The Mis-education of African American Males: Implications for Improving Success in a K-12 Setting

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Abstract

The achievement deficit of African American males in our public schools is a well-established issue that continues to plague our society. The need for improving the educational outcomes for this population is one of the most prevalent social injustice issues of our generation.

The educational, social, and political issues experienced by African American males reveal an alarming picture of systemic and societal failure. Statistics indicate that one out of three Black males will be imprisoned at one point in their lifetime.

It has been reported across the nation that African American males graduate from high school at a rate of 52% as compared to the 78% graduation rate of their white counterparts. The economic plight of this population is affected when educational opportunities are limited. Also, these racial disparities tend to lead to reduced life expectancy and low paying jobs. In contrast, higher levels of achievement correlate to better economic outcomes for all.

The research also suggests that African American males are two and half times more likely to be suspended from school than white students. This suspension leads to a higher incarceration rate. Currently, many suspensions and expulsions of African American students cannot be explained. Sadly, the inequity among adolescent Black males goes further than this. Black young males are taught by inexperienced teachers and those who fail to embrace cultural diversity. In addition to these grim statistics, Black males are historically and significantly more likely than their non-Black peers to be placed in a special education category, especially intellectually impaired as reported by the United Stated Department of Education.

> *Furthermore, the disparity of the achievement gap among African American males and Hispanic students continue to perform lower on standardized test scores overwhelmingly, than White and Asian students. According to the 2001National Assessment of Education Progress [NAEP], only 10% of black males were proficient in 8th grade reading as compared to a 35% proficient rate for White adolescent boys. In math, only 12% of African American males were proficient in grade 8 math as compared to a 45% proficient rate for White males.*
> *This paper will highlight the statistics and data that are affecting our African American boys and present strategies and policy implications for improving the success of African American males. The paper will also focus on the qualities of the teacher and school factors that are needed to obtain this achievement*

Disproportionality in Special Education

The 1954 Brown v. Board of Education case put legislation in place to ensure a quality education for all students. While our nation's schools have progressed with Blacks and Whites being able to attend the same schools, institutional racism is still prevalent in schools when it comes to special education. "Educational policies and practices have created a new system of segregation" (Blanchett, Mumford, & Beachum, 2005). In fact, one of the "separate but equal" dilemmas of the twenty-first century is the over-representation of African American boys in special education programs. Therefore, one can theorize that urban culture in many ways has become progressively segregated and unequal.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), African-American students were identified for special education services from the ages of 6 – 21 at a higher rate (12.07%) than their White (8.59%) and Asian (4.41%) counterparts over the years 1998-2007. The overrepresentation of minority males in special education is alarming and a trend that has continued even with targeted attention from educators and policymakers. Stith-Williams (2010) reported that "Nationally, African American students constitute 35% of the total special education enrollment in the ID (Intellectual Disability) category, but yet represent 17% of elementary and secondary students' admissions (ppt). Stith-Williams (2010) also indicated that African American students can be up 20 times more likely to be labeled with a disability than White students. She suggests that as many as 26% of African American students are classified under emotionally disabled, even though this group makes up 17% of the overall school population.

This discrepancy has continued with African American males identified at higher rates in the categories of intellectual disability and emotional impairment. One potential explanation in Myer & Patton's article (2001), cited that "African Americans, especially males who engage in certain behaviors represent artifacts of their culture-such language (Ebonics), movement (Verve), and a certain ethnic appearances have been found to be over referred for special education placement" (p.3). Additional studies have demonstrated that there is a discrepancy in literacy underachievement and overrepresentation of Black males in special education (Anderson & Sadler, 2007; Ebersole & Kapp, 2007; Hall, 2006; Hilliard, 2003; Washington, 2001; Watkins & Kurtz, 2001). Focus on Blacks (2011) statistics indicate that "Black boys are more likely than their white peers to be placed in special education, labeled mentally retarded, suspended from school, or drop out altogether" (p.1). Further data from Special but Unequal-Race and Special Education (2001) contends that ethnicity and low socioeconomic status associated with variance in special education. Other investigators have identified poverty, for example, as an underlying variable that influences special education.

Scholars such as Pattan (1998) have researched comprehensive literature on the causes of special education disproportionality in our nation's schools. It was not surprising that one's ethnicity identified as a dominant cause for students placed in special education services. As we struggle to ameliorate the racial disparities in special education, we must first identify the causes of misidentification for special education services.

Several studies have identified many factors for such placements (Cartledge & Dukes, 2008). However, the greatest factors appear to be institutional racism on the part of those who come in contact with African American children. Specifically, Nesbit (2015) identifies institutional racism as racism found in certain social institutions such as public schools or similar settings. Examples of institutional racism are perpetuated in instances where White teachers are afraid of Black males.

This structural discrimination causes inappropriate diagnosing of disabilities for special services, in addition to embracing institutional beliefs about African American students, student attitudes, behavior, and discipline. Furthermore, other examples of institutional racism include misperceptions of student behaviors, lack of family involvement, environmental influences such as violence, drugs, and hunger, poverty or low socioeconomic status, and racial identity. Hence, an overall lack of quality instruction in our schools for African American students is also an important contributor of institutional racism.

The overarching theme discussed in research from Elementary and Middle Schools Technical Assistance (2010) and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) (1992) was that misdiagnosed labeling of Black students into special education can have detrimental effects and dangerous repercussions. The negative impact of misplacement of these students occur when young males are removed, and excluded from the general education curriculum; educators have lower expectations, and the curriculum is watered down, which result in little to no preparation for post education or job opportunities. The research also found that the unbalanced depiction of Black students in special education causes the momentous racial divide.

One area of concern identified as a potential contributor of overrepresentation in special education is standardized test scores and mislabeling of the issue(s) (Cartledge & Dukes, 2008; Coutinho & Oswald, 2005; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 2001). Too many subjective and unreliable testing procedures and biased testing interpretations contribute to African American overrepresentation in special education. With this, African American males are more likely to be labeled as mentally retarded or having a learning disability than students from other ethnic categories (Milosky, 1974). McGhan (1972) further maintained that "IQ testing and ability grouping are examples of institutional racism" (p.1). He further suggested that the reliability of IQ testing is often questioned about African American students and that IQ tests "probably measure environmental and cultural differences rather than intelligence differences" (p.1). McGhan (1972) also cited in his literature that the Coleman Report "has shown that environmental differences among students are critical to the outcomes of education" (p.1) Further, McGhan's summary of The Coleman Report also revealed a direct association between a student's socioeconomic status and school achievement. Further, McGhan's (1972) analysis of the Coleman Report (Equality of Educational Opportunity) states that the "social characteristics of students were found to correlate more highly with achievement than such presumably relevant to school characteristics as size and per-pupil expenditures" (pp.1-2). One further consideration should also be the evidence that Black males continue to score poorly on standardized tests when they are unable to connect to the curriculum taught in the classroom.

There is supporting evidence as to why African American children are also failing to meet national and state literacy benchmarks. Recent studies show that our nation's classrooms are segregated in numbers the country has not seen since before the passage of the landmark Brown vs. Board of Education ruling in 1954.   The reasons for this segregation are varied and often focused on socioeconomic status in the community. According to Orfield & Lee (2003) discussed their views on racial equality in schools and stated that "race is deeply and systematically linked to many forms of inequality in the background treatment, expectations, and opportunities. From an educational perspective, perhaps the most important of those linkages is with the level of concentrated poverty in a school. These differences start at an early age."(p5.). and "face very different challenges than schools where some of the kindergarteners come better prepared." (p.5).

These schools also tend to have a high number of uncertified and inexperienced teachers. According to King (2016), there are a large number of teachers hired that are inexperienced and have no clue how to handle African-American children (King, Black Education). There is also a significant lack of parent involvement in these schools. For example, how many parents join the PTA as well as income of neighborhood and parent fundraising at each school. All of these issues tie into the big issue of educating Black America. There is still such a large disparity of inequity in schools across America. In Virginia, the Standards of Learning assessments in many urban schools appear to assess rote memory; and adequate critical thinking skills need to be emphasized more. This approach does little for narrowing the achievement gap among this group.

*The No Child Left Behind Act (*NCLB) was designed to ensure that all students would be reading on grade level by third grade. However, African American adolescent males continue to lag behind their White peers.   Good intentions will not close the achievement gap among African American males, and NCLB has not done enough in narrowing the educational disadvantages among this group. This legislation and high-stakes testing were coined to improve our nation's schools and hold teachers and students accountable. However, it has done little to dismantle the achievement gap among Black males.

The more recent legislation, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), now provides states flexibility in how and when assessments are administered to students. One particular example of this is that instead of one assessment at the end of the year, states can allow for this evaluation to be broken down into smaller, more manageable assessments given at different times in the school year (Korte, 2015).

Support from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The foundation for change in the identification of learning disabled was established by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and codified in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004. IDEA permits schools to implement problem-solving delivery systems and including Response to Intervention (RtI) in the assessment of students with learning disabilities. The emphasis on the use of scientifically based interventions and, more specifically, reading and behavior strategies that result in increased performance aligned IDEIA with the No Child Left Behind Act of the goal of improving student achievement (Idol, 2006). These provisions are intended to help promote student achievement and to reduce the need for special education services. Due to most reforms that affect students with disabilities, effective implementation will likely depend on administrative leadership and support for the innovation of these programs for all students.

The Discipline Gap

The racial disparities in suspensions and expulsions show that African American males are more likely than any other group to be suspended and expelled than any other group in the nation. (Meier, Stewart, and England, 1989). Zero tolerance policies do not apply to all students in the schools since the number of African American students and Hispanics are alarmingly high. Lewin (2012) indicated that "Hispanics and black students represent 45 percent of the student body, but 56 percent of those expelled under such policies" (p.1). To further show the disparities in discipline, Arne Duncan, the former Secretary of Education said, "Education is the civil rights of our generation. The undeniable truth is that the everyday education experience for too many students of color violates the principle of equity at the heart of the American promise" (p. 2).

Too many African American males continue to be suspended wrongly and expelled from schools due to misunderstood actions or behaviors of adolescent Black males. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), 83% of White teachers teach in our nation's schools, with 7.1 % being Black females, and 1% Black males. The number of White female teachers in public schools symbolizes why so many children of color are under scrutiny. Currently, there is no research to indicate children of color exhibit more behavior problems in schools than Whites (Adams, 2014). Is it fair to say that African American males are being expelled from school because of institutional racism and knee-jerk reactions when they misbehave? Some will agree that African American males are being disproportionately expelled due to fear from their educators. Further, some observational studies propose that African American students' punishments for misbehavior are much harsher when the behavior requires a more personal assessment (Skiba, Nardo & Peterson, (2002); Skiba et al., (2009).

While African American students can learn from teachers with different cultural backgrounds, many scholars, including Kunjufu (2009) have documented that there has been a 66 percent decline of African American teachers since Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education in 1954. Currently, within the teaching force, there are only 7% of African American teachers, with 1 percent being African males, with approximately 90 percent of K-12 teachers being white in our U.S. schools and nationally, African American students make up 36 percent. This data may suggest the precarious role White teachers play in urban schools.

Another behavior factor that is quite apparent is that African American male being placed in special education because of how they are disciplined due to actions of zero tolerance policy in our schools. In Junjufu's book, Black Boys and Special Education-Change is Needed, Kunjufu (2005) quotes Russell Skiba, as saying, "the determination factors for placing a child in special education, suspension, and expulsion are highly subjective. While middle income-females receive warnings, low-income African Americans, especially males receive special education, suspensions, and expulsions (p.161). As a result, Kunjufu (2009) believes that there is a correlation between special education and prison, literacy, and incarceration. Skiba, et al. (2008) indicated that "a variety of poverty-associated risk factors have been shown to predict academic and behavioral gaps that might be expected to lead to special education referral, suggesting that economic disadvantage makes some contribution to minority disproportionality in special education." (p.273).

Furthermore, Skibia, et al. (2008) indicated that "disparities in special education could be influenced by inadequacies in practice or bias generated at the level of special education referral and decision making. Although this possibility has received some research attention, the pattern of results is somewhat unclear." (p.275). With these facts, it is clear that African American students are subject to discriminated because of color and not necessarily due to behavior problems or conduct disorders. The inequity of discipline, harsh punishment, suspensions, or expulsions, apparently points to a primary reason for the achievement gap, or the mis-education handed down to African American males.

Statistically, it is reported that suspensions and expulsions lead to a criminal avenue since while not in school, adolescents' favorite places are the streets (American Civil Liberties Union, 2015). These suspensions and expulsions also lead to some form of court involvement (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003, Wald & Losen 2003). Being away from school is an easy target for African American males to engage in criminal activity. One cannot learn when he is not in school, or in a structured learning environment. This "school-to-prison- pipeline" approach may suggest that this is one way of pushing African American males out of schools (American Civil Liberties Union, 2015)

The Urgency Now (2012) asserted that state and district methods of discipline are the leading cause of decreased learning among out-of-school suspended students. Perhaps too, it sends a flag that insufficient attention is focused on the "affective domain" and behavioral issues. Another study from the Center for Civil Rights Remedies at UCLA's Civil Rights Project by Daniel J. Losen and Jonathan Gillespie, (August 2012, p.10), reported that over a million students were suspended at least once in the 2009-2010. Hence, a monster is on the rise that needs to be addressed and resolved.

The current approach to disciplining students in the United States runs counter to keeping students engaged at grade level for competitive course navigation and advancement. Interviews with district turn-around-leaders revealed that students who have been suspended are three more likely to drop out of school by the 10th grade when compared with their non-suspended peers. Data further indicates that students, who drop out of school, triple their chance of subsequent incarceration later in life. Dobbie & Fryer (2012) stated children who are out of school for disciplinary infractions come back to school faced with education inequalities that also includes little access to school support personnel that could assist them in making the transition back to school. Then too, chronic absenteeism has been linked to lower academic achievement suggesting a renewed focus on tiering, grouping and early counseling interventions to defeat the growing malady.

Marrus (2015) asserted that suspensions and expulsions lead to serious consequences, such as missed learning days, the loss of educational opportunities, and referrals to the juvenile justice system. An Office for Civil Rights Report (2014) yielded, for the first time, information that included data on the suspension of preschool children. Further, the report revealed that African American children were disproportionately suspended at all levels of education in 2011–12. Alarmingly, this report purported preschool, inclusive of black children, represented 18% of preschool enrollment, but 42% of the preschool children suspended once, and 48% of the preschool children suspended more than once. Significantly too, the report revealed that the number of suspensions for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade doubled from the early 1970s to 2006, reflecting a gap between racial groups that also grew. In the 1970s, White students were suspended at the rate of approximately 3%, while African American students were suspended twice as often (Ellen, 2015). By 2006, the rate for African American students had risen to 15%, while the rate of White student suspension only increased to 4.8%. Although the adoption and proliferation of zero-tolerance policies can explain the overall rise in suspensions, it does not account for the widening gap between the suspensions rates of black students and students of other races.

In March 2014, CBS News reported that "African American students are more likely to be suspended from school while in middle and high school" (CBS News). Not surprisingly, African American students in pre-school are being suspended as well. These statistics were released by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (March 2014). Their report states that, "18% of preschoolers are African American and that 42% of all preschool students are African American" (p. 1). This report further revealed that this number increases to 48% when considering students being suspended more than once" (p. 1).

Even though the number of suspensions in the Commonwealth of Virginia has decreased across the entire student population, St. George (2013) indicated that African American students still had a 67% suspension rate. In 2012, Virginia was categorized as the "21st in the disparity between suspension risks for blacks and white students at 11.6 percentage points" (p.18). However, "Illinois ranked 21.3 percent" (p.19).

Consequently, as a nation, dialogs must increase about the high rate of ethnic punishment in schools. It is speculated that the mistreatment of Black males contribute to African American males feeling inferior and helpless to the point where they underachieve in school (Steele and Aronson, 1995). If the goal is to close the achievement or academic gap, then schools must keep these children and youth in school and eliminate the racism experienced by African American males. This shortcoming may cause a significant number of suspensions, expulsions, and school refusal, academic failure, joblessness, and incarceration, as coined by Welsing (1974, 1978) as "inferiorization process". These harmful elements lead to the little educational success of Black males.

The remaining of this article will outline specific strategies for improving the success of African American males.

Strategies for reducing the number of special education referrals

Harry and Anderson(1994), offered excellent recommendations for reducing the number of referrals for special education.

They recommend that schools should:

"(1) Label students rather than services
(2) Direct restructuring efforts toward the creation of a unified education system,
(3) Restructure schools to emphasize the prevention of student failure.
(4) Conduct assessments for the purpose of guiding instruction rather than determining program eligibility.
(5) Implement curricula and instructional reforms,
(6) Replace the current age-based annual promotion system with a system based on heterogeneous, smaller, and less time-limited classroom groupings.
(7) Create community schools and alter the parent-professional process." (pp. 615-616)

Additionally, in brief, Harry and Anderson(1994), emphasized further that Schools should strive to be centers of learning where all students are prioritized, and education is seen as a valuable commodity. Further, schools should be a place where African American males feel encouraged to improve upon their skills and achieve personal growth. For these goals to be reached, a message must be sent that schools are committed to the success of African American males and are open to bridging the cultural gap that currently exists.

Closing the Attitude Gap

Kafele (2013) report that educators must safeguard a "positive classroom climate and culture (p. 22) that allows students to be themselves. Kafele (2013), further states that school personnel has the impact, and ability to positively influence the environment and ethnicity of its students so that students can excel and not feel alienated, or continue to wear a façade, nor can we use poverty as an excuse for poor achievement and underperforming schools. However, we as educators cannot eradicate poverty, but we can have a positive impact on our students who are in poverty. Further, Kafele (2013), states that students' outlook on life cannot be a separate entity from "classroom climate and culture" (p.24). However, these three factors will contribute to closing the achievement gap among urban and rural community schools.

Kafele (2013) offers a "climate and culture" outline for closing the "attitude gap" in urban schools (p.26). In summary, the five components that are needed to coach and motivate students are: One, "attitude" (belief in your students), two, "relationship" (do you know your students?), three, " care, concern, and compassion", (Do you care about your students?), four, "classroom environment", (Does your classroom environment stimulate students to learn?), and five, "culturally responsive", (Do you know your students ethnic and culture background?)" (p. 26).

Improving School Discipline Policies

According to Marrus (2015), as a result of "zero-tolerance policies", "the school-to-prison-to pipeline became a reality" for African-American youth (p.34). Because these policies affect a disproportionate number of African American youth, they also have a distinct influence or barriers on other minority children and many of them end up in the With these statistics, Marrus (2015), offers solutions to reduce the discipline gap and placement in the legal system. His solutions are that we must focus on early prevention, rehabilitation strategies, better educational opportunities, and reduce the number of referrals for special education services. Marrus' solutions also suggest that we reduce negative labeling of Black males, reduce the high number of African boys who end up in the juvenile system for minor misbehavior, and last, provide avenues for higher employment which will reduce the poverty rate among African American males.

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Ultimately, these solutions or strategies will result in self -reliance, productive citizens, and better health, and imminent educational fulfillment.

Marrus (2015) also offers the suggestion that institutions do a better job in transferring students' records when students transition from place to place to avoid delay in educating children. Delays in sending school records further cause delays in school enrollment and interferes with special education placements of students who may have special educational-behavioral intervention plans. Further, it has been shown in Marrus' study, youth who face suspension often have no legal representation before school personnel inflict severe consequences. Further, Marrus' study contend that students placed in foster care or the justice system are often stigmatized, lowers their self-esteem and are often labeled by schools. Consequently, for this particular population, the school administration and teachers may have low academic expectations of these students; their disciplinary policies project these students as "troublemakers" (p.44).

Perhaps for African American males who are suspended in enormous numbers, as stated by Marrus (2015), misappropriate labeling, and the stigmas of these Black youth can follow them through their school career. He further says that interruptions in the learning of these youth result in missed scholastic prospects. The lingering legacy of oppression and injustice of African-American males continues to criminalize boys of color. However, the greatest solution presented in this study regarding the criminalization of Black adolescent males is that "It is important to enact policies that will decrease the number of children in the juvenile and criminal justice systems and increase successful educational opportunities for all youth. This makes fiscal, if not moral sense because incarcerating a child costs more than educating one." (p. 45).

Further, Marrus (2015) briefly outlined placements, services, and programs that proved to be beneficial to African American youth. The High/Scope Perry Preschool for three and four-year-old low-income African Americans that evolved in 1962 discovered the benefit of "early childhood intervention" (p.48). This excellent program was a product of students who excelled greater tan than peer group and proved to be successful through young adult life.

Marrus(2015) also discussed school personnel practices that would decrease the academic loss of students due to suspensions and expulsions. He suggested that students should only be suspended for serious infractions. Lorsen & Martinez (2013) recommended three meaningful solutions such as "reserving out-of-school suspension as a measure of last resort can lead to higher achievement and improved graduation rates" (p.2). Second, Larsen & Martinez (2013) also recommend that we "Provide support for teachers to receive the training and assistance they need to be effective with diverse learners" (p.5). Third, "ensure that the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requiring a review of racial disparities in discipline for students with disabilities are implemented with integrity so that states do not create unreasonable thresholds for required interventions." (p. 5).

Similarly, Marrus ((2015), recommended student representation before disciplinary action will warrant that educational institutions implement fair disciplinary measures and non-discriminatory practices regarding suspensions. Equally important, Marrus (2013) legal guardians and students themselves should petition that schools consider rules regarding behavior take into some account of normal adolescent behavior before imposing consequences for such actions. Also emphasized in this study is an evidenced-based solution called "School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports" which is a program that focuses on preferred student behaviors (p.49). Marrus (2015) indicated that the extension of this strategy diminishes the need for school suspensions.

Last, the key aspect discussed in Marrus' study is that "Too many African American children find themselves in situations where their access to a quality education is considered diminished" (p. 54). Nevertheless, the researcher in this study offered three methods that we can preserve the education of African American adolescents from becoming the "new Jim Crow" (p.54). "First, the implicit racial bias that places a disproportionate number of African youth in foster care, school discipline, and juvenile systems" must be addressed. "Second, the number of children who experience more punitive school discipline, and the number of youth who are given harsh and lengthy sentences in juvenile and criminal detention facilities must be reduced.

Finally, for those children who do find themselves in one of these situations, we must provide them with a quality nurturing education" (p.54). Subsequently, if we don't put these practices and solutions into force, Marrus (2015) and other scholars believe the nation will continue to see urban schools with increases in the disparities in the achievement gap among African American males. Further examples would be an increase in dropout rates, illiteracy, higher unemployment, joblessness, and increased poverty and crime.

Other implications that Black youth would face are lower success rate in schools, increased discipline, suspensions, and expulsions and increased racial biases and lower educational standards.

Policy implications

In Lewis, Casserly, Simon, Uzzell, and Palacious, A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Achievement (December 2012), Pedro A. Noguera, Ph.D., recommended: "restructuring social institutions and redesigning public policy" (p. 8) to address the needs of African-American and Latino males. Specifically, these recommendations are that we apply therapeutic involvements promptly when visible signs exist; develop interventions to be all-inclusive and multicultural. Noguera (2012) states that these interventions must be designed to meet the needs of diverse African American and Latino males and institute policy approaches that are " racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically appropriate" (p.14).   Further, the author states that these intervention policies must be inclusive of stakeholders and school personnel to understand the "systemic educational, health, disciplinary, and policy issues affecting the academic achievement of Black and Latino males" (p.14).

The educational barriers will continue to endanger the economic prosperity of the United States until political leaders implement more effective reforms and policies to revert the tide in criminalizing African Americans, starting with the school-to-prison pipeline. Stakeholders can remedy the economic predicament confronting poor inner city residents by finding prudent ways to bring back jobs they once had. This action would negate the extreme poverty evidenced in families living in inner-city neighborhoods across the nation for lack of wage employment. The unprecedented pace of economic and political development is exacerbating the already pervasive gap. The result of generations of poor education and literacy policies in poor communities have left a legacy of families unprepared for the disciplined world of work and its requirements in today's global society (Ntiri, 2013).

Academic Achievement

Another essential recommendation from Moses & Moses (2012) in A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Achievement, is to accelerate the learning of struggling students in secondary math. There is the necessity to increase African American males in mathematics, as well as increasing their presence in "science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)" (p.107) classes. Moses (2012) who is the founder of the Algebra Project contend this project have been very successful in advancing African American Males and Latino's math achievement and participation in STEM programs. The Algebra Project focuses on four areas that are essential to improving the success of students in math. These areas are a partnership with communities and families, building content information and training through professional development learning centers and staff development, developing a curriculum for teachers, and providing an environment for increased peer knowledge and mentoring using challenging math activities outside of school.

Schools must also develop an academic intervention plan using collected data and assessments for students before they get too far behind; the end of the school year is too late.Based on the idea of closing the achievement gap, educational institutions must assess student performance at the beginning of the school year to determine current functioning level. Some students may have lost a couple of months due to being out of school, or gained a couple of months if they were in school, or in tutoring programs.

To add to these solutions or classroom practices, Moore & Flowers (2012) recommended decreasing the disproportionate underrepresentation of Black males in "gifted" or talented and programs by examining policies and recruitment practices for students that are used to enroll students in gifted programs, modify the organizational structure and financial provisions for such programs, improve staff training in the identification of talented programs, and analyze data and research regarding student access to exceptional programs.   The authors here contend that exclusionary practices of Black adolescents in gifted programs also have the same effects on African American males disproportionately placed in special education. Likewise, according to Baily and Dziko (2008), school personnel can also eradicate disproportionate representation of African American students in gifted and special education programs. This disproportionality can be done by establishing at the local level, staff development on ethnic behavioral norms and classroom behavior strategies that are effective, yet not punitive "to reduce the number of referrals to special education and better identify African American students for gifted education programs" (p.33).

Conclusion

The conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that there are many factors that have attributed to the mis-education of African American adolescent males. In particular, the racial injustices that continue to haunt African American boys continue to be a detriment to their survival in the world, in general. African American males have been in the storm for so long that it will take a color blind system to educate adolescent Black males entirely to the same magnitude of their White counterparts. We must continue with existing experimental studies to determine why African American males are still underachieving and have difficulty excelling in urban schools. Dismantling underachievement can only happen if the nation's schools are improving the segregated and unequal methods that continue, despite Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. Based on the information presented, we can also conclude that the mis-education of

African American adolescent males represent the failure of our nation's schools. However, some of the blame for a failed system must be put on little parental involvement in many urban schools. It also has been well documented that the absence of fathers and positive role models, and one parent households play an important part in the success of Black students, in general. Black parents should also be demanding more of their teachers and students, as well as insisting that educational institutions get rid of the educational disparities and among Black students. All stake holders should push to help African American males to discover their intellectual power by always pushing them to excel. While students cannot excel alone, schools must consider targeted strategies and recommendations to improve the quality of every child's education.

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