IDENTIFYING SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS THAT LEAD TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

A thesis presented
by
Keith C. Lezama Jr.

to
The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

in the field of
Education

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
February 2014
Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION:

Dedication ............................................................................................................................................... 4
Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. 5
Personal Narrative ................................................................................................................................. 7

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Statement of Problem ............................................................................................................................. 11
Significance of Research Problem .......................................................................................................... 16
Theoretical Framework: Social Identity Theory ...................................................................................... 19
Racelessness ........................................................................................................................................... 20
Stereotype Threat Theory ...................................................................................................................... 21
Studies Utilizing Social Identity Theory & Student Experiences ............................................................. 21
Positionality statement .......................................................................................................................... 22

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 24
The Journey through the African American Educational Experience in the U.S .................................... 26
  The Fourteenth Amendment ................................................................................................................. 28
  Washington vs. DuBois .......................................................................................................................... 29
Boys to Men Program Description ......................................................................................................... 34
The Achievement Gap in the United States ............................................................................................... 39
Educational Essentials that Positively Impact Student Achievement ................................................... 42
  Multicultural Curriculum ...................................................................................................................... 43
  Culturally Responsive Pedagogy ........................................................................................................... 44
  Cultural Pluralism and Cultural Competency ....................................................................................... 47
  Oppositional Society Identity Development ......................................................................................... 49
  Notion of Racelessness .......................................................................................................................... 50
  Socialization in Schooling ...................................................................................................................... 51
Impact of Stereotypes .............................................................................................................................. 53
  Socioeconomics Status ......................................................................................................................... 55
Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................... 57

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 58
Research Design & Tradition .................................................................................................................... 59
Participants and Sampling Strategy ......................................................................................................... 61
Recruitment and Access .......................................................................................................................... 62
Data Collection ....................................................................................................................................... 63
Data Storage ........................................................................................................................................... 65
Data Analysis .......................................................................................................................................... 65
Trustworthiness ......................................................................................................................................... 67
Protection of Human Subjects ................................................................................................................ 68
Dedication

This dissertation thesis is dedicated to my lovely children, Kayla and Chase Lezama, my amazing, supportive, God-sent- wife, Ashley Lezama, my mom, dad, sister, and brothers. None of this would be possible without your continued support and love. Also, I want to give a special thanks to four amazing men who I aspire to be: Mr. James Cradle, Dr. Adrian Mims, Mr. Roger Libert, and Dr. Bob Weintraub.

Your relentless support has inspired me to work hard, and to turn my dreams into reality. You took a boy and turned him into a man- you taught me how to be a better friend, educator, son, husband, brother, and father. This dissertation may have my name on it, but this a product of your support, guidance, and belief I can accomplish anything in life, even when I did not believe in myself and when my future was clouded by society’s influences. This dissertation is a testament to the idea- it takes a village to raise a child. Where would I be without you? Words will never be able to express how grateful and appreciative I am of you and all that you have done. So cheers to you on the completion of your dissertation.

Yours truly,

Keith Cassimero “KC” Lezama Jr.
Abstract

African American males are at risk and likely to lack success in secondary education because of the privation of educational opportunities and resources that affects their future. These disadvantages negatively impact achievements of Black boys much more than achievements of Black girls. As such, this study will specifically focus on the interventions that have led to the success of African American males. The intractable problems of African American males are compounded each day by negative portrayals of who they are. Their paths are uncertain and their hopes and dreams are diminished by negative assumptions and stereotypes, hindering their academic achievement and, thus, denying them the foundation for growth. Studies and literature about the academic achievement of African American males too often focus on the deficiencies rather than the achievements of a group of people who have fought to overcome injustices, inequality, prejudice and racism.

This doctoral thesis is a qualitative case study analysis rooted in autoethnography that examines the lives of six African American males who have experienced success in high school with the support and guidance of the Boys to Men mentoring program. Boys to Men mentoring program was established in 2009 in a suburban city in the Northeastern United States with the goal to empower, inspire and motivate African American males to be successful in all aspect of their lives. The researcher will utilize an autoethnography approach to describe and analyze the researcher’s personal experience with the founder of the Boys to Men program, highlighting the importance and often overlooked value of mentorship and the power of human connection in education. The researcher will illustrate this phenomenon though unveiling the evolution of their relationship through storytelling.
This study is guided by two primary research questions. How was social and academic excellence promoted among African American male students? How did specific interventions empower, motivate, and inspire young men to be successful in their academic lives?

The theoretical framework utilized for the research study is a Social Identity theory. Social Identity theory assists in understanding the psychological cognition and non-cognition behaviors of individuals in relation to membership within their ethnic group. Tajfel and Turner (1979) contend that Social Identity theory helps explain intergroup behavior and is a source of understanding one’s sense of social identity and belonging to the social world. Social Identity Theory provides a framework for understanding the development of self-esteem. The literature review highlights and provides a historical overview of the educational lived experiences of African American males since the inception of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

This study is significant because it identifies successful interventions and factors that have led to the improved achievement of African American males who attended Brookline High School, a predominately white public secondary institution; known for its academic rigor and robust curriculum. Moreover, this study highlights participants’ responses describing their lived experiences as scholars and how particular interventions have or have not influenced their lives. Furthermore, this study shifts from focusing on the deficiencies of Black boys to placing more emphasis on their achievements. It is important to note that the researcher uses the terms “African American males” and “Black boys” interchangeably.

Keywords: achievement gap, black boys, African American males, academic performance, equity, social justice, education, success of black boys, achievement factors for black males.
If we’re honest with ourselves, we know that too few of our brothers have the opportunities that you’ve had here at Morehouse. In troubled neighborhoods all across this country — many of them African American... they’re places where jobs are still too scarce and wages are still too low; where schools are underfunded and violence is pervasive; where too many of our men spend their youth not behind a desk in a classroom, but hanging out on the streets or brooding behind a jail cell.

President Barack H. Obama Commencement Address at Morehouse College. Atlanta, Ga., May 19, 2013

The Beginning of Mentorship
Tuesday May 8, 1999

Consider a 5’3” African American male, braids, baggy pants, oversized T-shirt, 14 years of age, with a chip on his shoulder. He’s witnessed a police raid his grandmother’s house, and his parents are going through a difficult divorce. By freshmen year of high school, this black boy has been suspended three times before winter break for stealing and fighting. He’s visited the principal’s office on multiple occasions for disrupting classes and inciting fights. Academically, he’s struggling, earning grades that ranged from C’s to D’s. His backbone, his grandmother, Elma Herbert, passes away his freshmen year on Tuesday, May 8, 1999. Statistical evidence would indicate that this child is on his way to incarceration.

Tuesday, May 8, 1999, some would predict, is the beginning of the end of this child’s life. What kept his family and, most importantly, him intact now is gone. This young man has no hope of living a successful life with great expectations. He will become just another statistic.

One Tuesday morning he wakes up to the screams of his sister and mother. He’s tried to hold strong, believing that God had a plan, but is confused and filled with anger and sadness.

That Tuesday morning was the day his life changed. As he walks into his African American Studies course, the teacher, James Cradle, asks him to step outside to talk. “What’s
going on son, why do you seem so down?” Having described to his teacher the tragedy that has taken place in his family, Mr. Cradle quickly puts his wings around him clutching him tightly and promising always to be there. That teacher’s promise was made to me and lives strong to this day.

On Tuesday May 8, 1999, this young man lost an angel but gained another one. Mr. Cradle, a man who has given forty plus years to educating the minds and hearts of students. Mr. Cradle was the founder and teacher of the African American Studies course. An inspiration to faculty, students, families and the community -- is my angel. He has supported and guided me since that day. He has instilled in me the values that have allowed me to excel as an African American male, as a father, husband, educator and scholar.

Mr. Cradle taught me how to be resilient and strong when faced with adversity. He taught me that no matter the obstacle, no matter the pain, to stay strong and focused on achieving my goals and potential. Mr. Cradle’s understanding, love and compassion taught me the importance of focusing on the positive, of reaching out and giving back. As such, it is my hope through this dissertation; I can contribute to the mission of enabling and supporting African American boys in achieving academic excellence and social success. Gandhi said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” My life and learning has challenged and inspired me to do just that.

As such, this study emerges out of the confluence of Mr. JC and I and the evolution of our relationship and power of mentorship. His commitment and love for me has manifested into the belief that I, a young man whose future was uncertain, could accomplish all his aims in life with the guidance and mentorship of a great man. The research indicates that many Black boys across this nation lack mentors who are successful African American men who are actively
engaged in their daily lives and who provide the support, love and guidance needed to help them achieve success (Harper, 2005).

Moreover, and given that media consistently portrays Black men as unintelligent, troubled, and violent, having successful Black men passionately engaged in their lives assists them in making wise decisions that positively shape their destines.

At the young age of 15, I quickly noticed the power of mentorship. The mentoring and love I felt from Mr. JC instilled in me the confidence and the intellectual ability to strive for excellence and ultimately pursue a career in education.

Mr. JC has an unique ability to make one believe in him or herself, which motivates them to be excellent in all aspects of their lives. This resonates deeply with a quote from the Dalai Lama that states: “when educating the minds of our youth we must not forget to educate their hearts.” Mr. Cradle’s ability to motivate students comes from the notion and importance that we have to educate the whole child.

As such, I embraced the opportunity to be mentored and I worked each day to make him proud. Furthermore, I was eager to receive his new and often fresh perspectives on life. Additionally, he often touched my heart by saying and doing the simplest, yet profound, things that have had the greatest impact on me.

I remember vividly the conversation Mr. JC and I had my senior year about life after high school. He told me to be prepared for greatness and that preparation and my work ethic will be the keys to my success. He then quoted Shakespeare, “This above all: to thine own self be true”. He told me I was great and to be proud of who I am, and that life was filled with opportunities for me to become successful.
Post high school, our relationship and the mentoring bond strengthen. It evolved into a father-son relationship that often provided career advice and collaborations with professional endeavors.

In 2009 Mr. JC and I started a project entitled Boys to Men; a program focused on improving African American male achievement through mentoring. The African American males who we worked with were deemed “at risk” by their middle school principal and teachers. As we worked closely each day for the past 5 years, I observed the impact that relationships and mentoring have on the academic growth and development of Black boys. These relationships flourished, and helped to break down many barriers students faced that hindered their progress. Moreover, the mentoring addressed many negative stereotypes that conditioned Black boys to feel and act inferior to their peers. These young men now have Mr. Cradle and I as African American male mentors. As we witnessed their maturation both academically and socially, it inspired me to search for a greater understanding to the interventions that contribute to high academic achievement for Black boys.

As such, I conducted this research to uncover and most importantly identify what interventions and factors led to the academic success of African American males in public secondary education, who participated in the Boys to Men program.

Throughout this journey and life mentoring experience it is my belief that in order to change the dominant narrative that depicts African American males as inferior, we must begin with coupling our young boys with successful Black men who are personally committed to becoming mentors who inspire, empower and motivate. With the involvement of mentors in the lives of African American young men becomes the difference between incarceration or college graduation.
CHAPTER ONE
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Statement of Problem

The goal of education is to develop the knowledge and skills of students, and to create confident, life-long learners and well-rounded citizens who think critically and work to achieve their full potential for success in an evolving, global society. Education nurtures the ability to problem solve, to become resilient, and to develop an ethic of hard work over time. Additionally, education inculcates the values of academic learning, democratic participation, and decision-making that promotes an ethical lifestyle, while honing one’s academic, personal, and professional skill set. As Yogi (2008) insists, education should enlighten the mind of a man so that he can accomplish all his aims in life.

To that end, this nation struggles to provide all students a high quality education. More specifically, it is most certainly failing to educate significant numbers of African American males. The lack of access to a high quality education for African American males has had a profoundly negative impact on their academic and social development.

According to Whiting (2006) Black high school males are in a state of crisis because they consistently perform and statistically rank at the bottom of most standardized assessments and ratings of college completion. Noguera (2002) contends in respect to Black boys:

“They lead the nation in homicides, both as victims and perpetrators and in what observers regard as an alarming trend, they now have the fastest growing rate for suicide. For the last several years Black males have been contracting HIV and AIDS at a faster rate than any other segment of the population and their incarceration, conviction and arrest rates have been at the top of the charts in most
states for some time. Even as babies, Black males have the highest probability of
dying in the first year of life, and as they grow older they face the unfortunate
reality of being the only group in the United States experiencing a decline in life
expectancy. In the labor market they are the least likely to be hired, and in many
cities, the most likely to be unemployed” (para.1).

Noguera (2002) further notes that Black boys are rarely viewed as gifted students.
Contrarily, descriptors such as “at risk”, “achievement gap”, and “crisis” continue to be attached
to African American males as a group. Harper (2009) contends these attributes are typically used
to render African American males collectively underserving of trust, respect, equitable and
workplace promotion, and fairness.

In 2010, the U.S Department of Education gathered data on the 2009 Post-Secondary
attainment, by level and sex, of Black men and women. The findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. College attainment discrepancy between Black men and women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Black Men %</th>
<th>Black Women %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>65.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Professional (J.D., M.D.)</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral (Ph.D., Ed.D.)</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education (2010)*

Harper (2013) insists, African American men’s representation in graduate and
professional schools lags behind that of their Latino and Asian American male counterparts. In
the inaugural publication from the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, Harper
(2013) insists, African American men’s hopeless and depressing college enrollments, disengagement, underachievement, and low percentage of attaining baccalaureate degree are among the most pressing and complex issues in American education. As Harper (2013) insists, perhaps more troubling than the problems themselves is the way they are continually mishandled by educators, policymakers, and concerned others; thus, amplifying the troubled status of Black boys at all levels of education. Harper (2013) notes that there have been few solutions to addressing these issues and claims current educational initiatives to improve the academic achievement for Black boys have had little positive effect. Harper (2013) contends this is attributable to the deficit positioning that constantly reinforces and portrays Black Boys in media, academic research journals, and educational practice as an inferior race.

A number of researchers assert that the deficit-deprivation theory explains the poor achievement of African American males. The premise of this theory is that there exists a hierarchy of intellectual ability, and that Whites and Asians are at the top of the pyramid while Blacks are at the bottom (Thompson, 2004). Thompson (2004) asserts that the deficit-deprivation theory argues that African Americans are incapable of excelling at the same academic level as Whites or Asians because they are genetically incapable and inferior to those groups.

Additionally, researchers have determined that schools have a deleterious effect on the achievement of Black boys (Thompson, 2004). Studies have determined that achievement for Black male students has actually decreased over time (Thompson, 2004). Thompson (2004) explains that this phenomenon has been coined by Dr. Kawanza Kunjufu as the “Fourth Grade Failure Syndrome” in which many Black males exhibit high achievement and potential of academic success in kindergarten and early grades, but by fourth grade have been relegated to special education or labeled as underachievers. This results in a decrease in the motivation,
confidence and academic progress for African American males as documented in standardized assessments in grades K-12.

Another factor researchers have identified in the poor achievement of African American males is low teacher expectations. According to Thompson (2004) low teacher expectations for Black male students in public schools are common. Society’s negative portrayal of African American males often shapes the assumptions and beliefs of teachers who hold these beliefs to be true, creating an inferior mosaic compared to their white counterparts. “If teachers expect students to be high or low achievers they will act in ways that cause this to happen” (Gay, 2000, p. 57). As Gay (2000) states, “Students who are perceived positively are advantaged in instructional interactions. Those who are viewed negatively or skeptically are disadvantaged, often to the extent of total exclusion from participation in substantive academic interactions” (p. 53). Thompson (2004) contends that low expectations from teachers lead to assumptions and beliefs that Black boys do not want to succeed. Moreover, they can lead to characterizations of African American males as lazy, apathetic, and lacking interest in learning.

According to Mocombe (2011), Ogbu (2004), and Perry, Steele and Hilliard, (2003), factors that contribute to the academic struggles of African American males include oppositional cultural identity, a cultural disconnect between teachers and students, and the absence of voices of prominent African-American intellectuals in the ongoing debate to improve high achievement and academic success of Black boys.

Given that the majority of research and literature pertaining to the achievement of African American male students stems from a deficiency model, the purpose of this dissertation is to identify and examine, through the voices of African American male students, interventions that have led to their academic success as high school students who participated in the Boys to
The goal of the program is to reverse the academic and social disparities that exist for African American young men by implementing initiatives that promote academic excellence and enhance leadership skills.

*The Boys to Men* program was established in 2009 as an initiative to empower, motivate, and inspire Black boys who were deemed at risk to excel in their academics. The four factors that the program uses to determine whether a student was "at risk" are:

1. Academic history
2. Scores on assessments
3. Teachers’ perception of students
4. Student behavioral factors

*The Boys to Men* program provides support through programming, events and, workshops that connect African American males with each other, faculty, and successful male role models of color that positively impact their lived experiences. The literature review found in Chapter Two of this dissertation provides a description of the program and highlights the core values the program is founded on.

This study documents the subjective experiences of African American males and highlights their attitudes as they relate to academic success. In addition, the study explores multiple initiatives that address what researchers and literature deem as factors that contribute to the poor achievement of African American males.

Furthermore, the goal of this research is to identify key interventions and common themes that have enabled African American males to be successful. It is the goal of the researcher to use the participants’ voices to capture the interventions that led to success. It is also a goal to use these factors to enhance the African American Male Theory that serves as a framework to clarify the factors that lead to their success. Moreover, it is the researcher’s hope
that future scholar practitioners will use this theory as a means to enhance the achievement of African American males.

It is important to note that the researcher has worked with the *Boys to Men Program* for five years and has an understanding of its culture. The researcher has, as Creswell (2007) asserts, disclosed at the outset of the study his assumptions, beliefs, and past experiences that may alter the interpretation and execution of the study.

**Significance of the Problem**

If the goal of education is to provide all children with equal and equitable opportunities to receive a high quality education, the United States educational system has and is failing in the effort to effectively educate a large percentage of African American male students. This is a significant local and national problem. As Kozol (2005) asserts, this injustice calls for action: an action that will result in a revolution similar to the Civil Rights Movement. Kozol (2005) insists that in order to make progress, individuals need first to recognize that there is a problem and next bring enough attention to the issue to agitate and force society to take action. He emphasizes the need to rediscover a commitment to treating all children fairly, even if this results in turmoil. Kozol (2005) asserts this is the price society should be willing to pay in order to provide all African American male students with the opportunity to prosper in society.

This educational crisis is a significant national problem, as evidenced by US Census reports that indicate that by 2050, the racial population of this nation will shift drastically: the 2013 report from U.S Department of Education projects that for the first time in United States history, white children from the ages of 1-5 will represent the minority, at 49.7 percent. Ron Ferguson (2007), the Co-Chair of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, argues that if this nation is to maintain a competitive advantage in the global economy, it is imperative
that all people be educated successfully. The nation cannot continue to be a global economic powerhouse if we accept the underachievement of a significant percentage of the African American male population.

On a local level an improved educational system can benefit the situation of African American males and the black community as well. The consistently high drop out rate among African American males contributes to a high unemployment rate that often leads to a life of crime. Improving the success of Black boys should reduce the rate of crime among African American males and the prison population. The prison system has grown for the past generations at a remarkable rate. Based on the recent criminal justice report by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the number of people incarcerated today is 2.3 million people. The U.S is responsible for 25 percent of the world’s prisoners. The racial disparities in incarceration are alarming. African Americans constitute nearly 1 million of the total 2.3 million incarcerated. Additionally, African Americans are incarcerated at a rate of nearly six times that of whites. According to the NAACP, African Americans and Hispanics make up 58 percent of all prisoners. It is imperative to note that if African Americans and Hispanics were incarcerated at the same rate as whites, today’s prison and jail population would decline by approximately 50 percent. According to the NAACP criminal justice report, one in six black men had been incarcerated as of 2001; if this rate continues, one in three black males born today will be expected to spend time in prison during his lifetime.

As Davis (1998) insists, mass incarceration is not a solution to the vast array of social problems. Davis (1998) asserts that a majority of people has been deceived into believing in the efficacy of imprisonment, even though the historical record clearly demonstrates that prisons do not work in rehabilitating inmates. Davis (1998) further contends that racism undermines the
possibility of creating a critical discourse to challenge the ideological trickery that presents imprisonment as key to public safety. The focus of state policy has shifted from social welfare to social control. The prison industrial complex has promulgated a vicious cycle of punishment, which only further impoverishes those whose impoverishment is supposedly “solved” by imprisonment (Davis, 1998). The NAACP criminal justice report asserts that prisons are not effective means for rehabilitation of offenders and that two-thirds of prisoners will reoffend. What is needed is not new prisons, but new health care, housing, drug programs, jobs, and most importantly an educational system that provides opportunities for people of color to prosper (Davis, 1998).

The report from the College Board on The Educational Crisis Facing Young Men of Color (2010) cites the problem of incarceration:

“The U.S. has the highest rates of incarceration in the world, with the rates for African American men at historically high levels, considered by many to be in part the result of institutionalized racism. Incarceration takes men out of homes, makes work hard to find for ex-prisoners and frequently disenfranchises them” (pp. 7).

If this injustice persists, the United States will have a society in which a large percent of African American males will be uneducated, unemployed, incarcerated, and constituting a significant segment of the American male population. It is the responsibility of all educational reformers, teachers, and school leaders to focus on the problem and develop strategies, based on successful and effective educational models. These models should enable, support, and sustain African American males in reaching their academic potential.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that is utilized in this study is a Social Identity theory (SIT) informed by two theories: Racelessness and Stereotype Threat. In 1979, Henri Tajfel and John Turner developed Social Identity theory. Hoggs and Abrams (1988) define SIT as a social psychological theory originally designed to understand the psychological cognition and behaviors of an individual in relation to his or her membership to a certain group. McLeod (2008) defines SIT as a person’s sense of who he is based on group membership(s). Hoggs and Abrams (1998) insist that the groups that individuals belong to can be a significant source of pride and self-esteem that can either help or hurt increase or decrease a positive self-image that enhances the status of the individual. SIT provides a sense of understanding of inter-groups seeking to enhance their self-image while discriminating against outer-groups by creating negative stereotypes portraying the outer-group as inferior (McLeod, 2008); this often leads to racism, discrimination and even genocide.

SIT identifies and employs three mental processes in analyzing and understanding individuals from social groups: social categorization, social identification and social comparison. McLeod (2008) asserts social categorization helps to establish how an individual identifies himself, leading to social identification. For example, Christians, Muslims, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Pacific Islanders and Native Americans are categories often used to place individuals in social groups.

Social Identification helps to identify the characteristics possessed by an individual. Social Identification will draw meaning to how an individual acts, thinks and conforms to his associated group. Furthermore, Social Identification can either increase or decrease one’s self-esteem, depending on the group association. The last stage of Social Identity theory is used to
analyze individuals is social comparison. Social Comparison examines the differences between social groups; the goal is to establish how a particular group compares to another. The aim of Social Comparison is to place two groups in perspective to see which group holds superiority, and to identify the factors leading to hostility and dislike between groups.

SIT focuses on how one’s social group identity is deeply embedded within the framework of American society. SIT brings understanding to how and why an individual’s attitudes and actions are viewed by the world that surrounds them. This theoretical framework will assist in bringing clarity and perspective to the issues African American males face in educational settings. Moreover, the idea of Racelessness and Stereotype Threat assist in constructing the context for the study. Racelessness and the Stereotype Threat provide insight into how African American male students view themselves in education and clarify, in certain instances, why African American male students fail to excel in academia, bringing to focus the societal challenges many young men face whether in or out of school.

**Racelessness**

Signithia Fordham examined the tension African American males face when striving for academic achievement; through her work she developed the Racelessness Theory. Fordham (1988) argues that because the African American community has a culture that is oppositional to the mainstream culture, blacks who wish to attain and maintain academic success and achieve upward socioeconomic mobility feel pressure to adopt a raceless identity. For example, because success in the academic world for African American males is often not viewed as the norm, the perception of success is not part of one’s culture or beliefs. As such, African American males fall victim to this idea and often create low expectations for themselves.
Stereotype Threat Theory

Claude Steele studied the impact that stereotypes have in the classroom. Steele (1997) refers to this phenomenon as Stereotype Threat. Steele (1997) defines the Stereotype Threat as the process of an individual or particular group confirming to a negative stereotype about one's group. In his study, he revealed that Black college freshmen and sophomores performed poorly on standardized tests compared to White students when race was emphasized. Steele (1997) contends that when race was not accentuated, Black students performed better and consistently on par with White students.

Studies Utilizing Social Identity Theory & Student Experiences

Robert T. Palmer, a Professor of Student Affairs at the State University of New York-Binghamton, used the SIT model to examine the issues of access, equity, retention, and persistence, and then to document the college experience of black men at historically black universities and colleges.

Toldson, Sutton, and Fry Brown (2012) of Howard University used SIT as a theoretical framework to examine the relationship between multiple dimensions of institutional identity and self-esteem in 411 Black male college freshmen.

Bryan and Gallant (2012) used the SIT theoretical framework to examine African American male students’ perceptions of school counselors and the services they offer. The Tripod Project, founded by Dr. Ron Ferguson, the Director of Harvard University’s Achievement Gap Initiative, has collected data on more than 3 million students who shared their experiences in the classroom. The conceptual framework used in the Tripod Project encourages and informs strategic planning and priority setting in schools and school systems that take into consideration students’ perspectives and experiences (retrieved from http://tripodproject.org).
The researcher uses the SIT as a means to identify and examine the interventions as acknowledged by the participants that led to high academic achievement. Through capturing students’ personal stories, the researcher hypothesized that findings would be more reliable than summarizing the indirect evidence of researchers and educational reformers who have not accessed the lived experiences of African American males. Additionally, the use of Racelessness and Stereotype Threat in the study provided greater clarity about the psychological factors deemed by researchers and literature as significant barriers that impact the success of African American males.

**Positionality Statement**

I am an African American male educator who has worked in a public school system for eight years. My beliefs and ideologies resonate deeply with Kozol’s (2005) statement, “Students are a great deal more reliable in telling us what actually goes on in public school than many of the adult experts who develop polices that shape their destinies.” (p.12).

As such, this study utilizes a qualitative, case study research approach that identifies multiple interventions and factors that contribute to the success of African American males. This study examines several sources of information, including student’s personal accounts of their lived experiences, because it is my belief that the answer to solving today’s educational problems facing Black boys lies in capturing their experiences and stories of interventions and factors that either improve or negatively impact their academic success.

Moreover, I believe that the educational crisis facing African American males calls for a refocus of priorities, a movement of significant change, similar to the Civil Rights Movement. This movement must transform our educational system. In order for this to happen, we must acknowledge and accept how our privileges play a role in the oppression of African American
males. Additionally, the beliefs and values of students need to be part of the content and structure of curriculum and educational policy and practice in order to motivate and inspire African American males to achieve at the highest academic level possible. It is through this understanding and acceptance that we will finally be able to address the educational inequities and institutionalized racism that exist and hinder the success of Black boys.

The Doctoral Thesis will continue with Chapter Two; the literature review that provides a historical perspective of African American education in this nation, by exploring the major factors that contribute to poor achievement starting from the Trans-Atlantic slave trade to the present. Additionally, Chapter Two discusses the multiple implications of the achievement gap and outlines strategies to eliminate the problem. Following, Chapter Three illustrates the research design in greater detail, outlines the research methodology, explains the data collection procedure and details the interview protocol. Next, Chapter Four presents the results of the study utilizing a First and Second cycle coding process. Chapter Four concludes with identifying successful interventions and factors participants identify as having contributed to their academic success. Last, Chapter Five summarizes the findings as indicated in Chapter Four. Chapter five concludes with the researcher’s recommendations based upon the findings drawn from the Chapter Four. Chapter five ends with the researcher’s suggestions for further research studies to examine success factors that contribute to the achievement of Black boys, and a more detailed definition of the African American male Theory.
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this literature review is to investigate common and successful interventions that contribute to the academic success of African American males. The literature review explores factors that researchers identify that impact the ability, confidence, and desire to excel in academics among African American males. The goal of this review is to focus on findings that the literature reveals as factors that enhance the academic success of African American males. The objective of the researcher is to highlight the successful interventions and strategies that positively impact the achievement and success of African American males despite the strong tendency in American society to portray African American males negatively. It is the goal of the researcher to focus on what works rather than what does not, by presenting analysis of the literature that distinguishes how to educate and better support African American male students in public education. Throughout this research, several database systems and a scholarly magazine were used to investigate articles relating to the achievement of Black males: JSTOR, ERIC, Journal of African American Males in Education, Google Scholar, EBSCO HOST, and TIME Magazine. The researcher selected New York Times as a scholarly source to get a sense of how popular media reported the achievement of African American males in education.

In order to find articles and books specific to African American male success in public education, the key words and phrases that were employed were: achievement of black boys, closing the academic achievement gap, enhancement of African American males in education, black boys success in education, strategies that promote and improve
academic achievement for black boys. This search yielded thousands of articles and books that focused on the factors that affect the poor achievement of African American males, despite the researcher initiating a positive approach.

This resulted in the need to delve deeper into the research to uncover specific examples of scholarly studies that speak to the success of African American males Black boys.

The guiding questions for this review included:

- What are the common factors that contribute to the academic success of African American males?
- What are the examples of successful black leaders are portrayed in scholarly studies.

The purpose of these questions is to establish the common factors that experts contend impact the academic success of African American males and to highlight successful black leaders in society.

The researcher defines the achievement gap that reflects the deficit in academic performance of African American males and identifies specific aspects of the educational experience considered by literature that impact their achievement:

1) Multicultural Education
   a. Multicultural Curriculum
   b. Culturally responsive pedagogy
   c. Cultural Pluralism
   d. Cultural Competency

2) Oppositional Society Identity Development
   a. Racelessness

3) Socialization
   a. Behavioral Conformity
   b. Moral Conformity
4) Impact of Stereotypes
   a. Stereotype Threat
5) Impact of socioeconomic forces

The Journey through the African American Educational Experience in the U.S

From the time of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade to the present, African American males have endured societal and institutional racism, prejudice, and inhumane treatment and have been denied educational opportunities that large segments of the white population have benefited from for generations. This deprivation has hindered the upward progress of African American males in achieving the American Dream; a dream filled with opportunities for prosperity and success.

The fight for an equal and equitable education for African American males has been plagued by racial and cultural conflicts in which blood has been shed and countless lives have been lost. Spring (2007) notes, education has been used since the 17th century to subjugate the African American male population by denying blacks an education or at times limiting their educational opportunities. He asserts that the poor situation of blacks in this nation stems from slavery and the lack of educational opportunity.

From 1619, when twenty Africans were brought to Jamestown, Virginia, as slaves, African slaves were denied an education. Spring (2007) argues that the denial of education was due in large part the result of slave owners fearing that an educated African who was literate would one day be exposed to abolition literature, which would be the beginning to the end of slavery. As such, southern states passed several laws making it a crime to educate slave workers.
African American males who had access to an education often did not receive a high quality education. After the passage of Massachusetts Education Act of 1789, which permitted African Americans to attend school, Boston created a comprehensive educational system of urban schools. Spring (2007) points out that even though Blacks in Boston had opportunities to attend school, many Blacks did not, because of the hostile reception and racist acts they endured at the hands of white teachers and students.

In 1798 black parents in Boston made a request to the School Committee to have a separate system of schools for their children for they felt it would be in their children’s best interest and safety. Spring (2007) reports that the School Committee initially denied blacks this opportunity, reasoning that if blacks received this concession other ethnic groups would demand it as well.

In 1806, the Boston School Committee reversed its decision, opened segregated schools and voted to provide permanent funds for the established schools if and only if the committee retained complete control. According to Spring (2007), after a few years the funds that were allotted to Black schools were rerouted by the state to fund predominately white schools and to build turnpikes and bridges.

After the abolition of slavery, education served to replace or at times devalue, and distort the black image.

Bennett (1982) went so far as to suggest:

“Education and white America was the vehicle that took the black image into dark places that hid black people from themselves and their greatness. There were intentional efforts to depict Black America as savages "docile wayward workers, who did not have the intellectual ability to be academic
scholars; in the effort to justify treating blacks in an cruel manner while working to keep them in inferior positions” (para.1)

Spring (2007) notes that, even though segregation ended in Massachusetts in 1855 and students could not be excluded from schools based on race or religious beliefs, segregation continued throughout much the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Spring (2007) asserts that whites who considered Africans a threat to their racial purity and cultural being fought to maintain segregation and were willing to do anything in their power to keep blacks in inferior positions. That often included limiting their educational opportunities.

**The Fourteenth Amendment**

According to Spring (2007), the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 had great impact on public education. States were prohibited from depriving any U.S citizen the right to liberty or property without due process of the law and prohibited denying any person equal protection under the law. The purpose of this clause was to afford each citizen the right to an equal and high standard education.

In 1892, Louisiana passed the Separate Car Act that legally segregated common railroad carriers. In June of 1892, a black civil rights organization decided to challenge this law. Homer Plessy, who identified himself as black, deliberately sat in the white section of a railroad car and was jailed. Plessey’s lawyer argued that the Separate Car Act violated the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. Spring (2007) notes that this was a case of great historical importance that reached the United States Supreme Court. The court declared that segregated facilities were constitutional as long as facilitates for whites and blacks were equal. This was a case of such magnitude that it shifted the
nation’s moral and ethical values, establishing the principle that separate but equal was acceptable. The Supreme Court, however, failed to define what constituted “equal”, perpetuating inequality and injustice in education and society.

**Washington vs. DuBois**

In spite of the fact the Union had won The Civil War and President Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation that deemed slavery illegal, society did not accept Blacks as equals to Whites (Spring, 2007). As Spring (2007) indicates, Blacks still encountered acts of oppression, discrimination, and racism, primarily in the south. The constant fight for equality and prosperity for blacks in the late 19th and 20th century, led to divisions in the black community. Two world renowned, transformational leaders, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B DuBois, were at the heart of this divide (Spring, 2007). Both men were great leaders in their own right who had different strategies of dealing with the issues of the black community. They disagreed on approaches for advancement of black intellectual, social, and economic development. Their contrasting ideologies remain both guiding forces for reform and points of contention for Black people striving to overcome racial injustice.

Booker T. Washington is most often associated with the founding of the Tuskegee Institute and with his position on separate but equal. Washington accepted the principle of segregated schools but believed that Blacks could, within that system, succeed in improving their economic futures. (Spring, 2007).

Booker T. Washington was born a slave. After the Civil War he attended the Hampton Institute, which had been established by General Samuel Armstrong in 1868. Armstrong is a white man who had a strong influence on Washington’s vision for Black
America. Armstrong’s vision for the education for African Americans was to help them adjust to life as free men, while keeping them in a subordinate position in southern society (Spring, 2007). Moreover, Armstrong believed that Blacks should not be granted the same civil rights as whites and should be denied the right to vote (Spring, 2007).

Armstrong and Washington used the phrase "industrial education" to define the purpose of education for African Americans. They believed African American education should focus on developing good working and moral habits, as opposed to developing intellectual ability (Spring, 2007). Armstrong, as well as many southern whites, believed that this type of education, which focused on work habits, suited African Americans. Moreover, Washington believed that focusing on the habits and moral values associated with daily work would highlight the important role African Americans could play in the new economic order, demonstrating their economic worth to this nation (Spring, 2007).

Spring (2007) reports that Washington believed that segregated schools were acceptable as long as there was equal opportunity for Blacks to be part of the industrial growth of the south. Speaking to an audience of predominately white people in 1895 at the International Exposition in Atlanta, Washington said, “In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress” (Spring, 2007, pp. 57). Washington believed that compromising with the whites would provide Blacks the opportunity to prove their worth by assisting in the growth and development of this nation's economic power.

W.E.B DuBois is known for his instrumental role in founding the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He earned a PH.D at Harvard in 1895 and believed that Washington’s acceptance of separate but equal
result in the disaster for Black people in the south, diminishing their political power and
their hope for prosperity (Spring, 2007).

According to Spring (2007), DuBois envisioned a different type of education for
Blacks, based on “no compromise” about equal rights and equal education. DuBois’ goal
was education for Blacks that would produce Black leaders to protect the social and
political rights of the Black community. Moreover, he envisioned education as a means
of building the Black community. He had a vision of educated Blacks returning to their
Black communities to teach in the local schools. DuBois’ purpose was to educate Blacks
to be discontent with their social position in the south (Spring, 2007). DuBois also had a
vision of educated Black leaders creating an Afro-American culture that would consider
the African slave culture and give young Blacks a strong and positive identity based in
awareness of the sacrifices and greatness of the Black race. DuBois sought to inspire the
Black community to reject the inferior status imposed by the southern society and racists
and build their own identity. DuBois and others associated with the NAACP fought and
worked diligently towards equal rights and the end of segregation in American schools.
His influence has played a major role in moving this nation along, in regards, to equality
and equity for all.

The fight for desegregation of schools was decided in 1954 with the landmark
case of Brown vs. The Board of Education of Topeka Kansas. In 1953 Brown was one of
five school segregation cases to reach the Supreme Court and was the first of the five to
be heard by the Court (Spring, 2007).

According to Spring (2007), lawyers from the NAACP brought suit to void a
Kansas law that permitted but did not require local segregation of the schools. The
NAACP had two objectives: 1) an end to segregation and 2) a ruling that separate facilities were inherently unequal (Spring, 2007). The Brown ruling resulted in the federal government ordering that all states proceed to integrate their schools. Desegregation was a slow process. Several city and state governments resisted and obstructed attempts to integrate the schools. (Spring, 2007). It was not until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that the Brown ruling started to take widespread effect. The Civil Rights Act put limits on the federal funding school systems could receive if they resisted school integration.

The fight for equality became the center of national attention during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Civil Rights’ advocates, fought, sacrificed, and died in the effort to bring equality to all people. As Wilmore (2012) notes, the Civil Rights Movement was led by men and women who would no longer accept the injustices that kept African Americans from achieving their American Dream. It was the fight that finally determined the illegality of racially segregated schools and denial of student admittance to institutions of higher education because of race or religious beliefs. Its purpose was to provide equality of access and opportunity for African Americans and other ethnic groups.

Impact of segregation in schools

Nearly 75 years ago the hope for a desegregated school system and prosperity for the Black community was a far cry from reality. For many generations, African Americans had been denied educational opportunities and not granted the same civil rights as whites. The hope for African Americans to achieve the American Dream had been effectively blocked by the racial prejudice and inhumane acts endured for centuries.
Education today is still impacted by the residual effects of segregation. The Census Bureau 2010 Report shows that Black residential segregation has decreased since 2000 but that during the same period segregation in public schools has accelerated. Orfield and Chungmei (2007) note that the majority of white students continue to attend schools that are predominantly white, while the majority of black students attend schools that are predominantly black. Orfield and Chungmei (2007) assert this growing trend of racial isolation and inequity is hindering the upward progress of blacks and latinos:

As such Orfield and Chungmei (2007) state:

“The country’s rapidly growing population of Latino and Black students is more segregated than they have been since the 1960s and we are going backward faster in the areas where integration was most far-reaching. Under the new decision, local and state educators have far less freedom to foster integration than they have had for the last four decades, which makes it likely that segregation will further increase” (pp.4).

Even though DuBois and Washington differed in their approaches, they were two African American men who were committed to education as a means of improving the social and economic status of Black people. Washington’s and DuBois’ quest for equality and equity for people of color created a successful blueprint that continues to contribute to the social advancement of people of color. Today, their work and philosophies serve as guides for the few mentoring programs and organizations across the nation whose mission is to improve the academic and social status of African American males. Based upon this research of nationwide programs that claim to provide academic and social support for African American males of high school age, the majority of such programs
focus on the deficiencies of the population, rather than the successful interventions and programming support that leads to academic success. As such, the researcher contends the implementation of the *Boys to Men* program is vital in reversing the vicious cycle of poor achievement amongst Black boys.

**Boys to Men Program Description**

The *Boys to Men* program was established Mr. James Cradle, in 2009, as a mentorship initiative committed to fostering learning communities that is founded in the values manifest in the work of Mr. Cradle. Mr. Cradle, Dean Emeritus has given forty plus years to Brookline High School. He was a former Dean and founder and teacher of the African American Studies Course and Co-Founder of the African American Scholars Program at Brookline High School. He retired in 2007. Mr. Cradle spends most of his retried days working in partnership with families, students, faculty, and the community to make Brookline High a better place for future generations. The following are core values that guide the daily work of and promote success and excellence within the *Boys to Men* program.

- The importance of trusting relationships
- A culture that challenges and promotes high academic achievement with the understanding that all students are capable of learning
- The notion that success is derived from hard work over time
- Understanding that learning is a collaborative effort, which embodies the concept- it takes a village to raise a child.
The mission of the program is to develop the knowledge and skills of students, and to create confident, life-long learners and well-rounded citizens who think critically and work to achieve their full potential for success in an evolving, global society.

Moreover, the Boys to Men program nurtures the ability of students to problem solve, to become resilient, and to develop a work ethic of hard work over time. Additionally, the program works to instill the values of academic learning through democratic participation, and decision-making that promotes an ethical lifestyle, while honing one’s academic, personal and professional skill set.

The goal of the program is to provide intellectual and personal support for students, while also delivering instruction that embraces and promotes racial identity development. Furthermore, the program encourages students to be curious and ask questions pertaining to the larger world that surrounds them; with the end goal to empower, inspire, and motive all students to try to accomplish all their aims in life. The program’s work is grounded in the understanding that mentorship between African American boys and Black men is a powerful tool that encourages, engages and helps African American boys make wise decisions in their academic journey. Moreover, the program insists that given society and social-outlets continue to portray African American boys as problems and at risk, it is successful Black men who possess the power to defy those negative stereotypes and begin to reverse the dominate narrative that has conditioned young African American boys to believe they are academically and socially inferior to their peers. The goal of the program is to reverse this belief by instilling hope, increased confidence in their intellectual ability, and by providing a sense of social responsibility that encourages Black boys to accomplish all their goals in life.
The goals of the mentors is to help members of the program to:

• Make immediate, and meaningful connections with African American male educators
• Navigate issues that may affect their academic success
• Keep up with the academic and social pressures of their school and community
• Become familiar with the world that surrounds them

The *Boys to Men* program starts in the eight middle schools of Brookline, Massachusetts offering workshops to African American and Latino eighth grade male participants twice a week for an hour each session. The objectives of the workshops are to build a sense of self-identity and culture through race identity development. Additionally, the program offers weekly one-on-one meetings with students to discuss any issues they may experience.

A student who participates in the *Boys to Men* program as a high school student at Brookline is required to attend weekly group meetings that convene once a week for one hour. Group meetings offer workshops promoting race identity development and serve as a space to openly and honestly discuss any academic and social challenges they face and devise strategies to cope with them. Furthermore, students are required to attend weekly individual meetings with the founder and co-founder of the program to discuss their academic progress and share any accomplishments or concerns they may have.

The *Boys to Men* program also requires students to create and maintain journal entries that offers self-reflection that crystallizes students’ thoughts into written content, to think deeper into the factors that are important to their academic and social growth and
development. Students are able to reflect on their experience through reading their journals and witnessing their maturation.

Through the eyes of the participants their monthly experience as a member of the Boys to Men program consists of:

- Daily academic check-ins with the Founder and or Co-founder
- Weekly one-on-one scheduled meetings with the Founder and or Co-Founder
- Weekly group meetings that convene once a week for one hour
- Weekly journal writings with the purpose to self reflect
- Bi-weekly meetings with academic teachers and Boys to Men program staff as needed
- Lunch group meetings twice a month

The researcher notes, all subjects for this study have participated in the program and have maintained journal entries since its inception of the program and when they joined. Additionally, participants have on average spent, post eight-grade year, three hours each week working directly with the staff of the Boys to Men program in its efforts to enhance their intellectual and social growth and development.

Also, the Boys to Men program offers each year the Boys to Men retreat. The Boys to Men retreat is to support Black boys in their academic and social development in high school so they can be inspired to turn their dreams into reality. The retreat serves to develop confident learners who strive for excellence in all aspects of their lives. The Boys to Men program believes when these young men reach their full potential, their
families and communities are strengthened. The retreats are held at a local college or university.

The retreat is comprised of engaging panel discussions that expose students to successful men of color, as identified, but not limited to, community activist, college graduates, and business owners. Additionally, workshops and activities are conducted that provide them with strategies and tools they can utilize to overcome personal challenges in life. The retreat is founded on the idea of Ubuntu, an African concept meaning, “I am what I am because of who we all are.” This concept encourages young men of color to pave a path for others to follow.

The following excerpts are the responses from Ailson C. and Tyreik M. sharing the impact of the Boys to Men retreats:

“At our men’s retreat the panel speakers who shared their success and how they overcame negative stereotypes similar to the ones we face motivated me. It was good to see people in front of me--directly in front of me--who are doing the right thing and proving stereotypes were all wrong.”

“The Boys to Men retreat helped us understand that we do not or should not live by the negative stereotypes- but to be greater and be positive and show the world we have a purpose. We learned that we must strive for excellence, especially in education.”

The goals of the Boys to Men retreat are to:

- Encourage students to own their learning
- Instill the understanding of the Growth Mindset Theory (Carol Dweck)
- Expose students to successful men of color- and their journeys
• Expose students to life opportunities beyond what they see in social media
• Cultivate a brotherhood that empowers, inspires, and motivates young men of color

Additionally, the work of Boys to Men program aligns with President Obama’s recent initiative “My Brother’s Keeper”, a new mentorship initiative that will marshal the resources of a number of organizations to address the unique and unfortunate challenges facing young African American boys.

To these ends, it is the hope of the program to help African American males flourish as members of their community.

The Achievement Gap in the United States

The effects of the failure of American education to address the academic needs of African American males is evident in what is referred to today in the literature as the “achievement gap”, the disparity in academic achievement between African American males and their white counterparts as measured on standardized tests.

The academic achievement gap has been a focus of research dating back to the inception of the United States' educational system (Gregory, Skiba, Noguera, 2010). Hillard (2003) defines the achievement gap as the disparity between the average performance of a particular group compared to the average performance of European students. Hillard (2003) asserts that common reference to the achievement gap often refers only to white and black students, specifically comparing the performance of African American males in education to their white counterparts.

The literatures reveals a need for deeper understanding of the complex forces affecting the achievement of Black boys, and the institutional barriers and cultural
influences that impact negatively on the achievement of young African American males. According to Hillard (2003) there is a deeper conversation about the achievement of black males that needs to take place among researchers and educators. Irvine (2010) claims that the language used to describe and document the achievement gap is misleading, failing to include and address factors that some researchers believe shape the attitudes and actions of students, teachers and educational leaders. Ladson-Billings (2006) insists that educational researchers should re-conceptualize the achievement gap. Ladson-Billings (2006) argues that we must move beyond the current achievement discourse and explore the myriad, complex factors that influence the academic achievement of Black students.

The literature suggests that the poor achievement amongst Black boys leads to unfulfilling and dissatisfying lives. Noguera (2002) asserts that the continuing poor academic achievement of African American males is disturbing and terrifying, given that the data suggest that significant numbers of young Black boys are failing to achieve economic and social success in American society. In fact, the data on African American males presents the need for significant change:

As Noguera (2002) cites

“They lead the nation in homicides, both as victims and perpetrators and in what observers regard as an alarming trend, they now have the fastest growing rate for suicide. For the last several years Black males have been contracting HIV and AIDS at a faster rate than any other segment of the population and their incarceration, conviction and arrest rates have been at the top of the charts in most states for some time. Even as babies, Black
males have the highest probability of dying in the first year of life, and as they grow older they face the unfortunate reality of being the only group in the United States experiencing a decline in life expectancy. In the labor market they are the least likely to be hired, and in many cities, the most likely to be unemployed” (para. 1).

Seaton (2010) suggests that the academic achievement gap that exists between African American males and their counterparts reflects a national crisis and, perhaps, the biggest challenge facing our nation. There is consensus in the literature that the alarming statistics and continuing failure of the American educational system to address the issue have brought it close to a national crisis point with the potential of disrupting the national economy and society in general.

A recent report from the College Board, “The Educational Crisis Facing Young Men of Color” (2010), was the product of a two-year qualitative study that examined the educational experiences of young men of color. The report identifies the many challenges Black boys face:

1. African Americans are disproportionately attending urban schools, many of them large.
2. Fifty-four percent grew up in female-headed families, which are more likely to be poor and less likely to have strong male role models.
3. Black males experience depression, anxiety, guilt and hostility at levels considerably higher than their white peers. (p.19)
The report further suggests that forty percent of African American males from ages 18-24, who do not receive a high school diploma, are more likely to be unemployed, become incarcerated, and die at a prematurely young age.

Given, as the report notes, that “minorities will represent more than half of all children in the United States by 2023 and that the entire U.S. population will be 54 percent minority by 2050”, (p.18) the implications for American society and the American economy are profound. A large percentage of this nation’s population will be uneducated and living at the lowest end of the economic spectrum. The report stresses that the growing diversity in the United States presents a number of challenges. But the report also suggests that if the educational system can be restructured to ensure that all students, including Black boys, are college and career ready upon graduation from high school, a well-educated diverse population becomes an asset in the workforce and in society.

The literature argues that swift and calculated initiatives need to be implemented in order to address the educational crisis facing African American males. Williams (2003) stresses that there needs to be engendered among African American males a strong and positive sense of racial identity. Accordingly, Williams (2003) urges that schools provide opportunities for teachers to develop their knowledge and skills in cultural competency, as well as assessment strategies to better teach and support African American males.

**Educational Essentials that Positively Impact Student Achievement**

A major recurring theme revealed in the literature that contributes to the poor academic achievement of Black boys males is the lack of a multicultural education.
African American males almost exclusively receive an education dominated by white history and cultural traditions. One of the major changes that needs to happen in order to make schooling more relevant to Black boys, is the inclusion of content in the curriculum that reflects the diversity of American society and culture, including:

- Multicultural Curriculum
- Culturally responsive pedagogy
- Cultural Pluralism
- Cultural Competency

**Multicultural Curriculum**

The purpose of multicultural education is to incorporate the history and culture of marginalized ethnic groups into the curriculum. Multicultural education serves to build greater awareness of the contributions of various ethnic groups to the history, culture and intellectual landscape of the nation (Gay, 2000). Multicultural education includes content that reflects and honors the contributions of marginalized ethnic populations and inspires students who are members of those ethnic groups. Multicultural approaches to education work to shift the attitudes and beliefs of teachers and students who represent the dominant culture, leading them to challenge negative societal stereotypes and open deeper understanding and communication with students of color.

It is important to note that multicultural education is not a new idea. The Black Panther Party, led by co-founder Huey Newton, worked towards establishment of schools for African Americans that emphasized respect and understanding of human differences. Newton (1971) insisted that a multicultural educational system would give Black people knowledge and understanding of their heritage and history and knowledge of themselves...
as a people. As Newton states, "if a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else” (Newton, p. 4 1971). Newton’s (1971) vision and the school’s mission were based on multicultural education that represented and honored the culture of its students. Newton knew that, in order for Black children to experience academic success, schools as institutions had to validate the contributions of Blacks by implementing the value of their culture in the curriculum.

To a large degree, the current educational system in the United States is out of date and can be viewed as biased, a system that caters to White/European history and culture. It is imperative that American education adopt a multicultural perspective in curriculum that will enable teachers and school leaders to construct school curricula that reflect the reality of American culture, society and history and improve the cross-cultural knowledge and understanding of all students.

**Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Culturally responsive teaching is teaching in which lessons and instruction are developed in a multiethnic frame, which enables previously marginalized ethnic groups such as African Americans to view themselves as significant contributors to society. Culturally responsive teaching makes learning relevant to and effective for African American male students. As Gay (2000) asserts, culturally responsive teaching acknowledges the legitimacy of students’ cultural heritage and honors the legacies that affect their dispositions and attitudes towards learning. Moreover, it builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school and between academic concepts and lived sociocultural realities. Most importantly the ethos of culturally responsive teaching
promotes a sense of cultural awareness, empowering and inspiring students from
disenfranchised groups (Gay, 2000).

Ladson-Billings (1992) states that culturally responsive teaching helps develop
intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by using cultural referents to impart
knowledge and skills. Additionally, Ladson-Billings (1992) highlights that culturally
responsive teaching helps students of color maintain a sense of self-identity and
community.

Gay notes that the lack of culturally responsive teaching and a multicultural
curriculum impedes students’ academic achievement, in part, because “intellectual
processing, self-presentation, and task performance is different from the process used in
school” (Gay, p. 12, 2000). As such, Gay (2000) contends that teachers need to
understand different cultural interactions and norms in order to close the cultural gap
between them and their students.

Furthermore, the literature reveals that Black boys are often disenfranchised in
today’s educational system (Gay, 2000). As a result, there is a significant need to
implement a cultural responsive curriculum that is designed to highlight the richness of
the African American culture in order to improve the academic performance of African
American male students.

Gay (2000) believes that culturally responsive teaching is a key component to
improving the achievement of students of color. Gay (2000) argues that there must be a
major shift in schools to multicultural curricula that have value for classroom instruction
and will result in improving interest in and motivation for learning among African
American male students, especially those who are culturally disconnected from school.
Gay (2000) claims that ethnic material should also be used in teaching fundamental skills of reading, writing and calculating. Gay (2008) insists that even though we have moved beyond overt racism in schools, individuals of color are still faced with subtle injustices that hinder their academic growth.

The educational crisis facing Black boys has led to accusations by some educational reformers and consultants who believe “European America” has conspired to prevent the advancement of African Americans by perpetuating the lack of academic and economic success by the majority of African American males. Kunjufu (2000) asserts Black boys are systematically programmed to fail by the U.S educational system and societal assumptions and beliefs that were created to keep Black boys in an inferior position. Kunjufu (2000) asserts that African American males are culturally disconnected from school and often not inspired, challenged or held to high academic expectations. Furthermore, Kunjufu (2000) argues that schools should take a multicultural approach to better assist in liberating African American males to feel empowered and inspired to be excellent in all aspects of their lives. Kunjufu (2000) believes that in order to address the educational crisis facing Black boys programs must be created that:

- Examples of leadership that includes black male role models
- Study sessions focusing on Black history and Black male development
- Skill development and instruction in:
  - Spirituality
  - Politics
  - Economics
  - Community Involvement
Family Responsibility

Kunjufu (2000) believes that education programs designed to build the identity of African American males will help secure the foundation needed for black males to succeed academically.

Cultural Pluralism and Cultural Competency

The literature proposes that the American educational system must be grounded in cultural pluralism that instills pride of one’s culture and identity, building, in students, a strong and positive self-image and the confidence needed to meet the challenge of academic learning at the highest level.

The purpose of cultural pluralism in education is to include all of the cultures reflected in the student population and in American society in the curriculum. Cultural pluralism enables educators to draw on their own cultural experiences as well as that of their students (Hillard, 2004). Hillard (2004) asserts that each student’s racial or ethnic background should be presented as part of the institutional curriculum of schools in order to guarantee that children from a wide range of racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds can find themselves in the content that they study. Hilliard (2003) further asserts that motivation and self-esteem are deeply affected by the topics that educators choose to present. Given that many different ethnic groups have enriched American society and culture through art, cuisine, education, history, language, and music, it is imperative their history and contributions be included in the American story (Hilliard, 2003).

A multicultural approach to education will improve cultural competency and instruction that is based on teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the students they
teach. The cultural disconnect in the U.S educational system is a factor that, as the literature has revealed, impacts the achievement of African American male students. The literature reveals that teachers and Black boys are often disconnected because of the disparity in their cultural experiences. This disconnect can be detrimental to the teaching and learning relationship.

Banks (1993) argues that cultural competency refers to the ability to interact effectively despite cultural and human differences. Banks (1993) asserts that, given the cultural disconnect that exists between teachers and African American male students, it is imperative that teachers become culturally competent in order to work effectively with diverse student populations. Banks (1993) notes that the achievement of Black boys improves when teaching strategies and activities build upon the cultural and linguistic strengths of the students and when teachers have knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the culture of their students.

The National Association of Social Workers (2001) defines cultural competency as:

“A congruent set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable a person or group to work effectively in cross-cultural situations; the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each” (para. 6).
Oppositional Society Identity Development

Researchers including John Ogbu and Signithia Fordham have attributed the academic marginality of Black students to oppositional behavior. They argue that Black students hold themselves back out of fear that their peers will ostracize them. (Noguera, 2002, para 30). The literature reveals that oppositional society identity development is a significant factor contributing to the poor academic achievement of African American males.

Fordham (1988) believes that the anger and resentment that Black adolescents feel is in response to their growing awareness of the systematic exclusion of Black people from full participation in American society. This awareness leads to oppositional social identity. Fordham (1988) insists that this oppositional stance protects an adolescent’s identity from the psychological assault of racism and keeps dominant groups at a distance. Tatum (1999) claims that oppositional social identity occurs when subordinate minorities come to identify certain forms of behavior, activities, and events as inappropriate for them because they associate those behaviors, activities, and events with white Americans. To behave in a manner not consistent with one’s cultural frame is to “act white” and this is often seen as a negative (Tatum, 1999). Tatum (1999) notes that specific styles of speech, attire, music, and academic performance that are perceived as exclusively Black can have a powerful impact on adolescent behavior.

Tatum (1999) identifies the following questions as African American males develop their identity:

- What does it mean to be a young Black person?
- How should I act?
What should I do?

Tatum (1999) claims that oppositional identity as it relates to academic achievement can be quite dramatic because success in academia for Blacks is often perceived as “acting white”. Therefore, during the adolescent phase of racial identity development, the search for identity leads to cultural stereotypes and away from anything associated with whiteness. One effect of this is that academic performance declines. For many young Blacks being smart is the opposite of being cool, and being smart is identified with being white (Tatum, 1999).

**Notion of Racelessness**

Signithia Fordham has identified the concept of racelessness. Fordham (1988) defines racelessness as the process in which individuals assimilate into the dominant group by de-emphasizing characteristics that might identify them as members of the subordinate group. Fordham (1988) notes that the characteristics required for academic success in society contradict an identification and solidarity with Black culture. Students, who feel this conflict between group identification and "making it" academically, may choose the strategy of racelessness, behaving in ways that are defined as acting white (Fordham, 1988).

Tatum (1999) believes educators must ask themselves three important questions:

1. How did academic achievement become defined as exclusively white behavior?
2. What is it about the curriculum that reinforces the notion that academic excellence is an exclusively white domain?
3. What curricular interventions might we use to encourage the development of an empowered emissary identity?

The literature reveals that oppositional identity, which disdains academic achievement, has not always been a characteristic of Black adolescence. Tatum (1999) notes that historically African Americans in the segregated south shared a positive attitude toward education. This is largely due to the fact that schools for Blacks, in the segregated south, were staffed by African American educators who were visible models of academic achievement. Tatum (1999) further claims that Black educators in the south presented a curriculum that included content on the intellectual legacy of other African Americans.

As Tatum (1999) insists, if young Black males are exposed in their early years to positive images of African Americans who have achieved success in academia, African American males will not tend to see school achievement as something for whites only.

**Socialization in Schooling**

Socialization is the process of introducing and encouraging specific beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies that shape the values of an individual and provide a blueprint for success in a global society and economy. The literature reveals a range of ideas and analyses that examine the processes and impact of socialization in American schooling.

Brint (2006) asserts that socialization is the process in which the representatives of a society’s dominant culture shape the values and conduct of others who represent a minority. Brint (2006) asserts that the efforts of school authorities to socialize students in the dominant culture is undoubtedly one of the major goals of schooling and has major
impact on the achievement of students, especially the achievement of Black boy students who often feel alienated from the dominant culture.

The literature further identifies behavioral and moral conformity as integral to the goals of socialization. However, the emphasis on conformity to the social norms of the dominant culture has the potential to conflict with the identity of African American males and negatively impact their academic achievement.

According to Brint (2006) the main purpose of behavioral conformity is to shape the actions of students in school. In most schools and classrooms, behavioral expectations most often align with the norms of white America. As a result, students who have a difficult time conforming behaviorally are often labeled as disciplinary problems or learning disabled.

When Black boys are unable to function within these behavioral norms, questions are often raised about their intellectual capacity and/or emotional stability. For many Black boys, conforming to school and classroom norms is challenging because of a conflict with their own cultural norms (Brint, 2006). Unfortunately, many African American young men are diagnosed with Attention Deficient Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), in many instances, because of their inability to conform to school behavioral norms. The National Medical Association (NMA) notes that, “hyperactivity disorders are being over-diagnosed in the black community, aggravating the concentration of minority children in special education.” (Stapp, 2000, para.3). The overrepresentation of African American male students in special education is just one example of how conflicts between culturally specific behavioral norms can negatively affect perceptions of students’ ability and self-image.
The literature reveals that moral conformity is also a significant goal of school socialization. Brint (2006) asserts that moral conformity reinforces the dominant culture’s ideas of what is “good and bad”. Brint (2006) notes that moral conformity in school is often based on the values that white, middle class teachers bring to and reinforce in their classrooms. Brint (2006) contends that American schools expect all students, regardless of their cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds, to conform to the moral values that represent the culture school faculty and administration.

**Impact of Stereotypes**

Additional factors that impact the achievement of African American male students negatively are the stereotypes and myths that have plagued all Black Americans, but especially young males. As Bennett (1984) asserts, stereotypes were created originally as a means of controlling Blacks and propagating racism. As a consequence, millions of Black and White Americas act on stereotypes and myths, which have no basis or are gross exaggerations and serve to undermine the Black male self-image.

There is a widespread belief that African American males are incompetent and shiftless, students with disciplinary problems who have little hope of being successful in the classroom (Bennett, 1984). The literature affirms that the poor achievement of Black boys stems, in part, from portrayals of the stereotypes of black males not being successful. Research has shown students’ social identities that are attached to a negative stereotype often lead to underperformance, even when students are capable of performing at the highest level. Claude Steele labeled this effect as Stereotype Threat.

Steele’s (1999) basic principle of stereotype threat stems from a person’s social identity; an individual is treated or acts according to his or her membership in an
ethnicity, gender, or religion, most often conforming to low expectations. Steele (1999) discovered through his research that Blacks who are associated with negative academic stereotypes tend to underperform in a manner that perpetuates the stereotype. Steele (1999) views this poor achievement as a result of an individual’s anxiety that manifests itself in behaviors consistent with the stereotype. Steele (1999) further asserts that teachers who allow their assumptions and beliefs to impact their teaching and interactions with students perpetuate the anxiety of the stereotype threat. Delpit (1995) suggests that the poor achievement of African American male students in the classroom is due in large part to teachers being exposed to the negative indoctrination. Delpit (1995) asserts many teachers tend to accept student stereotypical deficits, as propagated by society, rather than to identify and focus on student strengths.

The literature suggests that it is necessary to dispel any negative stereotypes that may hinder the upward progress of African American male students in order to end the vicious cycle of poor achievement.

Harper (2006) agrees and adds that in order to overcome the negative stereotypes young Black males must first learn to dream bigger. Harper (2006) argues that in order to move young Black males forward, this nation must challenge the stereotypical assumptions and beliefs rather than perpetuate them.

Cose (2002) asserts that even though African American males today have more opportunity for success, significant numbers of Black men are not successful in academia. Cose (2002) encourages all Black men as individuals to defy the stereotypes that haunt their lives.
Socioeconomics Status

The socioeconomic status of the majority of young Black men is a reoccurring theme presented in the literature as being a contributor to the poor achievement of Black boys.

The reality of the impact that poverty has on the academic achievement for Black boys is viewed by many researchers as disheartening. Researchers have disclosed that educational outcomes are greatly influenced by the family incomes:

“Most income comparisons between African Americans and white Americans are so dispiriting that it is easy to think there is no point in trying to improve things. Still, household income for African Americans has improved for generations. Recent Census data indicate that about 5.7 million African Americans are in households with an income of $19,999 or less annually, poverty stricken by any common-sense understanding of the term. But nearly 7 million live in households with incomes between $20,000 and $49,999 annually (borderline middle class, at least); an additional 3.3 million are in households with incomes between $50,000 and $75,000; nearly 2 million live on between $75,000 and $99,999; and more than 2.4 million enjoy household incomes above $100,000” (Lee & Ransom, 2010, p. 7).

According to Tough (2009) additional academic supports and increased numbers of qualified teachers in schools that serve minority populations are not enough to reverse the trend of underachievement. The Harlem Children Zone Project asserts that promoting true meritocracy and cultivating a social system that gives opportunities to children in
poverty on the basis of their ability are the keys to success for students of color (Tough, 2009).

The literature examines the work of researchers who have examined and identified the sources of socioeconomic inequalities in order to determine the cause and effect on academic achievement among families from low and middle socio-economic backgrounds. Sastry and Pebley (2010) highlight that the number of families who are identified as low income account for the largest percentage of underachieving students. Sastry and Pebley (2010) further assert that the levels of student academic skills are related to students’ economic status.

In contrast to the overwhelming evidence that socio-economics plays a major role in the achievement of students, many researchers have determined that low income does not necessarily correlate with poor achievement. Shea (2000) asserts that the academic success of children does not necessarily correlate with parent income, thus she encourages researchers to further delve into this matter.

Gershoff, Raver, Aber, and Lennon (2007) discuss other factors that may contribute to the academic success of children. These include positive parenting and, most importantly, material benefits. As noted by Gershoff, Raver, Aber, and Lennon (2007) low family income alone cannot explain the poor achievement of students.

John Ogbu’s work in Shaker Heights, which examined the poor achievement of students of color in an affluent community, discovered that children of color who come from wealthy and educated homes still underperform compared to their white classmates. This raised the question of the role socioeconomics plays in the poor achievement of Black students. According to Goldsmith (2003), Ogbu believed socioeconomics was not
the most significant factor in student achievement; instead, he argued that the attitudes of parents, teachers and peers had a greater impact.

**Conclusion**

The literature suggests that there needs to be major and substantial efforts to improve the academic success of African American male students. The American educational system must prepare teachers to teach all students effectively, regardless of students’ socioeconomic, cultural, racial, intellectual or physical status.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

According to Whiting (2006) African American high school males are in a state of crisis because they consistently rank at the bottom in achievement on most standardized assessments and in college completion. Noguera (2002) notes that African American males in this nation have the fastest growing rate of suicide and for contracting HIV and AIDS. He asserts that, in contrast, the incarceration and conviction rates of African American males rank at the top of the charts. He asserts that Black males are least likely to be hired and often most likely to be unemployed because of a lack of an education. Noguera (2002) further asserts that African American males are rarely viewed as gifted students, and descriptors such as “at risk”, “achievement gap”, and “crisis” continue to describe the plight of African American males in education.

Given these alarming statistics, why did six African American male students who attended Brookline High School perform well academically and rank statistically at the top of the charts? What are the interventions and factors that contributed to their academic success? This study utilizes a qualitative case study analysis with an autoethnographic lens to capture and examine through the voices of former graduates of Brookline High School interventions and factors that contributed to their success. The goal of this study is to uncover through a qualitative case study approach, grounded in autoethnography, the factors that contributed to their academic success as deemed by the participants. The researcher will provide an overview of his educational experience, more
specifically, the evolution of his relationship with the founder of the Boys to Men program, Mr. JC, highlighting the power of mentorship.

Research Design & Tradition

This study utilized a qualitative case study approach, rooted in autoethnography. Creswell (2007) defines qualitative research as “an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of materials” (p. 35). He asserts that a qualitative research study is preferred for assessing how different pieces come together to constitute a whole. Creswell (2007) further asserts that qualitative research inquires into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007, p.37). Webb (1999) defines qualitative research as research that utilizes various non-experimental methods that include interviews or observations, with the goal of exploring and understanding the attitudes, opinions, feelings and behaviors of an individual or group.

Creswell (2007) defines case study research as “a study of the issues explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 73) and notes that case study research assists the researcher in gathering detailed, in-depth data involving multiple sources of information through interviews, observations, and documented reports.

Yin (1994) asserts that the key to conducting efficient and effective case study research is dependent on the researcher possessing the skills to ask thoughtful questions, be a great listener, and be flexible in reacting to various situations. Moreover, he asserts that the researcher must have a strong grasp of the issues being studied and be unbiased to preconceived notions. Yin (2009) argues that a case study approach has no single, specific process but provides structure for focusing on a specific issue that is fundamental
to understanding the phenomenon being studied. Yin (2009) further asserts that the goal of a case study approach is to consider the voices of the participants and give power to their stories and lived experiences. He further asserts that a case study approach should explain the complexity of the phenomenon through lived experiences; he claims it provides context for the interventions that may have contributed to change and allows the researcher to evaluate and explore how the interventions ultimately impact the set of outcomes.

Eisenhardt (1989) describes a case study approach as a research strategy that focuses on examining one or more cases within a particular phenomenon. He explains that a case study approach is an ideal methodology when the researcher is searching for a holistic, in-depth understanding of a specific issue.

Numerous researchers emphasize that case studies are designed to bring out the facts from the points of view of the participants and that it is their voices that hold the power to understanding a particular phenomenon.

The researcher utilizes an autoethnography approach to share his personal experience as it relates to the African American male participants. Autoethnography seeks to define and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. This approach challenges a unique way of conducting research and representing others as a political, socially conscious act (Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

The researcher uses an autoethnography approach to be aesthetic and evocative, engaging the readers, though the storytelling of the relationship between the researcher and the founder of the Boys to Men program. The researcher sought to ultimately make
this study engaging and emotionally rich by sharing the evolution of their relationship and the value and importance of mentorship.

Participants and Sampling Strategy

The achievements of Black boys are found to be far poorer than that of Black girls. Thus, the research study has specifically targeted African American males.

The study utilized purposeful sampling methodology. Creswell (2007) explains that purposeful sampling is an approach that selects individuals for a particular study with the intent to provide meaning to the research problem and central phenomenon. Purposeful sampling requires the researcher to select a program for study that specifically informs the research problem (Creswell, 2007).

The Boys to Men program was selected as the study program because African American male students at Brookline High School has shared that this program was a significant factor that has contributed to their academic achievement and social development.

Additionally, the Boys to Men program was selected by the researcher as the site study because of its leader’s long-standing reputation for academic excellence and innovative academic programming for students. The pseudonym Mr. JC will be used to protect the identity of the program leader. Mr. JC. has served the Brookline Public Schools for thirty plus years and has been recognized as one of the premier high school leaders in the state. Additionally, Mr. JC has been recognized for his extensive curriculum development and implementation of initiatives towards addressing the educational needs of all students.
Additionally, this study utilizes a criterion sampling strategy method. Creswell (2007) asserts this strategy provides a creative and concise way of selecting participants who meet specific criteria to assure quality. Criterion sampling provides the researcher the opportunity to select a site and individuals that meet predetermined criteria of importance.

In order to have participate in this study the subjects must meet the following criteria:

1. Identify as an African American/Black male
2. Have participated in the Boys to Men Program
3. Graduated from Brookline High School
4. Earned a score of a 1500 or higher on the Scholastic Aptitude Test
5. Enrolled in a minimum of two honor or advanced level courses
6. Maintained a baseline grade point average (GPA) of a 3.0

The study targeted six African American male students who participated in the Boys to Men Program and are graduates of Brookline High School. The sample group was selected with the goal of highlighting interventions that contribute to their academic achievement. The small sample size enabled the researcher to collect detailed information on each participant through the research interviews. Moreover, the small sample size allowed the researcher to transcribe interviews in a narrative model that speaks to the interventions that promoted academic success among African American males and to delve deeper into their program journals.

**Recruitment and Access**

Given that these young men have graduated from Brookline High School and are 18 years of age or older, no acquired access to an institution was needed. In order to
recruit participants for the study, the researcher emailed a letter to prospective participants and received permission from Mr. JC to have access to student records and to interview students. The letter included detailed information on the purpose of the study, the benefits and risks for participants, and the expected outcomes. Additionally, the researcher ensured, in writing, that all information relating to and gathered from participants and the program would be kept confidential. Pseudonyms are used for all human participants. Please see appendices A. and B.

Data Collection

The researcher began the data collection by reviewing participants’ student achievement data. Documents were analyzed to ensure that participants: 1) earned a score of a 1500 or higher on the Scholastic Aptitude Test; 2) were enrolled in a minimum of two honor or advanced level courses; 3) earned a baseline grade point average (GPA) of a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.

This study utilized a series of data collection methods that included: field notes, journal entries, academic profiles of the participants and the research interviews. The data gathered from student interviews as well as additional data, including the academic profiles of students, journal entries and field notes, have been analyzed and assisted in the scope of the research.

1. **Field notes:** Since 2009, the researcher maintained a series of notes documenting the initiatives of the Boys to Men program and the educational and social outcomes of its participants. Moreover, the researcher documented countless hours of observations that shared the rationale behind the implementation of interventions and structure of the program and its desired,
and actual outcomes. The researcher’s documented notes date from January of 2009 to May of 2013.

2. **Journal Entries:** The researcher was granted access to the *Boys to Men* program student journals by Mr. JC and the subjects. The journal entries were comprised of the participants’ educational experience as members of the Boys to Men program. The journal entries included specific information that pertained to interventions and factors that contributed to their academic success and social growth and development. Moreover, the journal entries outlined detailed information of devised strategies, created by members of the program, that helped them to cope with academic and social issues the participants faced. Furthermore, the journal entries provided the researcher with background information about the participants’ experiences in school and as members of the *Boys to Men* program.

3. **Participants’ academic profiles:** With permission from the founder of the *Boys to Men* program, the researcher received access to review and analyze the participants’ academic profiles, which included their transcripts and assessments. The researcher notes the participants’ academic profiles helped to confirm that the participants’ met the criteria for the research study as well as helped form the basis of the study’s findings.

4. **Participants’ interviews:** The participants were asked to take part in a one-on-one audio interview that was recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. All interviews were conducted in a secure location of the participant’s choice to ensure privacy and confidentiality for the interviewees. The interviewer
asked the same series of questions of each participant. The notes utilized for this study did not begin until 2013. Additionally, this study stems from the researcher’s passion for developing a program for Black boys that serves to enhance their academic achievement. Please see appendix C for interview protocol.

The data collection methods have been analyzed and have assisted in forming the basis of the study’s findings on the successful interventions that contribute to the academic success of African American males.

**Data Storage**

To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned pseudonyms. Additionally, the researcher and principal investigator, Dr. Kristal Clemons, are the only individuals with access to data, notes, recordings, transcriptions of the interviews and observations. The interview transcripts were used to identify interventions participants believed contributed to their academic success. The researcher and Principal Investigator, Dr. Kristal Clemons, are the only individuals with access to data. All data continues to be kept in a secure, passcode safe located at the researcher’s home. All participants were assigned aliases. All data will be destroyed following the completion of analysis and reporting. Signed informed consents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for no less than three years as mandated by the Northeastern Institutional Review Board.

**Data Analysis**

This study employs Wolcott’s data analysis strategy. Creswell (2007) defines this strategy as a traditional approach that enables the researcher to form assumptions from the data and relate those assumptions to the literature and the themes in cultural
anthropology. Wolcott’s strategy helps identify commonalties within the study and also assists in displaying data in a way that is easy to comprehend.

The study utilizes a First Cycle: Initial In Vivo Coding process to effectively and efficiently code the datum transcribed. Saldana (2009) states that Initial Coding breaks down qualitative data into distinct parts, allows for thorough examination of those parts, and for analysis of the data for common themes and differences. In this particular coding process the “distinct parts” are the interventions that each subject identifies as having positively impacted his academic achievement. Saldana (2009) insists that Initial Coding is especially suitable for interview transcripts. Given that the purpose of the study is to identify the successful interventions that the subjects identify as contributing to their academic success, the In Vivo coding process is most appropriate for honoring the subjects’ voices. In Vivo Coding uses the actual words of subjects to enhance the understanding of the factors that impact a phenomenon. Furthermore, Saldana (2009) notes that In Vivo coding provides a checkpoint for whether or not the researcher has grasped what is significant to each subject.

In order to reorganize, reanalyze, and to ensure the integrity of the data gathered and synthesized, the researcher utilized a Second Cycle Axial coding method. Second cycle coding methods are designed to condense information gathered from the first cycle coding process. As Saldana (2009) explains, the primary goal of Second Cycle coding is to take the individual pieces from the First Cycle and consolidate them into one common theme. Saldana (2009) argues that the purpose of the Axial Coding method is to strategically reassemble the data that was isolated during the Initial Coding process.
Axial Coding groups similarities and re-labels them into conceptual categories and ultimately aids in determining which codes are most significant and dominant.

The study also offers a narrative that facilitates organizing information, building theories, and conducting analyses of data. The narrative helped with transcription of audio data, which is key in compiling the information needed to uncover the factors that promoted and supported high achievement for African American males.

**Trustworthiness**

In order to establish trustworthiness, quality, and verification, the study employs several methods highlighted by Creswell (2007) that are frequently used by qualitative researchers: triangulation, clarity of researcher bias, member checking, and prolonged engagement. These methods ensure authenticity of the study and provide greater insight to the datum gathered.

Creswell (2007) explains that in triangulation, researchers utilize several sources, methods, and theories to provide corroborating evidence to support and validate a study. This study involves three types of corroborating evidence to illuminate the common themes that are uncovered throughout the study: interviews, documents, and descriptive narratives.

It is important to note that the researcher worked with the *Boys to Men Program* for five years and has an understanding of the culture and its impact on the academic growth and development of its participants. The researcher has, as Creswell (2007) asserts, disclosed at the outset of the study his assumptions, beliefs, and past experiences that may shape the interpretation and execution of the study. Creswell (2007) emphasizes
that it is imperative that the participants understand the researcher’s position in order to ensure trustworthiness, quality and verification of the study.

Additionally, the researcher made clear to subjects the problem of practice, purpose of the study, and the benefits, risks, and potential outcomes of the research. The purpose of this strategy was to encourage open and honest responses from participants to ensure the credibility of the study.

To guarantee the validity, the researcher utilizes the strategy identified by Creswell (2007) as prolonged engagement. This strategy assists the researcher in building rapport with participants, gaining a greater understanding of the culture of the study program, and dispelling any inaccurate information that may result from the data collection process. Prolonged engagements with subjects were conducted through multiple conversations.

To ensure quality and effectiveness of the study, the researcher conducted a member checking approach that elicits subjects’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations of the data transcribed. Creswell (2007) argues that member checking is a significant method for establishing credibility and is most appropriate for qualitative case study research. Participants in this study were given the opportunity to examine and reflect on the accurateness of data.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

In order to maintain protection of human subjects, a series of protocols were implemented prior to conducting interviews with subjects. To ensure protection of human subjects, the researcher participated in the National Institute of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research training, received Institutional Review Board approval, and adhered
to Northeastern University’s (NEU) protocols. Additionally, to guarantee protection of human subjects, consent was obtained before any data was collected. All subjects received a consent form that outlines the following: the right for participants to voluntary withdrawal from the study at any time; the central purpose of the study; procedures and guarantees to ensure confidentiality; statements of known risk associated with participation in the study; expected benefits to participants in the study; and the signature of the participant. To ensure that each participant understood the study the researcher provided an opportunity by phone, Skype, or in person to discuss any questions or concerns. No participants had questions or concerns. After the subject agreed to participate in the study and before the interview commenced, the researcher went over for the second time the consent form and asked the participant to sign the consent form. Please see appendix C for the consent form.
CHAPTER FOUR
ANALYSIS OF DATA & FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of Chapter Four is to present the data compiled during the research study. Chapter Four will commence with an introduction of the purpose of the research study followed by a description of the interview protocol. Next, the researcher provides a narrative that facilitates in organizing information, building theories, and conducting analyses of data, which was key in compiling the information needed to uncover the factors that promoted and supported high achievement for African American males. Following, the researcher introduces and presents the First initial In Vivo Coding process that was selected to dissect the datum transcribed. Ensuing, the researcher presents a summary of the findings from the initial first coding process. Next, the researcher introduces the Second Axial Coding process that was used to condense information gathered from the First Initial Coding process. Last, Chapter Four concludes by identifying common themes that led to the academic success of six Black males at Brookline High School at an demanding public high school located in a northern American city in public secondary education as stated by the participants.

The Research Project

The lack of access to a high quality education for Black boys has had a profound negative impact on their academic and social growth and development. According to Whiting (2006) Black high school males are in a state of crisis because they consistently perform and statistically rank at the bottom of most standardized assessments and ratings of college completion. Noguera (2002) asserts that African American males are rarely
viewed as gifted students, and descriptors such as “at risk”, “achievement gap”, and “crisis” continue to be attached to Black males as a group.

The research and literature and numerous anecdotal explanations pertaining to why African American students are underperforming stem from but are not limited to the deficit-deprivation theory. Schools have a deleterious effect on the achievement of African American males, which is commonly referred to as the “Fourth Grade Failure Syndrome” whereby African American males exhibit high achievement and potential of academic success in kindergarten but by fourth grade, many have been relegated to special education or labeled as underachievers. Low teacher expectations, oppositional cultural identity, and a cultural disconnect between teachers and students, are just a few factors that influence the underachievement of Black boys.

Given that the majority of research and literature pertaining to the achievement of Black boys stems from a deficiency model, the purpose of this research is to identify and examine, through the voices of six African American male students, interventions that led to their academic success as high school students who participated in a Boys to Men Program and attended a predominantly white public institution known for its academic rigor.

The purpose of this research study is to highlight the subjective experiences of these African America males and their attitudes and behaviors towards academic success. Furthermore, the goal of this research is to identify the key interventions and commonalities that have enabled African American males to be successful. It is the goal of the researcher to use the voices of African American males to capture and examine the interventions that led to success and use these interventions to create an African
American Male Theory that serves as a framework to highlight factors that lead to their success. Moreover, it is the researcher’s hope this theory will be used by future scholar practitioners as a means to enhance the academic achievement of Black boys.

**Interview Protocol**

The researcher conducted voluntary interviews with six African American male students who fulfilled the criteria for this qualitative study. The interviewees took part in a one-on-one interview. All information that was gathered in the interview will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants and keep their identity anonymous. During the interview, the researcher asked ten questions pertaining to their lived experience as a student. The goal of the interview was to uncover interventions that have contributed to their academic success. Please keep in mind that before the interview as well as during the interview the researcher informed the participants they could opt out of the study. Please see appendix F for the list of questions used to conduct the interview:

**Trustworthiness of Datum Transcribed**

After all six interviews were conducted and transcribed and the narratives were written the researcher engaged in cross-validation with the interviewees to ensure trustworthiness of the datum transcribed. All participants indicted to the researcher that their transcribed interview was accurate. This allowed the researcher to commence the first initial in-vivo coding process.

**First Initial In-Vivo Coding Process Analysis**

The study utilized a First Cycle: Initial In-Vivo Coding process. Saldana (2009) states that First Cycle: Initial In-Vivo Coding breaks down qualitative data into distinct portions that allow for thorough examination of those parts and analysis of that data for
common themes and differences. In this particular coding process the “distinct parts” are the interventions that each subject identifies as having positively impacted his academic achievement.

Given that the purpose of the study is to identify the interventions that the subjects deem as contributing to their academic success, the In Vivo coding process is most appropriate in honoring the subjects’ voices. In Vivo Coding uses the actual words of subjects to enhance the understanding of the factors that impact a phenomenon. Furthermore, Saldana (2009) notes that In-Vivo coding provides a checkpoint for whether or not the researcher grasps what is significant to each subject. The following chart consists of ten questions and each participant’s responses. The names of the students on the chart are fictitious.
**First Cycle – Initial In-Vivo Coding Matrix With Interview Questions & Participants’ Responses**

**Question 1:** What if any, specific experiences at BHS helped the development of your identity as member of your racial and ethnic group?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DD</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>BM</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>MB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“METCO helped shape my development as a person, because it made me more open to the world and towards people” Also, “made me a stronger person … did not judge people off the back it made me get to know people and who they really are as a person and not just as their appearances”</td>
<td>“Being a part of METCO and AALSP because “we got to learn about our history why it is important to become better students and better people” “It was a family vibe and if there was ever someone struggling there was always someone to help support him or her”</td>
<td>I will have to say METCO and being a part of AALSP has helped me identify who I am those around me - they guided me and helped me keep my eyes on the books and to be successful in a predominantly white institution - that had low expectations.”</td>
<td>“Definitely have to say the group of African American males that were with me throughout high school, that support group was very helpful and also having you, Dr. M Dr. V how you strive for academic excellence made us as a group strive for academic excellence and also you being on us to do it”</td>
<td>“I think it was exploring different community in the school, being in the scholars program. METCO really helped shape who I am the people who I am close with and my openness to others”</td>
<td>“One was being a part of my brotherhood - I was put into a brotherhood - boys group and that helped me accept who I was not try to fit in with the Caucasian students but try to stay true to who I was- being around like race like minded people helped me be happy with who I was.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 2: Are you familiar with any negative stereotypes of Black males in education? If yes, share a prominent stereotype?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DD</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>BM</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>MB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Black people are dumb they can’t read not smart they just good in sports” “Moreover, “They like to steal” like to have guns on them”</td>
<td>“We are lazy don’t take class serious we are class clowns and education comes after athletics.”</td>
<td>“Black males are not suppose to do as efficient as other races and genders and what. In academics mainly - black males are not as smart and capable as others”</td>
<td>“Most African American males are suppose to drop-out of high school not go to college and even if they do make it to college most drop-out after their first year… African American males are unruly angry, black males, lazy”</td>
<td>“That we are below the learning curve we are not as smart as the white student sitting next to us that was something I was taught”</td>
<td>“One black males don’t graduate high school or attend college- likely to get your GED – don’t take school serious and only focus on sports”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Question 3: Has your understanding of black male stereotypes impacted your experience as a student? If so, how has there been any learning opportunity to prepare you to disarm the negative stereotypes?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DD</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>BM</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>MB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Being around other African Americans who are trying to achieve great things” “I think that is what disarmed the stereotypes and held me to higher standard and you were not just trying to excel for yourself but for others it always keeping them around you that reminds you what you have to do.”</td>
<td>“Definitely … kept me motivated… don’t fall into the stereotypes don’t fail don’t slack” “Men’s Retreat… At our men’s retreat the panel speakers who shared their success and how they overcame negative stereotypes similar to the ones we face motivated me… it was good to see people in front of me directly in front of me who are doing the right thing and proving stereotypes were all wrong.”</td>
<td>“Talking with Dr. V Mr. L … about striving for excellence and overcoming negative stereotypes the Boys to Men retreat help us understand that we do not should not live by the negative stereotypes but to be greater and be positive and show the world we have a purpose in education to strive for excellence panelist’s stories about success and that educated us to be something special. – I will also say the groups talking with individual teachers who are both white and black helped us understand life and what we need to do”</td>
<td>“It made me defy those stereotypes … I know my peer support group and you guys would not allow us to perpetuate those stereotypes.” “Boys group helped me disarm them. And second was the AALSP that pushed me and held me to high expectations”</td>
<td>“Pushed me to work harder and stay focus I just did not want to be another statistic – I did not want to fit the description of what white students their parents and teachers thought of black males from the inner city- so it motivated me – learning opportunity- mainly it was the program boys group – we were actually preparing grades yesterday- we supported each other – there was a lot of times we just helped each other”</td>
<td>“– I wanted to graduate college and hopefully get my doctorate my motivation I want to show black males that it could be done and reverse the stereotype. There was no specific learning opportunity – to me it was just keep on striving even when its tough- you have to keep on- and pick yourself up when you fall and keep on pushing – don’t stop trying”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Question 4: How do you define academic success?**

4a. Describe specific factors that promoted or contributed to your academic success as an African American male student?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DD</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>BM</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>MB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I think it is being able to overcome academic obstacles that is academic success” (Line 103-104). Part 4a. “Boys to Men retreat and seeing other African American males and hearing their stories where they come from and where they are today” “Average people who reached their goals who are happy no excuses”</td>
<td>“Progress is a huge aspect of success… progress, hard work I consider that success- moving forward overcoming obstacles.”</td>
<td>“Being able to achieve my goals to be high in honor classes and being able to make honor roll I wanted to try and prove that I am just as part – one intervention that was created by Dean Cradle that really showed me the path of becoming academically successful. There were ten boys I should say men who tried to become like Dean Cradle.”</td>
<td>“I think a lot of people think it starts with grades and in some cases it does but to me its more-so having the knowledge and confidence in yourself to do well and share your knowledge with others.”</td>
<td>“I define academic success as when you do the best you can …achieve a goal that you have a passion for- taking what you learn – Intervention- “I think it was being in a program that thought me the type of learner I am and the things I like – strategies to be better and feeding off of positive energy-being around positivity”</td>
<td>“Just working hard and pushing yourself- success to many people are different but to me it was being the best you can even if that meant you getting a C” When I received a D – my parents asked me if that was the best I could do- I knew it wasn’t so that meant working harder”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 5: What were some academic challenges you faced as an African American male student? How did you overcome those challenges?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DD</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>BM</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>MB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Math was a challenge. Being by myself but having study groups helped (Line 180). Study groups consisted of peers.”</td>
<td>“When I was the few/minority ... I noticed it more when I started to take more challenging courses such as honors the attention was on me. Just accepting it was reality and speaking to adults who looked like me.”</td>
<td>“Will have to say being alone in some classes made it hard to be myself. I wanted to keep myself with my friends and wanted to be successful but at the same time I had to challenge myself – being in these classes made it extremely hard and hard to achieve your goals because there were not others who looked like you to help you out”</td>
<td>“Low expectations from people-it was either having people believe you can not surpass certain expectations to people being shocked your surpassed the low expectations they had for you” “white teachers and white teachers in higher academic level classes. These classes where you don’t normally see African American males in they don’t know what to expect because the have not seen a large population of us in their classroom”</td>
<td>“I struggled in honors because I lacked the confidence but I started to meet other kids who looked like me doing well and talking to them and that’s how I gained confidence...I learned from the boys group the steps I needed to take to be successful-advocate - I had to advocate – I had to do everything that was necessary to graduate with good grades”</td>
<td>“A lot of my honor classes being in class where I was alone- there were some classes I was the only black kid and in certain parts of class I felt I the black expert- I was the black historian in history class and often I felt kids felt pity for me” “I did not let it get to me and used humor to make things better”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 6: Does a teacher's racial-ethnic and gender background impact your ability to foster a relationship with them? If so, describe why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DD</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>BM</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>MB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“A better connection with folks who like me cause they are able to relate more to specific stories”</td>
<td>“Not all the time – but when I had Dr. V. it felt really good to have an African American male teacher – I felt a connection before the class even started and when you feel that connection with a teacher – you focus better work harder and you enjoy the class better I think it is beneficial and makes things a lot a better”</td>
<td>“I believe you should be able to get along with everyone no matter their gender or race – one example – “Mr. Wheeler, had a strong impact on my life – it was my sophomore year- I did not bond with him initially because I was the only African American male in that class and felt uncomfortable. And later on him and I had a stronger bond and we talked about success and performing well and the effort that is needed and it was never the 100% effort it was the 110% effort we always talked about”</td>
<td>“I definitely think so… I have seen white middle age women as my teachers and their expectations and I got use to it – but I am always happy to see an African American male teacher as my teacher… I have a different feel from having an old white man to a middle class white woman – there seems to be already a connection and the high expectation is there”</td>
<td>“I was taught by white female older teachers – that type of environment did not really fit me — so I knew the importance of building a relationship with the teachers of color it was comfortable especially knowing we had something in common it was a different presence”</td>
<td>“- It should be no – but it does – when you have a teacher that looks like you it makes it easy to approach them and to see teachers in your space also made it comfortable and to see teachers interact with students it helped foster a good relationship. Mr. Wheeler is white but you will see him interact with kids and come to where the black kids hang out where we are -you develop a different and trusting relationship with a teacher like that. Its them stepping out their comfort zone to be with you”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Better connection with folks who like me cause they are able to relate more to specific stories”

“At the end of the day it’s your job to have a relationship with the teacher”
**Question 7: Whom do you go to for advice at school?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DD</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>BM</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>MB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“To my friends first who look like me and what their problems are and if I want to seek more advice will go to folks who look like me”</td>
<td>“A wide variety of people to go to- but I usually go to my friends who were in METCO (family culture) teachers who looked like me or someone older – like Dean JC because he is so knowledgeable and can always find something to relate to and gives great advice often grounded in history”</td>
<td>“3-4 teachers…. those are the ones who I feel confident in and I trust them the most”… “Those talks really helped- but the aid of my brothers was big they pushed me and I pushed them we were always giving that extra effort for each other”</td>
<td>“My peer group you Dr. Vick – those who I trust…. But developing more trust with those who I can go to is key”</td>
<td>“My friends first and my mom first- besides that Dr. V- but my white English teacher who I have a great relationship with who is open and often comfortable with talking about race and issues surrounding kids of color- she put me in leadership roles and made it clear that she cared about issues around race and underachievement of kids of color”… “Teachers who took notice of me and made me feel comfortable with whom I am”</td>
<td>“I’m a close person- but I will talk to you Dr. Vick my role models- it all has to do with trust and building relationships- it years of talking with you and Dr. V and developing that trust factor”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 8: Have any of your academic classes been structured in a way that led to greater academic achievement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DD</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>BM</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>MB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Yes in clustered classrooms with your peers there is always someone checking on the other. Making sure they are on top of their work” I think when it’s you in the classroom just the person of color I think you lose that confidence and edge to want to compete.”</td>
<td>“I think when the class is more diverse it helps me focus I feel more excited/comfortable such as my senior history class which had tons of people from around the world… that made it more interesting and taught me a lot about other people” “So I think grouping is great for students it helps build confidence and makes the class more interesting”</td>
<td>“A few classes but AALSP was great I was able to learn about my history and learn about those who fought to make life possible for me – this was a big motivator- it was great and inspired me to do more. – Taught us about stereotypes – that was the main class”</td>
<td>“Being in a cluster class with my peer group and a teacher who understood the clustering of the class” “If you’re the sole African American male in a class where there is low expectation you might defy certain stereotypes or meet them but if you are in a class with people who look like you – you will work together to defy those stereotypes and having that support and going against those low expectations there is more of a chance to overcome those low expectations – and as time progresses you kill those low expectation and the idea that everyone is capable”</td>
<td>“Being in a class where there was kids who looked like me and there was a feeling and emotion you will have when you became the black expert and there was support- and there were times when I was in a class with them it was a reminder to stay on track- its about making kids feel comfortable and that was one way.”</td>
<td>“Yes, sophomore year- Mrs. Jenkins it was my math class there was never a down day – she would encourage you to work hard and stay enthusiastic always- that class will make you want to participate”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Question 9: Describe specific experiences in high school, which have had the most influenced on your academic growth and development?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DD</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>BM</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>MB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Junior year developing that resiliency to like not letting anything get you down cause I was really close about really close to giving up in school” Math Class “She was a good person because even when you weren’t doing good in the class she would always be there and encourage you to do good in the class she would never shy away from you”</td>
<td>“Freshmen year I was not in AALSP that was my motivation to get a 2.7 GPA or higher I started to develop as a student…” I saw students with higher GPA and who were taking Honors AP courses and that encouraged me to do more- and work harder that was my motivation”</td>
<td>“Our boys group I will have to say with out that group I would not been able to get by high school. It was great to reflect on the week and with that talk and aid I do not know how well I would do- it impacted all the boys in that room- it made us know that we can be who we want to be and be the successors and something in life and my success came from being around those who are doing the same and others who are trying to help you push yourself and be great leaders who have come before us”</td>
<td>“Not being considered a scholar and trying to figure out how to do well and become a scholar – seeing Dr. V and others always in my ear on how I was doing and having high expectations … Second was brotherhood group which was a peer group that talked about being black and in predominately white institution …what does it mean to be black male – also the values from home help realize and identify what you want and how to achieve it”</td>
<td>“I think it was my junior year – life got serious the work load became a lot harder college was around the corner but I was prepared I knew this stuff since freshmen year from our boys group I knew what to expect- that year I received all A’s and B’s –”</td>
<td>“My engineer class – ever since I was born I knew what I wanted to do – but it was coming to high school and taking this class and having hands on experience- that right there pushed me to go to college to further my education and passion for what I love- to me it was my Dream meeting Reality and I loved it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 10: If you had to change two things about Success to improve the academic achievement of black boys what would they be, and why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DD</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>BM</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>MB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Be more on top of them when it comes to academics”</td>
<td>“Maybe a day or night where teachers go and try to learn more about AALS students and METCO students and understand the struggles “? Cultural awareness day …” most importantly learning about the stereotypes”</td>
<td>“Getting more Black boys to take more honor and AP classes because there were very few in there we have to challenge ourselves and realize that hard work pays off… “And the second thing is increasing the diversity in those classes…to learn from all type of people and help them reach a better place”</td>
<td>“Enhancing the culture…I would say its hard work the big thing is setting time to play and work. Time management” Understandin the journey “focus on the work not just the end game”…” Hard work will not happen without focus, making sacrifices that are required to be successful”</td>
<td>“Try to connect more with the school-steeping out and exploring more things that are going on because when that comfort is gone you have nothing to fall back on – to me its about learning to be uncomfortable learn to explore take new classes and meet new people. Really it about finding yourself by exploring new things. Last thing to educators is to build a thirst for success-provide and put kids in position to work hard”</td>
<td>“Kids have the wrong mindset- we have to start young- I was at a boys group and the kids couldn’t stay focus and there was no order-these kids need to know when the time to be serious and time to have fun” Educators- “need to focus-talk to the kids early about the reality of life and second keeping up with the boys group and building healthy competition to push each other its beautiful- like minded kids who push each other”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initial Findings

The preliminary findings from the first initial coding process seem to indicate and give credence to the notion that students are more reliable than educational reformers in identifying which interventions lead to academic success for Black boys in public secondary education.

This is evident from the unique responses from the interviewees that were contrary to the researcher’s hypothesis. After the initial analysis was undertaken, the researcher conducted a second cycle axial coding process to condense the datum gathered by grouping similarities and developing common themes.

Second Cycle Axial Coding Process

In order to reorganize, reanalyze, and to ensure the integrity of the data gathered and synthesized the researcher utilized a Second Cycle Axial coding method. Second cycle coding methods are designed to condense information gathered from the first cycle coding process. As Saldana (2009) asserts, the primary goal of Second Cycle coding is to take the individual pieces from the First Cycle and consolidate them into one common theme. The researcher selected the Second Cycle Axial code matrix because it attempts to develop a coherent synthesis of conceptual thematic organization from the aggregate first cycle coding process. Saldana (2009) argues that the purpose of the Axial Coding method is to strategically reassemble the data that was isolated during the Initial Coding process. Axial Coding groups similarities and re-labels them into conceptual categories and ultimately aids in determining which codes are most significant and dominant.
### Second Cycle- Axial Coding Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Interviewees Synthesis: AC, BM, TM, MB, LB, &amp; DD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What if any, specific experiences at BHS helped the development of your identity as member of your racial and ethnic group?</td>
<td>Programs that are led by African American male educators that cultivate a culture of family support – a brotherhood with like-minded peers who seek to accomplish greatness – that teaches about African American history – that makes African American males aware of stereotypes, which inspires Black males to achieve academic success by fostering a culture of serious, invigorating scholarship. Eliminating the notion of racelessness. Instilling the notion that “Black is Smart” - Social and Academic Belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Are you familiar with any negative stereotypes of Black males in education? If yes, share a prominent stereotype?</td>
<td>Black males are unwilling to make the effort to be successful or do something properly, lack the intellectual ability to enroll and be successful in Honors and Advance Placement courses. Black males are violent and often perceived as delinquents. Black males are more likely to dropout of school than to receive a college degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Has your understanding of black male stereotypes impacted your experience as a student? If so, how have there been any learning opportunities to prepare you to disarm the negative stereotypes?</td>
<td>Being aware of the stereotypes pertaining to Black males and most importantly having and learning about successful African American males who have overcome these stereotypes have inspired, empowered, and motivated these males to dismantle them and show the world their greatness by performing as well as they could. Young Men’s Retreats - hearing personal testimonials of African American males success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do you define academic success?</td>
<td>Academic success is not defined as having exceptional grades, A’s and B’s but by overcoming obstacles and challenging oneself to the best of their ability. Resiliency and Grit, Hard Work Overtime. The notion of growth-mindset. Having the understanding the intellectual ability is not innate and that hard work over time – more time on task prepares you for academic success. This idea was regularly promoted in conversation and through stealthy messaging from Black male educators. i.e. retreats, history lessons, constant reminders that they are scholars especially through constructive criticism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a. Describe specific factors that promoted or contributed to your academic success as an African American male student?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What were some academic challenges you faced as an African American male student?</td>
<td>Being the only student of color was the most challenging followed by a lack of low expectations, by white female teachers who as the interviewees stated were often shocked when they surpassed their expectations. Subsequently, lack of confidence in one's intellectual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5a. How did you overcome those challenges?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5a. Black males overcame these challenges by having African American male educators who helped build their confidence by setting high expectations and reassuring them they are scholars. Additionally, by challenging them to be excellent in all aspects of their lives regardless of the low expectations that were set by others. *Even though students were enrolled in the higher-level courses they still lacked confidence in themselves.*

6. **Does a teacher's racial-ethnic and gender background impact your ability to foster a relationship with them? If so, describe why?**

   Having teachers of the same race and sex had an immense impact on their academic and social experience. There was a sense of comfort and trust that was already established that made approaching a teacher of color of the same sex easier. *Additionally, African American males stated having educators of color who placed white teachers in positions for them to foster positive relationships with students of color had a significant impact on their lives.* *This experience addressed their assumptions and beliefs about white teachers, broke down many barriers and opened their minds to respecting and accepting human differences.*

   Teachers who are willing to broaden their comfort zone, be open to and respect cultural differences, understand and articulate the struggle and importance of African American males working hard made it easier to foster a relationship. It’s your job to establish a relationship with your teacher.

7. **Who do you go to for advice at school? Why?**

   Black males would often go to their peer group who were like-minded individuals who they trusted. They shared that their peer group often inspired and motivated them to reach higher heights. Second, African American males stated they would go to educators who were knowledgeable and who they trusted and have established a positive relationship with. Additionally, educators who are **empowering, great listeners, compassionate, honest, gave tough love and held students to high expectations.** Most importantly educators who took notice of students, their struggles and accomplishments and who adapted to a student’s culture and who they wanted to become.

8. **Have any of your academic classes been structured in a way that led to greater academic achievement?**

   Classes that were diverse allowed for a rich and diverse transmission. It was important not to be the only kid of color in an honor or AP course because it provided a
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8a. Have you been in a clustered classroom? Do you personally believe grouping students of color in high-level courses contribute to your achievement?</td>
<td>sense of comfort that made them feel as if they belonged. Being in classes that are clustered also encouraged and empowered students to help each other. Social and Academic Belonging Importance of Clustered Classrooms- addresses the idea of racelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Describe specific experiences in high school, which have had the most influenced on your academic growth and development?</td>
<td>A Dream Becoming A Reality- exposure to life opportunities and meeting and speaking with African American males who are successful in areas in which students aspire to. Boys Group weekly meetings that allowed for opportunities for African American males reflect on the week and to help cope with issues. Conversations with educators of color who communicated with African American males on a consistent basis high expectations and the reality of life. Exposure to opportunities Interventions that inspired African American males to seek for greatness- Speaker series, retreat panelist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10. If you had to change two things about Success to improve the academic achievement of black boys what would they be, and why? | Other than the educators of color, there was a lack of expectations and willingness to inspire African American males to take the most challenging courses. As such, Black males suggested a school wide initiative to address the assumptions and beliefs of teachers and the impact they have on Black males when they have low expectations.  
Students should explore opportunities beyond their comfort zone. Continue to expose students to college at an early age and teach them about the growth mindset. Hard work over time is the key success. Provide opportunities for teachers and students to learn from each other and equip them with the skills needed to be successful. |
About the Participants

This section provides an account of each participant’s responses to the interview questions that aim to uncover successful interventions. This section facilitates in organizing information, building theories, and conducting analyses of data, which are key in compiling the information needed to uncover the factors that promoted and supported high achievement for African American males. Chapter Four ends with a summary of the key themes that emerged and will be examined in Chapter Five.

Meet the Achievers – The Good & The Ugly

The researcher purposefully selected six African American males to participate in this study. To ensure confidentiality and trustworthiness, all participants were assigned pseudonyms. The following pseudonyms were assigned to the six participants: Denzel D., Ailson C., Tyreik M., Branden M., Lake B., and Matthew B.

The researcher, who served as their administrator during their time at Brookline High School, already knew each of these participants. During this time, the researcher and participants established a positive rapport that gave the researcher insight into their lived experiences prior to the study. The researcher outlines the participants’ personal background and academic struggles prior to experiencing successful interventions that led to their academic success.

About Denzel D.:

Denzel D’ is an African American male who was born and raised in Dorchester, MA. Denzel D. has described himself as humorous, loving, affectionate and smart. At the young age of 7 Denzel’s mom passed away of natural causes, leaving behind his two
sisters, dad and him. Denzel insisted despite the lost of his mom he has been fortunate to live in a beautiful home and neighborhood, and given everything he has wished for. Denzel D. insists his father’s work ethic and determination to ensure he receives access to a quality education motivated him each day.

However, Denzel D.’s experienced academic challenges in middle school that were due in large part to his belief that intelligence is simply a fixed trait that cannot be developed. Denzel shared during his interview that he put minimal effort into developing his academic skills because he believed that his innate intellectual ability would be enough for him to experience success. Moreover, Denzel began to see that the stereotypes that represented Black boys as unintelligent, and inane, and whose focus was primarily on athletics, began to play out in his life.

About Ailson C.:

Ailson C. was born and raised in Dorchester, MA, and attended the public schools of Brookline. Ailson C. is a kind hearted young man who will put others before himself. He is a young man that often finds and seeks for the good in others. Ailson C. shared he is inspired by his mom, who migrated from Cape Verde and has earned her Associates degree in business. Ailson C. insisted that for as long as he can remember, his mom has provided him with the educational necessities to ensure his academic success and has taught him the importance of being open and accepting to all.

Even with a great home life, Ailson C. asserted he still lacked the confidence and desire to make the sacrifices required of him to be the best student he could be. As a result, he struggled to maintain decent grades and regularly found himself in trouble. He explained that his poor performance was due to his belief that he was not good enough to
succeed and admitted he fell victim to the negative stereotypes that portrayed African American males as inferior to their white counterparts. Ailson insisted, as a result, that his academic performance was influenced by the awareness that he was not as smart as his white peers.

**About Tyreik M.:**

Tyreik M. was born in Boston, MA and was raised by his two amazing parents who earned their Bachelor degrees. Tyreik M. refers to himself as a gentle giant with an aim in life to help his peers navigate through the troubled waters of society that often discourage and prevent young men of color from excelling. Tyreik M. asserts his parents’ spiritual belief and understanding that education is the key to success served to guide his personal decisions and instilled a sense of the importance of hard work. Moreover, Tyreik shares he has had the opportunity to be raised in an affluent neighborhood and in a home that has been influential in his growth and development.

Given Tyreik M. upbringing, one will believe Tyreik M. was destined for academic success. However, Tyreik M. academically struggled in middle school and during his freshmen year in high school due to his lack of confidence, determination, and his poor work ethic. Tyreik often chose the path of least resistance and lacked the determination and focus to perform well in his academics. He claimed that the stereotype that depicted African American males as not capable of achieving at the same high level as their white counterparts had a negative impact in his ability to excel in his academics.

**About Branden M.:**

Branden M. was born and raised in Roxbury, MA. and resides in an affluent section of Roxbury. His parents are college graduates who have also earned their Masters
degrees. Branden M. is a mature, personable and smart young man who is full of potential to accomplish all his aims in life. He insists that his strong work ethic and desire to be successful stems from society’s negative persecution of Black men. He asserts that his parents have afforded him opportunities that have opened doors for him to become successful, and have inspired and motivated him to be a role model and mentor to others.

Nevertheless, in the eighth grade Branden M. did not demonstrate the qualities of hard work or dedication, and did not fulfill the social responsibilities expected of him. Branden lacked the diligence and determination to excel in his academics and spent much of class instruction time in the principal’s office. As a result, his teachers deemed him a disciplinary problem. Branden attributed his poor achievement to being misunderstood and being held to low expectations by his white teachers.

**About Lake B.**

Lake B. was born and raised in Hyde Park, MA. Lake B.’s parents are college graduates who have made a career in public service. Lake B. is known for his sense of humor and strong work ethic. He insists that his aim in life is to reverse how society negatively views Black men through his determination and life long accomplishments. Lake B. asserts that his family upbringing has provided him the opportunity to view the world openly and respecting to respect the cultural and racial difference of others.

Lake B. had an amazing family support, but he never seemed to live-up to achievement that was expected of him. Lake B. often found himself trapped in the social scene of school, masking his intellectual ability. His mind was often clouded by the idea that African American Boys were dumb, and inferior to white students. To him “black
was not smart” and “smart was not cool.” Thus, he did everything in his power to perpetuate the negative stereotypes of Black boys.

**About Matthew B.:**

Matthew B. currently resides in an affluent section of Dorchester, MA. His parents are college graduates and currently business owners. Matthew B. is strong minded and confident in his ability and desire to be successful. Matthew B. asserts his family has been his biggest social support and driving force behind his success. Moreover, Matthew B. denotes his parents’ belief that education is key in the upward mobility of an individual instilled in him the desire to receive a quality education that will help him better himself.

However, Matthew B. did not take his academic responsibilities seriously in middle school and his grades suffered as a result. Matthew was rarely self-motivated, lacked focus, and had no desire to excel determination to excel in his academics. As a result, he found himself getting into trouble. Matthew said that his plan was to use his athletic ability to get into college. As he noted, he fell victim to the stereotype.

Based on the academic struggles of each participant the researcher identified through these interviews, several key theories and factors as mentioned in the literature contributes to the poor achievement of Black boys: lack of the Growth Mindset Theory, Racelessness Theory, Stereotype Threat theory, limited access to race identity development, poor resilience and advocacy skills, and absence of educators of color in a school setting.

The researcher considered all participants as members of the middle or upper middle socioeconomic class as measured by a combination of education, income and
occupation of their parents. This is significant, given the research powerfully demonstrates that a student’s family socioeconomics status plays a significant role in their education.

Moreover, the researcher deemed it significant to share the academic struggles of the participant in order to capture and understand why particular interventions as identified by participants led to their academic success. The researcher has determined all participants as middle socioeconomics class, as measured as a combination of education, income and occupation.

**Beginning of Successful Interventions Race Identity Development**

The six subjects asserted that successful interventions either occurred as a member of the *Boys to Men* Program in their eighth grade year or in their freshmen year at Brookline High School. Each participant believed that learning about his culture and history helped develop and shape their racial identity. The participants stated that this resulted in increased confidence, intellectual ability, desire, social responsibility and awareness to excel in their academics. Below are statements from each participant:

**Denzel D. raved:**

“Learning about my history taught me about myself. I became more open to the world’ and I knew that success was, umm yeah, derived from hard work. I knew more about my history than others. I felt confident in myself and my people”

**Ailson C. said:**

“There were multiple interventions that motivated me to strive for excellence, but the biggest one was learning about my ancestors, my
history, and I will say the accomplishments of my people that inspired me.”

**Ailson C. further states:**

“Mr. JC taught us about the role our people played in shaping this nation and why we need to be better students and people.”

**Tyreik M. raves:**

“There is a saying, you have to know your history, to know where you’re going. Well, knowing my history showed me where I can go. I know I can do anything I want. I learned about myself and my value to society; that’s why I give back and help you with these boys that my job”

**Branden M. said:**

“History teaches you so much. I got to know my people, not just the traditional people you hear about every year during Black History month, but others who had a great impact.”

**Branden further states:**

“By learning about my history I learned about myself, my ability and worth to be great and to give back. I was definitely inspired and I did not want their sacrifices to go in vain”

**Lake B. mentioned:**

“The most important thing that inspired me was exploring my history and that of others. I realized how great my people were. It was scary to learn what we as a people went though but that made me understand their
sacrifices and why I’m here and well… people sacrificed their lives to
open doors for us. That inspires me.”

Matthew B. said:
“My experience in the Boys to Men program taught me about my history
and myself. It helped me accept who I was not and not try to fit in with the
Caucasian students and try to stay true to my culture who I was and my
people.”

Black Male Stereotypes

Each participant shared by learning about his history and culture he became more
understanding of the popular racial stereotype and the impact it has on the academic
progress of Black boys. The stereotypes identified by participants were: African
American males are unintelligent, shiftless, inferior to whites, great athletes, not great
students, violent, unruly, and often disrespectful. The following are participants’
responses to the common stereotypes they were aware of:

Denzel D. raved:
“The prominent stereotypes I know are we can’t read, we are not smart,
they (inaudible) just good in sports.”

Ailson C. said:
“There are tons of stereotype … we are lazy, don’t take class serious. We
are class clowns and education comes after athletics.”

Tyreik M. raves:
“I will have to say black males are not supposed to do as efficient as other
races and genders --in academics mainly not life as a whole-- black males
are not as smart and capable of being successful.”
Branden M. said:

“Most African American males are supposed to dropout of high school, not go to college, and even if they do make it to college, most of the time they dropout after their first year -African American males are unruly angry, lazy a lot of negative stereotypes not too many positive.”

Lake B. mentioned:

“We are always below the learning curve; we are not as smart as the white student sitting next to us, and not capable of taking the Honors and Advance level courses.”

Matthew B. said:

“Black males don’t graduate from high school or attend college- likely to get your GED – don’t take school serious and only focus on sports.”

Participants indicted that being armed with the knowledge of their history helped them defy the negative stereotypes that often depicted Black boys as an inferior race. The participants insisted that the images of successful African American males no longer came to them primarily through the media, but through the Boys to Men Program that presented successful Black males as transformational leaders in society. Such leaders included W.E.B DuBois, John Lewis, Jessie Jackson, President Barack Obama and many others. Participants shared that being exposed to successful African American males instilled a sense of greater self worth and responsibility. The participants further asserted having African American male teachers also had a significant impact on their academic success.
Impact of Teachers and Administrators of Color

The six participants felt that a teacher’s racial/ethnic and gender background had a significant impact on their academic success. Five out of the six participants did not experience a single teacher of color in grades kindergarten through eight (K-8). All six participants shared that they had never experienced being taught by an African American male teacher until their freshmen year at Brookline High School. Each participant during his time at Brookline High School experienced both an African American male teacher and administrator. The participants indicated access to African American male teachers and administrators on a daily basis had a significant positive impact on their success. The participants’ responses are below:

Ailson C. asserted:

“I felt personally, umm more inspired; motivated to work harder knowing they are my teachers or are checking in to make sure I’m doing well. It felt really good to have an African American male teachers- and administrators umm I felt a connection- before the class even started and when you feel that connection with a teacher – you focus better you enjoy the class better. I think it is beneficial and makes things a lot better and easier, … I also like that I could go to older Black males, their wisdom and knowledge and their stories helped me deal with my issues.”

Matthew B. said:

“When you have a teacher that looks like you it makes it easy to approach them, there’s a connection that makes being in that class a lot more comfortable. Also, I feel they have umm my best interest at heart not to
say White teachers don’t but some White teachers don’t understand what you go through and often don’t’, you know Mr. L, take the time to figure you out… it all has to do with trust and building relationships.”

**Lake B. mentioned:**

“I had a handful of Black teachers that motivated me– different from my White teachers. Their classroom environment and expectations seemed different. There was definitely a better connection with my Black teachers… when I was taught by white female older teachers - that type of environment did not really fit me – that setting was quite, very different but I always knew the importance of building a relationship with my teachers but with the white teachers it was a little bit harder. They seemed somewhat guarded; with my teachers of color it was a lot more comfortable. Cause of this I went to my Black teachers for advice I’m lucky we have a few at SHS, my life would have been different if I didn’t have you and others to go to.”

**Denzel D. stated:**

“There’s a better connection with teachers who like me. I work harder cause I feel inspired and feel as though I can relate to them. I have noticed a difference in expectations and discipline between my White and Black teachers. I get away with more from my white teacher than my black teachers – you would think it would be different; they [Black teachers] - constantly reminded me of the bigger picture, and to stay focus… Mr. L we had many of those conversations. Well, having [Black] teachers
definitely impacted my academic success; I knew I could go to them for help anytime even if it was not regarding their class.”

**Branden M. asserted:**

“I definitely think it had an impact on my academic success. I have seen White middle age women as my teachers and their low expectations and I got used to it – they often held me to low expectations and was surprised when I surpassed their expectations. Umm it was often a weird battle that I regularly won but never faced with my Black teachers; there’s a different feel a different level of expectations. Many times I felt they [Black teachers] believed in me more, they wanted the best for me even if that met I had to go above and beyond what was expected. And most times I did, because they inspired me.”

Tyreik M.’s response was slightly different. Tyreik felt that having an African American male teacher was influential and empowering. What was most powerful for him was that his African American administrator helped him to navigate through the process of developing a positive relationship with his White history teacher.

**Tyreik M. said:**

“This helped me addressed the negative assumptions I had about that White teacher, I was basically failing…Mr. JC was the you know the guider who helped me foster a relationship with him [White teacher]. This broke down many barriers and opened my mind to be open to him, I went from hating him to liking him and my grade went from a D to a B. You remember that? That was big.”
The participants credited the presence of African American male teachers who participated in their learning and social development was significant, contributing to their academic success. It is important to note that the school’s leader made it a goal to hire teachers and administrators of color to support the achievement of African American males.

Branden M. speaks to the importance of having African American male educators:

“There’s one thing to have you another to have the support from you, and for you to be in the building, and I know now that was big for me and does not exist anywhere else umm and to see your success, and how you strive for academic excellence made us as a group that strived for academic excellence.”

**Definition of Academic Success**

When asked how do you to define academic success, the researcher was shocked at their responses. The researcher was presumptuous in assuming that each participant’s definition of academic success would consist of earning grades of A’s and B’s but he was mistaken. The following are responses of the participants:

**Denzel D. raved:**

“I don’t necessarily define academic success as just having A’s and B’s having a 4.0 or 3.5 I think it is being able to overcome academic obstacles. So if you are not getting like something at first you keep going at it and trying to prevail in it and have success and attempting to re-doing it and finally you know, you overcome it and I think that is academic
success…you have to be resilient and tough. It’s toughness it’s a skill.

Right Mr. L., you know it’s not going off to an Ivy League or a top 10% school, it’s wanting to learn more to be great and crafting your skill under a specific skill. Reaching the highest degree learning everything you can.”

**Ailson C. said:**

“My definition of academic success and in my opinion is not just earning A’s and B’s. I think progress is a huge aspect of success and there are times when you might be struggling facing something new and not use to it and to achieve through hard work I consider that success- moving forward overcoming obstacles being resilient and strong minded that’s success.”

**Tyreik M. raves:**

“I define academic success as being able to achieve my goals to do well in honor classes-and prove that I am just as good- it’s about me never giving up staying focus and rising up to the occasion.”

**Lake B. mentioned:**

“I define academic success as when you do the best you can without stressing yourself out and achieve a goal that you have a passion for-taking what you learn to the next level and it becoming a passion; something you like do, giving back what you have learnt over the years.”

**Matthew B. said:**

“Just working hard and pushing yourself- success to many people are different but to me it was being the best you can even if that meant you
getting a C-. It’s about working hard, and being resilient when things get tough.”

Racial Grouping

Participants identified grouping students of color in high-level courses as a successful intervention that contributed to their academic success. As indicated by the participants, being grouped in an Honors or Advance Level course relieved racial stressors. Participants further indicated there was a sense of unity that provided a peer support group and a sense of academic and social belonging. The following are the responses by the participants.

Denzel D. asserted:

“Being in a class where we were grouped together was key to my success. It’s like having a study group where your friends are supporting you and pushing you not to fail or give up when things get tough. There is always someone checking on you. Making sure they are on top of your work and I think that is a great to have in the classroom.”

Ailson C. stated:

“I think when the class is more diverse it helps me focus I feel more excited- it makes class more interesting and taught me a lot about other people and their culture… I think grouping is great for students it helps build confidence and makes the class more stimulating.”

Tyreik M. mentioned:
“It felt like I was able to learn more, not only from the teacher but my peers. I felt comfortable and more willing to participate and take risk. I did not feel alone and it just made learning more fun.”

**Branden M. insisted:**

“I think grouping definitely is one intervention that led to my success- just think if you’re the sole African American male in a class where there is low expectations, you might meet them but if you are in a class with people who look like you – you will work together to defy those stereotypes and having that support and going against those low expectations there is more of a chance to overcome those low expectations.”

**As Lake B. stated:**

“Being in a class where there were kids who looked like me, there was a feeling and emotion of confidence and belonging you will have. You were no longer the black expert and there was support- if I was ever in a class not doing what I was suppose to do there was always a reminder from my friends to get back on track- its about making kids feel comfortable and that was one way.”

**Matthew B. asserted:**

“Being in a grouped class was encouraging, it pushed you to work hard and it was enthusiastic always was- that class will made you want to participate, it was not discouraging or intimidating.”
Obama 2.0

The participants have experienced many trials and tribulations, and, at times fit the depiction of young African American males who occasionally end up dropping out of school, and not attending college. These young men attributed their success to multiple interventions that were provided through the Boys to Men Program and Brookline High School.

As Tyreik M. stated:

“Mr. JC really showed me the path of becoming academically successful. There were ten boys I should say men who tried to become like Dean JC and others. Being in that boys program helped and showed me ways I can be successful and I’m grateful for that I’m a better person for that.”

Harper (2013) describes a national study of 219 college Black male undergraduates who had earned a cumulative GPA of a 3.0 or above. These students had established extensive records of leadership and active engagement in multiple student organizations, developed meaningful relationships with campus administrators and faculty outside the classroom, and participated in enriching educational experiences. Furthermore, Harper (2013) contends that Black males in the study also earned numerous merit-based scholarships and honors in recognition of their college achievements. In examining the achievements of the six African American male participants who earned a cumulative grade point average of a 3.0 or higher. The researcher identified similar qualities: all participants possessed leadership skills, were active members in their community, and developed great working relationships with their teachers and
administrators. The students overcame many obstacles with the support of male role
models and effective interventions. As a result, Denzel D., Ailson C., Matthew B., Tyreik
M., and Lake B. all earned academic scholarships while Branden M. received a full
tuition scholarship to attend Hamilton College; the fourteenth best national liberal arts

This Chapter will conclude by outlining the findings from the Second cycle
coding process.

Findings from Second Cycle Coding Process

There were several themes identified from the second cycle coding
analysis derived the participants’ responses to the research questions:

1. The need to develop and support programs that promote and teach race
   identity development
2. Instilling in Black boys the Growth Mindset Theory that promotes hard work
   and dedication that leads to high achievement and academic success
3. Capitalizing on the power of human connection and teacher student
   relationships
4. The importance of racial grouping in Honors and Advance level courses - a
   diverse classroom environment
5. Hidden Curriculum that promotes high achievement and academic success

Conclusion

The qualitative data presented in Chapter 4 was utilized to interpret the findings
and identify specific interventions the participants deem contributes to their academic
achievement in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 summarizes and presents the findings and provides implications and recommendations for practice, policy, and future research.
CHAPTER FIVE
ANALYSIS OF THE COMMON THEMES

Introduction

Chapter five reiterates the purpose of practice, the theoretical framework, and research questions. Following, the researcher analyzes the findings presented in Chapter four. Next, Chapter five addresses the extent of the limitations of the study and the impact those limitations may have on the validity and reliability of the findings. Subsequently, the researcher highlights implications for practice and policy by introducing a Response To Intervention (RTI) approach to improve the academic achievement of African American males. Following, the researcher outlines the African American Male theory aimed to address the poor achievement Black boys. The section concludes with the researcher’s personal account of the experience gained from conducting the study and further research that can be conducted by doctoral candidates to build on the interventions and factors that contribute to the achievement of Black boys.

Purpose of Research and Research Questions

African American males are in a state of crisis because they consistently perform at the bottom of most standardized assessments and fail at college degree attainment. Each day their problems are compounded due to the lack of quality in the education they experience. Too often research and the literature focuses on the academic deficiencies and disturbing data rather than the creating solutions that promote high achievement and academic success for African American males.
As such, this research study offers a qualitative case study analysis examining the lived experiences of six African American males who have achieved success in high school.

The primary research questions that guide this study are: How was social and academic excellence promoted among African American male students? How did specific interventions empower, motivate, and inspire young men to be successful in their academic lives?

The theoretical framework utilized in this study is a Social Identity theory, which helped assist the researcher in understanding the psychological cognition and non-cognition behaviors of Black boys in relation to membership in their ethnic culture. Additionally, the literature review helped highlight and provide a historical overview of the educational experience of African Americans since the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade to the present.

This study is significant because it provides an overview of several interventions and factors that lead to the improved achievement of Black males. In particular, this study shifts from focusing on the deficiencies of African American males to placing more emphasis on successful interventions and that leads to academic success for Black boys.

**Five Themes from Analysis**

The findings from Chapter four: Second Cycle Axial coding process analysis identifies five themes that the participants implied were major interventions that led to their academic success as high school students.

The five themes are analyzed and presented to confirm their significance. The following are themes presented as interventions and factors that promote high
achievement and academic success for Black boys: programming support that promotes race identity development, the implementation and teaching the Growth Mindset theory, the value of human connection, and the importance of having African American males as teachers and administrators, grouping students of color in high level courses, implementation of a hidden curriculum that promotes high academic achievement, and exposes Black male students to imagining successful life opportunities for themselves beyond what is consistently communicated through social media outlets.

**Promoting Race Identity Development through Programming**

Programming support that promotes race identity development is one finding based on the participants’ responses the researcher deemed contribute to their academic success. The participants indicated that learning about their history, the success of their people, and stereotypes that negatively shape the way African American males perceive themselves, provided internal motivation, and a sense of self-worth to defy negative stereotypes and excel in their academics. Additionally, programming support that promoted race identity development addressed the notion of Racelessness. Racelessness is the idea that African Americans, who wish to maintain academic success, feel pressured to adopt a raceless identity that contradicts identification with the Black culture and the idea that Black is not smart. Race identity development helped reversed the belief that black is not smart. The following excerpts are from Ailson C., Matthew B., and Tyreik M respectively:

“We got to learn about our history why it is important to become better students and better people.”

“Helped me accept who I was -not try to fit in with the Caucasian students but try to stay true to who I am.”
“I was able to learn about my history and learn about those who fought to make life possible for me, this was a big motivator, it was great and inspired me to do more.”

When considering programming that promotes race identity development, expectations for students must be clear. The students who participated in programming support indicated they were part of a school community that manifested into a family whose members worked together to support each other to build a culture of high achievement and academic success. The participants strived to serve as models and as leaders for all students. It was noted by the participants that the programming support grounded in race identity development provided opportunities to explore their history and to prepare them for college, and leadership roles.

**Implementation of the Growth Mindset theory**

The second theme that emerged during the data analysis is the idea of the Growth Mindset being taught to African American males. The Growth Mindset theory developed by Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck is a unique, yet, a simple idea. In Dweck’s many years of research she discovered that teaching a growth mindset creates motivation and productivity and improves the achievement and success of individuals in all fields. The basis of the Growth Mindset theory is the assertion that one’s intellectual ability is not innate but rather one’s intellectual ability can be developed over time through hard work and dedication. The researcher found that the teaching of a Growth Mindset to the study participants had a significant impact on their success. This became evident when the researcher examined the participants’ definition of academic success. The participants defined academic success not by earning grades of A’s and B’s but by their ability to overcome obstacles through hard work and dedication. Participants
suggested that the understanding that success is derived from hard work, not by innate intellectual ability have contributed to their academic success and encouraged them to take more challenging courses. The following excerpts are from Ailson C. and Matthew B. respectively:

“I think progress is a huge aspect of success and there are times when you might be struggling facing something new and not use to it and to progress, to work hard I consider that success- moving forward overcoming obstacles.”

“Even when its tough-you have to keep on- and pick yourself up when you fall keep on pushing – don’t stop trying”

It is evident based on the participants’ responses that the notion of the growth mindset creates motivation and resiliency, as well as an increase in academic productivity, for these Black boys.

Value and Importance of Human Connection & Diverse Teacher Population

The third theme that emerged from the analysis was the value and importance of human connection. The researcher learned that teachers who actually connected with students on a real, human, and personal level played a significant role in their academic achievement. The researcher believed that little significant learning can occur without a significant student – teacher relationship based on trust and honesty. As George Washington Carver once said, “all learning is understanding relationships.”

The researcher believes this is true. Participants indicated that the relationships fostered with teachers of color played a significant role in empowering and inspiring
them to achieve academic success. Participants asserted that many of these relationships made them feel loved and cared for and considered these teachers models of- who they aspired to be.

Participants felt that their relationships with successful African American male educators provided examples that were different from the athletes and entertainers they normally viewed as role models. They experienced, many for the first time, successful African American males who were their teachers and administrators who cared about them and who made learning fun. Tyreik M. stated, “Mr. JC really showed me the path of becoming academically successful… he was my role model.”

Other participants indicated that having teachers of the same race and sex empowered them and whom they entrusted had an immense impact on their academic and social experience. Matthew B. stated, “there was a sense of comfort and trust that was already established that made approaching a teacher of color of the same sex easier…class was more interesting.”

The researcher discovered a unique phenomenon that participants revealed during the interviews. Two participants shared that their assumptions and beliefs about white teachers were challenged when the African American administrator whom they trusted became the conduit in initiating and fostering positive relationships with their white teachers. The participants insisted from there on out it made it easier to establish relationships with white teachers.

To conclude, participants disclosed they were just as responsible as teachers in failing to initiate and foster positive relationships and saw great worth in making it a two
way street. Denzel D. states, “at the end of the day, it’s your job to have a relationship
with the teacher as well.”

**Racial Grouping in High-Level Courses**

The fourth emerging theme was the class demographics that includes a significant
number of Black students contributes to students’ academic success.

Participants asserted one of the major challenges they face was being the only
student of color in their Honors and Advanced level courses. Matthew B. stated, “Being
in class where I was alone was hard.” Ailson C. said, “the biggest challenge was when I
was the minority in my honors class, and I had to be the black expert. That was often
uncomfortable”

Participants articulated that when isolated and alone they questioned their
intellectual ability and academic and social belonging. Being the only Black student in
class evoked a feeling of discomfort and uncertainty that impacted their overall
achievement. Below is an excerpt from Tyreik M.:

“Being alone in classes made it hard… these classes made it extremely
hard to achieve your goals because there were not others who looked like
you to help you out- you know umm, fighting a battle by yourself, I
wanted to quit I tried to quit, y’all told me I couldn’t.”

Subsequently, participants stated being enrolled in an Honors or an Advanced
level course with your peers of the same race made class more comfortable, provided a
peer support group that allowed you to defy the negative stereotypes that often hindered
you academic achievement and success. Below is an excerpt from Branden M.:
“If you’re the sole African American male in a class where there is low expectation you might defy certain stereotypes or meet them but if you are in a class with people who look like you, you will work together to defy those stereotypes and having that support and going against those low expectations there is more of a chance to overcome them”

It is apparent from the participants’ responses when African American male students are grouped together in higher-level courses, their confidence in their ability is greater than when they are isolated racially. Moreover, grouping Black boys in high-level courses provided an opportunity for these young men to form peer support groups in which students empowered and inspired one another to be successful.

**Hidden Curriculum and Exposure to Success**

The fifth emerging theme that arises from the analysis is the impact of the school’s a hidden curriculum that exposes the participants to life opportunities beyond the norm. Based on the interviews it is evident that the school’s Hidden curriculum was one intervention that undeniably was a driving force behind the participants’ academic success. The researcher believes that due to the complexity of the hidden curriculum, one definition cannot encapsulate its total meaning. In the most general terms, hidden curriculum is the socialization process of schooling, it is comprised of the unwritten, unspoken but understood values derived from the perception of the demographics of a school’s culture and its community.

Dreeben (1967) defines hidden curriculum as students conforming to social relationships, submerging much of their personal identity, to accept the legitimacy of categorical treatment. Vallance (1973) insists that hidden curriculum is the unstudied
covert curriculum that produces non-academic outcomes of schooling. For instance, a communicated understanding of high expectations that builds one’s confidence and defines one’s responsibility to perform at the highest-level possible. Giroux (1983) defines hidden curriculum as the explicit norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and communicated to students through the fundamental system of rules that shape the routines and social relationships in the school and classroom.

The subjects indicated that on a daily basis, they were told they were scholars, capable of accomplishing great achievements. Participants shared with the researcher that on multiple occasions, staff at Brookline High School would assert that they would be attending a four-year university or college on a full tuition scholarship. Participants insisted these messages instilled in them a sense of confidence in their ability to excel in their academics. Tyreik M. stated, “We talked about success and performing well and the effort that is needed to take the next steps—it was never the 100% effort, it was the 110% effort we always talked about to get us to where we aspired to be.”

Additionally, participants shared that the school culture embraced and valued all ethnic groups. As participants noted, the faculty sponsored school wide initiatives that celebrated and acknowledged their achievements, and encouraged academic excellence. Participants commented on the importance of day away retreats that were facilitated by the Boys to Men Program to empower and inspire young men of color through workshops and activities. These retreats introduced students to successful African American males, who held positions as, lawyers, scientist, and engineers. Ailson C.:

“At our men’s retreat the panel speakers who shared their success and how they overcame negative stereotypes similar to the ones we face motivated
me. It was good to see people in front of me directly in front of me who are doing the right thing and proving stereotypes were all wrong. Honestly this was the first time I got to listen to the stories of successful African American males, this had to be the best thing that happened for me.”

Participants also stated that exposure to and involvement in high-level academic courses encouraged them to work hard and set life long goals. Below is an excerpt from Matthew B.: 

“Ever since I was born I knew, what I wanted to do – but it was coming to high school and talking to Dr. M who was an engineer and taking the engineer class- -having hands on experience-- that right there pushed me to go to college to further my education and passion for what I love- to me it was my Dream meeting Reality and I loved it there were examples of people who I know who did it- I can as well.”

It is evident that Black males who are told they are capable of accomplishing greatness and are exposed to opportunities beyond their personal experiences develop a sense of self-worth that empowers, inspires, and motivates them to achieve in all aspects of their academics. A hidden curriculum that promotes high achievement for all students regardless of their lived experiences provides a sense of academic and social belonging and instills the confidence to achieve greatness.

**Conclusion of Findings**

To conclude, it is important to note that the themes of this study become especially powerful when viewed through the prism of Indra’s Jeweled Net, a Buddhist
concept of interpenetration that holds that all phenomena are intrinsically and intimately connected. Thus, each identified intervention needs to be considered within the context of all of the factors that impacted the participants’ academic performance.

**INDRA'S JEWELED NET**

The metaphor of Indra's Jeweled Net is attributed to the ancient Buddhist Tu-Shun of 557-640 B.C.E. Tu-Shun invites one to visualize a vast net in which a jewel lies at each connection. Each individual jewel reflects all of the other jewels. In Tu-Shun’s metaphor, the jewels represent individual lives, but in this study the jewels represent successful interventions and factors that lead to academic success for Black boys. The interventions taken together play a significant role in the academic success of Black boys.

Furthermore, the research findings suggest the need for a substantial shift in efforts to reform the current educational system by creating schools that reflect, respect, and embrace cultural differences. Moreover, the study's findings suggest a need to create a school culture that empowers, motivates, and inspires African American male students by holding them to high expectations and providing opportunities for them to excel through a multicultural curriculum. As mentioned in Chapter two, a multicultural education and school culture that honors the contributions of marginalized ethic
populations inspires students who are members of those ethnic groups and shifts their attitudes and beliefs about themselves, challenging negative societal stereotypes and developing a deeper understanding of themselves and the world.

**Limitations of the Study**

There were three limitations to the study. Possibly, the most significant limitation was the small sample size. Fifteen African American male students graduated from the participants’ high school that fit the study criteria. Of the fifteen African American male students, only six were selected to be interviewed, 40%. The students who comprised the sample size of six were students whose academic achievements were significant. However, with a larger sample size one could hypothesize that the study would have been richer in evidence.

The second limitation was the limited scope of the questions presented to the subjects. It is possible that some information was left uncovered because of the ambiguous research questions. Even though this study was qualitative in nature, the researcher believed deeper probing could have unearthed more details for clarification. Merriam (1998) asserts probing comes in the form of asking for more details, clarification, and for examples that allow for more insight into the study.

Finally, the researcher expected each interview to last no longer than 40 minutes. Due to the short duration of each interview, the researcher believed that more significant information could have been accessed by having participants write a personal narrative reflecting on interventions that led to their academic success. The researcher believed that personal narratives might have provided more details that could have contributed to
developing policy and practice aiming to promote high academic achievement for Black boys.

**Implications for Practice and Policy**

The research findings provided insight into the factors necessary to develop a Response to Intervention (RTI) model for schools focus on enhancing the achievement and academic success for Black boys.

It was evident as shown by participants, when empowered, inspired, motivated, and instilled with confidence most African American males can achieve academic excellence at the highest-level. Thus, the researcher will use the findings of the study as a guide to create a concise model for RTI multi-tier support for the advancement of Black boys in public education.

Response to Intervention is commonly known to design instructions based on the guided assistance of student data and suggestions to improve student achievement. The researcher designed a RTI model to promote high achievement for African American males in public secondary education based on the recommendations derived from the responses from students who identified interventions and factors that contributed to their academic success as a high school student.

The RTI implementation can only be successful if the following essential components are implemented to maintain the integrity of an effective model.
Response to Intervention
Policy and Practice Procedures

Tier 1: Professional Training Classroom Instruction & Policy:

Tier 1 will serve to assess and analyze best practices that promote academic success for Black boys by examining the school culture through observations and surveys of teachers and students.

Additionally, Tier 1 will examine the hidden curriculum of the school and how it positively or negatively impacts the achievement of Black boys. Also, Tier 1 will examine the impact of human connections between teachers and students and examine programming support that promotes race identity development and exposes Black boys to college and life opportunities at an early age.

Lastly, Tier 1 will assess the impact of racial groping and gather specific data relating to student achievement.

Tier 2: Instruction and Interventions:

Tier 2 will focus on three factors: evidence based, small group instruction, and clear intervention with fidelity. Tier 2 is focused on remediation of academic skill deficits for students with the notion that it will increase student achievement. In the case of RTI to improve student achievement for African American male students in public secondary education, Tier 2 will be used to build the confidence, skills, and intellectual ability for African American males to succeed at the highest-level.
Evidence Based

As indicated by the participants, programming support that promotes race identity development inspires and motivates students to achieve at the highest level. Moreover, having the opportunity to listen to stories of successful Black men had an immense impact on students believing their dreams could one day become a reality.

Small Group Instruction

As such, students will engage in classroom instruction that will promote race identity development through using a historical context wherein students learn about their culture and the political, cultural, and intellectual contributions of their Black ancestors. It is imperative that a teacher of color facilitates this learning. Additionally, classroom instruction will work on improving advocacy skills, as well as resiliency.

Interventions

Students will be able to participate in small advisory groups facilitated by an African American male staff member whom they trust and respect. These groups will meet each week to discuss concerns students raise. Additionally, students will participate in a monthly series featuring presentations by successful Black males - doctors, lawyers, engineers, scientists, historians, and educators who have experienced the same struggles and achieved academic and professional success.

To ensure a successful Tier 2 approach the researcher will develop specific classroom lessons, models for academic support, and interventions to help guarantee success for the students.
**RTI Conclusion**

The researcher believes this RTI approach will improve the achievement of African American male students in secondary education by providing interventions that help increase and accelerate their academic and social development. RTI will provide specific models for assessing the culture of a school as well as best teaching and administrative practices to meet the academic and social needs of this specific population of students. The researcher concludes that the RTI model is an effective intervention for reducing the excessive number of Black male students who underperform. Since the inception of the informal RTI at the participants’ high school one can conclude that African American male students’ confidence and ability to perform at top of their class and in standardized assessments is due to those specific interventions as identified in the study. This model could address this pressing problem in many school settings. Moreover, it would be feasible to implement the RTI model in any school environment where a significant portion of Black male students is underperforming.

**Conclusion Implications for Further Research**

It is the hope of the researcher to expand the work of Lawson Bush V of California State University, Los Angeles, and Edward C. Bush of Riverside Community College in enhancing the African American Male Theory (AAMT) as a theoretical framework to analyze the trajectory of Black male success in public education. The researcher contends that the following interventions will provide an opportunity for AAMT to be the source for institutions of public education, higher learning, community organizations, and educational policy reformers to promote academic excellence for African American males. It is important, again, to emphasize that the following
interventions are intertwined and only effective if all are employed with the goal to empowering, inspiring, and motivating African American male students:

- Programming support that promotes race identity development
- Implementation and teaching of the *Growth Mindset* theory
- Power of Human Connection with Black male educators
- Examination of a school’s hidden curriculum that promotes high achievement and holds African American male students to high expectations
- Exposure to successful Black males

The findings of this study have also served as a catalyst for an initiative called the Urban Scholars Ambassador (USA) Program, a program created by the researcher, and grounded in the findings of the study. USA will serve as a means to reverse the academic and social disparities that exist for African American male students by implementing interventions and instruction that promote academic excellence and enhance leadership skills.

The researcher plans to provide psychological and academic supports for African American male adolescents in grades eight through twelve. The program will lead students in honing cognitive skills through the processes of acquiring knowledge through reasoning and intuition and non-cognitive skills. These processes, often hard to measure, involve enhancing the emotional maturity, empathy and interpersonal skills of students. In addition, the researcher will provide a social service component with the goal of providing students and families’ social work support when issues arise.
The researcher believes this support will help young men set achievable goals and see the world filled with opportunities they had previously only imagined.

**Personal Account**

“When educating the minds of our youth we must not forget to educate their hearts.” – Dali Lama

This experience renewed a sense or commitment to working towards enhancing the achievement and academic success of students of color. As a Black male who has been inspired and uplifted to live out achievements that were once beyond my imagination, I feel it is my obligation and lifelong goal to make a difference in the lives of all students, but especially for students of color who are often marginalized. This experience has reminded me that our goal as educators is to teach children to dream bigger and lead them to overcome the low expectations that often hinder their progress. Furthermore, my job is to teach students to be empathic and to understand the importance of giving back and being a role model for students to follow. My job is to reinforce Ubuntu, an African concept meaning, “I am what I am because of who we all are.” Ubuntu encourages all to pave a path for others to follow, keeping in mind that we serve an important purpose in each other’s lives. This experience has taught me to investigate and examine a problem, gather qualitative data and create interventions to remedy the problem, in this instance, the educational crisis facing African American male students. Furthermore, I learned that it takes transformational leaders to build a culture of academic excellence for all students. Last, it is important to note that no matter one’s lived circumstance one should not be able to determine a child’s academic and educational destiny based on their race or zip code.
Recommendations for Future Research

In order to build upon the findings of this study, the researcher suggests future research projects to further identify interventions that lead to academic success for Black male students in public secondary education, including:

- Research that involves a larger sample size to explore and identify additional interventions identified by Black males as factors that contribute to their academic achievements and success.

- Further research in the following areas to determine what impact these specific factors have on the achievement of African American male students:
  - Parental support
  - Peer support
  - Exposure to opportunities i.e. early interventions for college opportunities

- Further study investigating educational polices and procedures that impact the achievement and success of African American male students i.e. grouping students of color in higher-level courses, advising and counseling programs, etc.

- Further study that assesses the impact of programming that promotes race identity development.

- Future research that examines support interventions for Black male students

- Further investigation and experimentation into the growth mindset theory is strongly recommended

- Future research that examines the impact of school’s hidden curriculum

- Future research that examines RTI models that support and enhance the achievement of African American male students
Reframing Black Achievement

In conclusion, the achievement gap that exists between African American males and their counterparts can be narrowed and ultimately closed. In order to close the achievement gap, educational reformers, policy makers, leaders of schools, and within the community must move beyond a deficit perspective and begin to focus on research-based methods, programs and resources that help African American males achieve academic excellence. It is imperative that research shifts from focusing on the negative educational experiences of Black males to promoting and replicating successful interventions. Additionally, there must be a considerable emphasis on highlighting students’ success. Future studies must explore and examine factors that inspire and enable African American males to become active and engaged in the classroom and the community. Also, future studies must examine specific interventions and factors that support and promote the advancement of Black males. Moreover, studies must shift their research approach from a deficit model to placing more emphasis on positive approaches that improve the achievement of Black boys. Such research questions that can guide positive studies can include: How do Black boys receive GPAs of a 3.0 or higher? Which teaching practices best engage and motivate African American males to achieve academic excellence? How do families and teachers nurture and sustain black male interest in school? How do African American males foster meaningful and positive relationships with faculty to achieve their academic goals?

It is my belief that if educational reformers, researchers, literature, and policy makers focuses on successful interventions and programming supports for African
American male students, reversing the trend from poor achievement to high achievement. The findings in this study confirm that Black male achievement and success result from school culture and programming that encourage race identity development, promote the power of human connection and hold all students to high expectations.
REFERENCES


National Association of Social Workers. Standards for Cultural Competence in Social


Vallance, E. (1973). Hiding the Hidden Curriculum: An Interpretation of the Language of


Retrieved from: http://www.philipallan.co.uk/psychologyreview/index.htm


Consulted:


President Barack H. Obama Commencement Address at Morehouse College. Atlanta, Ga., May 19, 2013
Dear Interviewee:

My name is Keith Lezama and I am a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University in the College of Professional Studies Program. I am writing to express my interest and enthusiasm in having you participate in my doctoral research study. Please do not feel pressured at anytime to participate.

As you may know, African American males are in a state of crisis because they perform and statistically rank at the bottom of most standardized assessments, and ratings of college completion. Moreover, African American males are more likely to end up incarcerated than to receive a college degree.

As a student of Northeastern University, I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to address this crisis by conducting research on identifying the interventions that lead to academic success for African American males. It is my hope that this research will provide the practical knowledge to help school leaders touch the hearts, and minds of Black boys and to push them to be excellent in all aspects of their lives.

Over the past five years, you have worked extremely hard in your quest for academic scholarship. Your grade point average, SAT scores, and course enrollment in high-level courses have demonstrated your commitment to academic excellence. Additionally, your passion and desire to develop as a scholar is paramount.

It is my belief that educators, such as myself, can learn from you. As such, I would like to ask for your participation in my research study. Participation is entirely voluntary. However, if you decide to participate in this research study, you will take part in an interview that will last about 40 minutes. All information gathered in the interview will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used to keep your identity anonymous. During the interview, I will ask you several questions pertaining to your lived experience as a student. The goal of this study is to uncover factors that have contributed to your academic success. Please keep in mind that at any time before, during or after the interview you can opt out of the study. If you would like to participate, please contact me by email at Lezama.k@husky.neu or by phone at (617) 307-8294 and I will forward you a letter of consent to begin the interviewing process.

Thank you, for your consideration and if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by email or phone.

Sincerely,
Keith Lezama
Appendix B
Permission From Boys To Men Program

James Cradle
JimCradle@yahoo.com
(617) 291-7767
Boys to Men Program

October 8, 2013

Dear Mr. Lezama

This letter is to grant you access to all student records as well as to interview students from the Boys to Men Program for your research study at Northeastern University.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or by phone.

Sincerely,

James C. Cradle
Appendix C
Interview Protocol

**Interview Protocol Form**
Interviewee Name: __________________________________
Interviewer: _______________________________________
Date: _______________
Location of Interview: ______________________________

**Prefatory Statement:** I would like to hear about your experience in your own words. To do this, I am going to ask you some questions about the key experiences you encountered during your time as a student at Brookline High School. Your responses may include both academic and non-academic elements as appropriate.

**Research Questions:**

1. What if any, specific experiences at BHS helped the development of your identity as member of your racial and ethnic group?
2. Are you familiar with any negative stereotypes of Black males in education? If yes, share a prominent stereotype?
3. Has your understanding of black male stereotypes impacted your experience as a student? If so, how has there been any learning opportunity to prepare you to disarm the negative stereotypes?
4. How do you define academic success?
   a. Describe specific factors that promoted or contributed to your academic success as an African American male student?
5. What were some academic challenges you faced as an African American male student?
   a. How did you overcome those challenges?
6. Does a teacher's racial-ethnic and gender background impact your ability to foster a relationship with them? If so, describe why?
7. Who do you go to for advice at school? Why?
8. Have any of your academic classes been structured in a way that led to greater academic achievement?
   a. Have you been in a clustered classroom? Do you personally believe grouping students of color in high-level courses contribute to your achievement?
9. Describe specific experiences in high school, which have had the most influenced on your academic growth and development?
10. If you had to change two things about Success to improve the academic achievement of black boys what would they be, and why?

*Ask participant if they have any questions and thank them for their participation.*
Appendix D
Consent Form

Northeastern University, Ed.D. Educational Leadership (K-12)

Name of Investigator(s): Kristal Moore Clemons, Ph.D.; Keith C. Lezama Jr., MS.Ed.

Title of Project: Identifying Successful Interventions that Lead to Academic Success for African American Males In Secondary Education

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study
We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researchers will explain to you in further detail the purpose of the project and your participation. Please feel free to ask any questions to address any concerns you may have. At your earliest convenience, please let me know if you plan to participate or not. If you decide to participate and before the interview can commence you will be required to sign the consent form in person.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
You were selected to take part in this research study because you demonstrated academic scholarship as a high school student.

Why is this research study being done?
The purpose of this research is to explore, through students’ voices the factors that lead to academic success for African American males. It will be in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Education for Keith Lezama Jr.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in this research study, you will take part in an interview that will last about 40 minutes. During this time, there will be several questions that seek to uncover key factors that have contributed to your success. Your responses may include both academic and non-academic elements as appropriate. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. After the interview Keith Lezama will transcribe each interview and provide you with a copy of your interview transcript to proofread for accuracy.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?
You will be interviewed in a confidential location and time of your choice at your earliest convenience. The interview will last no more than 40 minutes.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
You will not experience any risk or discomfort as a participant in this research study.

Will I benefit by being in this research?
You will not receive any benefits for participating in this research study. However, your responses to the research questions will assist in unearthing key factors and interventions that lead to academic success for African American males in public education.

**Who will see the information about me?**
All interview transcripts and notes taken will be kept in a secure, passcode safe, located at the researcher’s home. The principal investigator Dr. Kristal Clemons and the researcher will be the only people privy to and have access to the data gathered. After you proofread the interview transcript for accuracy and at the conclusion of the study all data will be destroyed. The consent forms will be kept for a minimum of three years. Please note pseudonyms will be used to ensure your identity is kept anonymous. In rare cases, an authorized person or people from the Northeastern University Review Board may request to see the data to ensure the research is being done properly. If so, I will communicate this to you.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**
If you suffer any harm as a result of this research no special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of your participation.

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**
At any time you are welcome to remove yourself from participating in this research study. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question at anytime.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**
If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Keith C. Lezama by telephone at (617) 307-8294, or by email: Lezama.k@neu.edu the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Kristal Moore Clemons by email: k.clemons@neu.edu, the Principal Investigator.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact:

Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection,
960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115.
Tel. (617) 373-4588 | Fax. (617) 373-6600 | Email: n.regina@neu.edu

**Will I be paid for my participation?**
You will not be paid for your participation.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**
There is no monetary cost to participate in this research study.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**
At anytime your can opt out of the study.
If you decide to participate in this research study please complete the consent form below.

Printed Name of Participant ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Signature of Participant

Printed Name of Researcher/Administered Consent Form ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Signature name of Researcher/Administered Consent Form

""
Appendix F
Interview Questions

1. What if any, specific experiences at BHS helped the development of your identity as member of your racial and ethnic group?

2. Are you familiar with any negative stereotypes of Black males in education? If yes, share a prominent stereotype?

3. Has your understanding of black male stereotypes impacted your experience as a student? If so, how have there been any learning opportunities to prepare you to disarm the negative stereotypes?

4. How do you define academic success?
   a. Describe specific factors that promoted or contributed to your academic success as an African American male student?

5. What were some academic challenges you faced as an African American male student?
   a. How did you overcome those challenges?

6. Does a teacher's racial-ethnic and gender background impact your ability to foster a relationship with them? If so, describe why?

7. Who do you go to for advice at school? Why?

8. Have any of your academic classes been structured in a way that led to greater academic achievement?
   i. Have you been in a clustered classroom? Do you personally believe grouping students of color in high-level courses contribute to your achievement?

9. Describe specific experiences in high school, which have had the most influenced on your academic growth and development?

10. If you had to change two things about Success to improve the academic achievement of black boys what would they be, and why?