of an eighth grade reading intervention on posttest reading scores, covarying the effect of pretest scores. The main effect for the intervention was not significantly related to posttest reading achievement ($F(1,23) = .206, p > .05$). The mean scale score for the comparison group was 1,574.80 and the mean for the intervention group was 1,583.81.

Table 10

Eighth Grade Posttest Descriptive Statistics

| Group name | <i>N</i> | Mean | Std. error | 95% confidence interval | |
|--------------|----------|----------|------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | | | Lower bound | Upper bound |
| Comparison | 15 | 1,574.80 | 12.90 | 1,548.12 | 1,601.49 |
| Intervention | 11 | 1,583.81 | 15.07 | 1,552.64 | 1,614.99 |

Summary of Results

Independent sample *t*-tests at the .05 level of significance were conducted to calculate the mean gain differences on the BAS in reading for all the intervention and comparison groups. Additionally, a one-way ANCOVA was calculated to examine the effect of the reading intervention on posttest reading scores, covarying the effect of pretest scores. The data indicated there were no significant differences between the comparison and intervention groups for all grades. Therefore, based on the independent *t*-

tests statistical analyses, and one-way ANCOVA, the hypotheses stated in the null were not rejected for the comparison or intervention groups.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results of this quantitative study, which sought to determine if a socioconstructive approach applied as a Tier-2 reading intervention might show significance in students' reading achievement, measured through a comparison of their pretest and posttest results. The findings showed that there was not a statistically significant difference in the reading achievement of Black males who participated in the intervention and those who did not. This chapter presented the results of the quantitative study. The findings were discussed and supporting data were provided. The data collection was completed using SPSS 12. The sample consisted of archival data from 40 students who participated in the Tier-2 academic intervention and 53 students who did not. Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted at the .05 level of significance to test the hypothesis. Additionally, a one-way ANCOVA was calculated to examine the effect of the reading intervention on posttest reading scores, covarying the effect of pretest scores.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter 5 is divided into four different sections. This final chapter includes a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, a conclusion, and recommendations and implications for practice and further research. The first section, summary of the study, includes an overview of the study. The next section summarizes the findings and provides a conclusion. Recommendations for practice and further research are listed in the remaining section along with the implications of this research. The underlying assumption was that using a Tier-2 academic intervention would have an effect on the reading achievement of Black middle school male students. The conclusions and recommendations were drawn using the data collected from the reading section of the Benchmark Assessment System for the intervention and comparison groups.

Summary of the Study

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the research on empirically supported interventions for Black males to improve their reading achievement. The intent was to determine if the reading achievement of the Black males in the middle school improved due to participation in the Tier-2 academic intervention. For purposes of this study, academic achievement was measured by the mean gain scores on the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) in reading. The underlying assumption was that using a Tier-2 socioconstructivist grounded academic intervention would affect the reading achievement of Black middle school male students in an urban school setting.

To better understand the relationship between participation in the academic intervention and nonparticipation, students were selected to be placed in the academic-intervention class based on pretest scores and collaboration between the general education and academic intervention teachers. Once in the academic-intervention class, students were informally assessed by the Academic Resource Teacher to determine if there were any other reading deficiencies in oral reading fluency and word recognition that could possibly be impeding the students' reading achievement. In the intervention-class setting, students with similar skills were grouped for literature circle and language-arts center rotations. Instruction was provided by an Academic Resource Teacher whose pedagogy, practice, and learning environment were grounded in the socioconstructivist framework. The intervention included a core curriculum using evidence-based socioconstructivist practices.

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of a Tier-2 academic intervention grounded in a socioconstructivist framework on the reading achievement gains of Black males who attended a neighborhood public middle school in an urban setting. The quantitative findings were presented.

The following conclusions were reached regarding the effect of a Tier-2 academic intervention based on the quantitative data analysis.

1. There was not a statistically significant difference found in the reading achievement of sixth grade Black male middle school students who participated in the Tier-2 academic intervention.

2. There was not a statistically significant difference found in the reading achievement of seventh grade Black male middle school students who participated in the Tier-2 academic intervention.
3. There was not a statistically significant difference found in the reading achievement of eighth grade Black male middle school students who participated in the Tier-2 academic intervention.
4. While there was no statistical significance in all three grades, the intervention group scored higher by a minimum of 14.64 points. Anecdotal notes provide support of the impact of the academic intervention within the students' affective domain. Therefore, the effect of the Tier- 2 academic intervention cannot be overlooked.

Limitations

As with all research, this study had several limitations. The Tier-2 academic intervention was a stand-alone program that was developed by the Academic Resource Teacher and was only conducted at the school site studied. The small number of students who participated in the intervention and the small number of students in the comparison group were a limitation to the study. The sample sizes for the study were smaller than desired; in order to properly detect a small effect at .80 power, a sample size of 45 students per group would be required. In order to detect a medium effect, a sample of 18 per group would be required. In order to detect a large effect, a sample size of 10 would be required. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the intervention being researched and the small sample size may have an effect on the possible generalizability of this study.

Recommendations

Implications for Practice

Although the analysis of the data provided no statistical significance for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in the intervention and comparison groups, “small gains” did take place. The following recommendations are put forth based on the “small gains” via study of the pretest and posttest scores and the literature in the field.

This research is in keeping with previous research on socioconstructivism. Noguera (2003). Noguera explored how sociocultural influences mold the connection among race, gender, and school performance. Noguera concluded that environmental and cultural forces influence the ways in which Black males come to perceive schooling and that those perceptions influence their behavior and performances in school. Noguera convincingly argued that it is possible to educate all children at high levels. The author explored the possibility that the academic performance of Black males can be improved by “devising strategies that counter the effects of harmful environmental and cultural forces” (p. 433).

The diversity of students in today's classrooms highlights the importance of developing curricula, teaching strategies, and policies to help all students succeed in school. Efforts to welcome, understand, and affirm all students, and to treat their cultural and linguistic backgrounds as equally valid and important should be reflected in literacy classrooms. This is especially important when addressing the needs of Black male students. Effective literacy instruction builds on the cultural and linguistic backgrounds, ways of making meaning, and prior knowledge that all children bring to the classroom. Such instruction also acknowledges the important role of gender in language and literacy

learning. Understanding and respecting gender in the classroom can help educators adopt strategies for teaching literacy that will encourage and support student achievement.

Educators might consider that an underlying reason behind the literacy underachievement of Black males is not always due to lack of desire or motivation to learn. Rather, that traditional educational settings do not work best for all students in the same environment. Therefore, educators are urgently recommended to do everything possible to create an appropriate, non-discriminatory learning environment for all students with equal opportunities to improve their academic achievement. Educators must be prepared with the appropriate pedagogical skills and techniques to teach Black male students because the same styles of teaching and learning do not work for all students. This will provide teachers with the cultural background knowledge and pedagogy to teach successfully in diverse classrooms.

When planning for the implementation of different interventions and methods of instructional planning, schools must use student achievement data to plan for differentiated instruction for small groups and individuals based on their unique learning needs so all students are appropriately engaged and challenged (Ingram et al., 2004). Additionally, collaboration among the Tier-2 Academic Resource Teacher, the general-education teacher, parents, and the student must be given paramount consideration. The delivery of instruction in the Tier-2 academic intervention grounded in socioconstructivist pedagogy, must also consider the dynamic learning styles of Black males and ensure that these students are engaged through activities and technology that accommodate various learning styles, personality styles, and the need for physical movement. The environment must be consistent with the learning styles of Black males

in that the teacher acts as the collaborator in the development of students' learning goals. In this environment, the role of the teacher increasingly emphasizes mediated learning. Collaborative teachers encourage students' use of their own knowledge, ensure that students share their knowledge and their learning strategies, treat each other respectfully, and focus on high levels of understanding. They help students listen to diverse opinions, support knowledge claims with evidence, engage in critical and creative thinking, and participate in open and meaningful dialogue. In this pedagogical practice, the teacher presents academic content through a variety of instructional strategies to reach all learners. The learning environment must be a collaboratively developed, focused environment of fairness and respect that encourages students to take risks and strive to reach goals.

Assessments in the Tier-2 academic intervention must also measure student achievement of, and progress toward, the learning objectives and broad goals with formative and summative assessment tools in the intervention classroom, and again when students return to the general education classroom. The Academic Resource Teacher and general education classroom teachers must continuously collaborate to use student data from students' performance in the intervention classroom, reflecting on the effectiveness of lessons and student achievement in order to improve instruction and personal practice. This research also supports the need for collaboration with parents/guardians, families, and other members of the community, involving them in academic activities to support the success of Black males (J. Banks, 1995b; Hale, 2001; Kunjufu, 2008; Tatum, 2005).

Implications also exist for preservice teacher education programs and teacher professional development as well. Although training in culturally responsive practices

has a long history, gender-based research specifically aimed at closing the reading achievement gap for Black males has been limited. Adequate funding is needed to support classroom-based research, a more efficient system for disseminating research findings, and implementation of research-based interventions aimed at closing the literacy achievement gap for Black males.

This research provides a basis for action research and classroom inquiry. In this regard, the affective domain should be given a place in school curricula. With current emphasis placed upon standardized testing and content standard accountability, the need to seamlessly incorporate strategies aimed at balancing the cognitive and affective for a balanced educational product seems greater than ever. When affective issues are addressed and social emotional needs met, students often face their challenges with emotional balance and appropriate coping mechanisms that promote success in reaching personal potential rather than failure to do so (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995). For example, as boys spent less time reading for pleasure, the kind of books teachers propose may need to be adapted to better stimulate their interest (Coles & Christine, 2002). An important challenge is to bring about changes in curriculum and the daily practices of teachers that are likely to help them respond to the differential needs of students. Affective educational outcomes that focus on individual dispositions, willingness, preferences, and enjoyment must be acknowledged and integrated into curricula throughout schools. There is an imperative to consider how these affective qualities and views can be ‘taught’ (Nillsen, 2004). Moreover, this study illuminated the fact that there is a need to understand how students in the most problematic, declining academic achievement groups compare with each other and whether characteristics measured later in the

academic experience could influence the nature and course of their motivation and literacy development.

Further Research

Based on the findings, the study should be replicated in other middle schools in urban settings to explore generalizability. Additional studies could look at similar programs for Black male middle school students in larger settings. A longitudinal study could also be implemented and researched to follow Black middle school male students and track their reading and academic achievement throughout high school to determine the long term impact of such an intervention.

Acknowledging that completing this dissertation has been a learning process, it is recommended that this study be replicated with the following changes, Tier-2 pretesting could be done earlier in the year to allow students more time in the academic intervention. Secondly, a larger number of students might also be included in the study. Additionally, after state assessment is completed, students should be allowed to remain in the intervention class in order to further develop their literacy skills. This research can be a model for others who want to improve the reading and academic achievement of Black male middle school students in other public schools in urban, rural, and suburban settings.

Based upon the findings of this study, it is recognizable that educational researchers should continue to build on this line of inquiry in an effort to redirect what is known, as educators work to provide the best learning possibilities for all students, especially Black males. Findings from this study broaden the dialogue regarding definitions and complexities involved with increasing the reading achievement of Black

males. Through this research, the author gained a better understanding of how students created knowledge and meaning through their interactions, discourse, and lived experiences, as they participated in academic intervention class. Additionally, the perspective of social constructivism allowed the researcher to investigate not only where students derived knowledge, but also how socially mediated experiences, personal beliefs, and educational practices shaped their perceptions, as well as their ability to understand and implement cognitive and affective strategies to improve their literacy development.

This study's findings also suggest that examining practice and learning through the lens of socioconstructivism, identity, and relevant methods of research-based pedagogy can help to close the academic achievement gap for this group of students. Furthermore, the examination of an affective pedagogy, an established pedagogical practice, and socioconstructivist principles may prove to be one manner of highlighting and understanding the continuum between theory and practice that may enable practices that will positively affect the learning growth and development of Black males.

Finally, it is recommended that a qualitative component be included to strengthen the study. Interviews with students and teachers who participated in the intervention would also be useful. This research would seek to determine the extent to which the students and teachers perceive the Tier-2 academic intervention had on the learning and teaching and if it had impact their reading achievement and literacy practices, respectively.

Chapter Summary

This research sought to examine the impact of a Tier-2 academic intervention on the reading achievement of Black males who attend middle school. The concern for boys' literacy achievement has taken on increased urgency in light of recent reports. National test results suggest that the reading performance of middle school boys has been relatively steady, showing no significant growth, and the overall performance of high school boys has declined (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). This chapter provided a review of the study and a summary of the findings. The null hypotheses were rejected based on the data analyzed using SPSS 12. Limitations of the study were discussed. Recommendations and implications for practice and further research were also discussed to further the knowledge base of Tier-2 RtI programs aimed at closing the reading achievement gap between Black and non-Black middle school male students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



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OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD Research with Human Subjects
Protocol Review

Date: May 9, 2011

Protocol Number: 110402

Title: The effect of an academic intervention on the reading achievement of black middle school male students

Approval Date: 5/9/11

Name: Derek Hall
Address: 17303 SW 80th Place
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Sponsor: Dr. Nancy Masztal
ADSOE

Dear Mr. Hall:

On behalf of the Barry University Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have verified that the specific changes requested by the IRB have been made. Therefore, I have granted final approval for this study as exempt from further review.

As principal investigator of this protocol, it is your responsibility to make sure that this study is conducted as approved by the IRB. Any modifications to the protocol or consent form, initiated by you or by the sponsor, will require prior approval, which you may request by completing a protocol modification form.

It is a condition of this approval that you report promptly to the IRB any serious, unanticipated adverse events experienced by participants in the course of this research, whether or not they are directly related to the study protocol. These adverse events include, but may not be limited to, any experience that is fatal or immediately life-threatening, is permanently disabling, requires (or prolongs) inpatient hospitalization, or is a congenital anomaly cancer or overdose.

The approval granted expires on August 30, 2012. Should you wish to maintain this protocol in an active status beyond that date, you will need to provide the IRB with IRB Application for Continuing Review (Progress Report) summarizing study results to date.

If you have questions about these procedures, or need any additional assistance from the IRB, please call the IRB point of contact, Mrs. Barbara Cook at (305)899-3020 or send an e-mail to

APPENDIX A

dparkhurst@mail.barry.edu . Finally, please review your professional liability insurance to make sure your coverage includes the activities in this study.

Sincerely,



Manuel Tejada, PhD
Vice Chair Institutional Review Board
School of Business
Barry University
11300 NE 2nd Avenue
Miami Shores, FL 33161

.....
Note: The investigator will be solely responsible and strictly accountable for any deviation from or failure to follow the research protocol as approved and will hold Barry University harmless from all claims against it arising from said deviation or failure.

APPENDIX B

Confidentiality Agreement

As a member of the research team investigating "*The effect of an academic intervention on the reading achievement of Black males in middle school*", I understand that I will have access to confidential information about study participants. By signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of my obligation to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following:

- I understand that names and any other identifying information about study participants are completely confidential.
- I agree not to divulge, publish, or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons or to the public any information obtained in the course of this research project that could identify the persons who participated in the study.
- I understand that all information about study participants obtained or accessed by me in the course of my work is confidential. I agree not to divulge or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons any of this information unless specifically authorized to do so by office protocol or by a supervisor acting in response to applicable protocol or court order, or otherwise, as required by law.
- I understand that I am not to read information and records concerning study participants, or any other confidential documents, nor ask questions of study participants for my own personal information but only to the extent and for the purpose of performing my assigned duties on this research project.
- I understand that a breach of confidentiality may be grounds for disciplinary action, and may include termination of employment.
- I agree to notify my supervisor immediately should I become aware of an actual breach of confidentiality or situation which could potentially result in a breach, whether this be on my part or on the part of another person.

Mamud La Fleur 5-13-11 Mamud La Fleur
Signature Date Printed Name

Signature Date Printed Name