WHAT HAPPENS TO A DREAM DEFERRED?
A STUDY OF THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF BLACK MALES
FROM AN AFFLUENT HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

The achievement gap refers to the disparity in the academic performance between groups of students. According to current research, there is an academic achievement gap that exists between Black students and White students (NAEP, 2014). Although this gap has decreased over the last few decades, the disparity in the academic achievement of Black students and White students continues to persist. Researchers suggest that the underperformance of Black students is not based on the lack of ability but can be attributed to social, cultural, and educational factors that will be explored in this study. Current research attributes much of the academic achievement gap to specific cultural and social factors that impact academic achievement such as socioeconomic status, cultural competence of the school systems, and lack of identification with school for Black students. The goal of this quantitative study is to explore these factors and how they impact the academic achievement of Black students who attend a high performing school system in order to have a better understanding of how SES and race impact the academic achievement of Black students.
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Chapter 1 Introduction

Statement of Problem

Recent research suggests that a persistent academic achievement gap still exists between Black and White students in the United States despite decades of awareness and efforts to eliminate it (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2013) in 2009-10, only 66.1% of Black students graduated from high school compared to 83.0% of White males. This study also reports that 21% of Black men in their twenties who did not go to college are in jail; about one in four Black men aged 20-29 are on probation, parole, or in prison, which is more than the total number of Black men in college.

Although a NAEP study (2014) reports that the achievement gap has decreased over the last few decades, academic equality continues to evade many minority populations, specifically Black students, which results in the academic achievement gap. Though there is no single explanation or cause attributed to this gap, current and past research suggests that the achievement gap between these groups can be attributed to multiple factors such as socioeconomic status (SES), ethnicity, and gender (Coleman, 1966; Kober, 2001; Lewis, 2006; Reardon, 2011, 2012, 2013). Additional research also suggests that school, community, and home environment also contribute to this problem (Kober, 2001), and one critical factor that has been found to impact the academic outcomes of students is the increasing income gap in this nation.

According to Reardon (2011), the income gap between high- and low-income families has increased over the last fifty years. In fact, he reports that the gap is roughly 30% to 40% higher among children born in 2001 than among those born twenty-five years ago. This income gap is noteworthy because further research suggests that the SES of a child’s parents is one the strongest predictors of a child’s academic achievement and educational attainment (Reardon,
2011). Additionally, low-income groups have traditionally performed lower than high-income students on most measures of academic success such as: standardized tests, grades, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment and completion (Reardon, 2013).

When examining the research and studies done on the lower academic achievement scores in Black students, most of the literature focuses on Black students from low SES, whereas there has been very little research done on the academic achievement in Black students from high SES. Additionally, although researchers have identified specific trends in socioeconomic achievement gaps, the achievement disparities between children from high- and low-income families or between children from families with high or low levels of parental educational attainment, these trends have received far less attention (Reardon, 2011). However, studies have shown that there is a direct relationship between wealth and academic achievement (Ogbu, 2003).

Historically, low-income students as a group have performed less well than high-income students on most measures of academic success including standardized test scores, grades, high school completion rates, and college enrollment and completion rates (Reardon, 2013). According to Reardon (2011), there is a relationship between academic achievement and family income and, consequently, researchers now have the tools to measure how income is a strong factor. Family income is now considered to be as strong as parental education in predicting children’s achievement (Reardon, 2010, 2011).

Research suggests that students from a high SES tend to perform better than students in low SES due to multiple factors such as: rigorous course offerings, highly qualified teachers, high quality curriculum and resources, and high teacher expectations (Reardon, 2011). Research
also suggests that students from high SES not only score higher on standardized tests but they also have higher college attendance and completion rates (Reardon, 2013).

Research suggests that affluence and resources correlate to higher achievement rates (Reardon, 2012). Although this is true for most ethnic groups, research suggests that this does not hold true for Blacks (Ogbu, 2003). According to Ogbu, (2003) Blacks from high SES have additional factors that impact their academic achievements negatively. He attributes this lack of academic achievement to low teacher expectations, lack of student academic engagement and focus, lack of parental involvement, and blaming teachers for students’ lack of success (Ogbu, 2003).

According to Reardon (2011), a parent’s SES is a strong indicator of a child’s academic achievement because parents from high SES tend to focus their resources on their children’s cognitive development and economic success. Additionally, a 1992 NAEP study reports that wealthier students scored more than 30 points higher on average than students from low SES. Further research suggests that kindergarten students from high SES score more than a standard deviation above on standardized tests in math and reading than students from low SES (Reardon, 2013). As compared to their White and other ethnic counterparts, Blacks from high SES do not tend to have achievement scores that are comparable to White students from high SES (Ogbu, 2003). Further research reports that although the number of affluent Black families has grown substantially since the 1960s, the children’s test scores continue to lag behind those of White children from equally affluent families (Jencks & Phillips, 1998, p. 9). According to a NAEP report (2012), White students continue to score 21 or more points higher on reading and math assessments on average than Black students.
The issue of underachievement in Black males is a complicated one, and there are multiple factors to consider besides wealth such as self-efficacy, and school experiences. Therefore, in order to address the issue of underachievement in Black males and to come up with viable solutions for the continuing problem this study examines the educational experiences of both Black and White males who live in an affluent community and attend an affluent high school.

According to the Schott Report (2010), 42% of Black students attend schools that are under-resourced and performing poorly. The implications of this inequality are significant because there is an ever-growing population of minority students in this country. In fact, a 2008 NCES study found that the racial demographics of the country have become significantly more diverse in the past 20 years. The report states that from 1980 to 2008, the U.S. has seen a shift in the racial composition of the population. The Hispanic population has grown the fastest and has increased from 6.4% of the population in 1980 to 15.4% in 2008 while the White population declined from 80% to 66%. The Black population did not shift and remains at 12%.

Kober (2011) states that as the U.S. moves further into the 21st century, a greater proportion of minority students will be in schools. If this is the case and minority ethnic groups continue to grow, eventually, these groups will become the majority of the population and our current educational systems will need to change to meet the academic needs of the diverse populations.

Multiple studies have shown that Black students’ score lower than their White counterparts on vocabulary, reading, and mathematics tests that claim to measure scholastic aptitude and intelligence (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Although the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2009, 2011, 2012) results show that this gap has decreased over
time, any definitive solutions to the problem continue to evade researchers and thus the disparity continues to persist. For example, special analyses by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2009 and 2011 showed that Black and Hispanic students trailed their White peers by an average of more than 20 points on a 0-500 scale on NAEP math and reading assessments at 4th and 8th grades, a difference of about two grade levels. These gaps persisted even though the score differentials between Black and White students narrowed between 1992 and 2007 in 4th-grade math and reading and 8th-grade math (NCES, 2009, 2011). In order to explain the achievement gap that continues be a pervasive problem in American society, researchers have examined specific variables that have been attributed to the academic achievement in students both Black and White and the underachievement of academic achievement in Black students. Although controversial, variables such as ethnicity, SES, school location, and access to educational resources have been determined to have some impact on education (Cokely, McClain, Jones, & Johnson, 2011, Nisbett, 2011, Dotterer, 2012, McKown, 2013, Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Over the years, researchers have tried to explain why ethnicity and class have impacts upon the academic achievements of Black students; however, the conclusions have been hotly debated.

One such controversial conclusion was made in 1994 book The Bell Curve. The claim that Herrnstein and Murray make is that the achievement gap that exists between Black and White students is based on students’ genetic makeup and natural ability, a claim that has since been established as false (Nisbett, 2011). In fact, many experts and studies examining the academic achievement gap between Black and White students found that the gap is the result of more subtle environmental factors and the lack of opportunities and resources available to poor children as opposed to wealthy children (Nisbett, 2011). In addition to having poor health care
and nutrition, which also have implications on academic achievement, children from low SES often have fewer educational resources such as books and an adult reading to them at home. Studies also indicate that there is a gap in the academic readiness between children from low SES and children from high SES when they enter school (Lee & Burkam, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). In relation to their White counterparts, Black children entering kindergarten in public schools have larger average class sizes, are less prepared with basic skills, have less well-prepared and experienced teachers, and attend schools in areas where safety is more of an issue (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011). According to Jencks and Phillips (1998), the achievement gap that exists between Black and White students is decreased albeit by a small amount when Black and White students attend the same schools. Additionally, the achievement gap decreases even more when Black and White families have the same amount of schooling, the same income, and the same wealth.

**Purpose of Study**

Historically, low income and minority groups have underperformed academically when compared to their White peers. What research suggests is that SES and race are important factors when examining the academic achievement of students; specifically minority students and low income students. There has been a lot of attention and discussion surrounding the academic achievement gap between Black students and White students and much of the research has focused on the underperformance of low-income Black students who attend a low performing school compared to their mid to high income White peers from middle to high performing schools. Although researchers have identified multiple factors that impact the academic achievement of both groups, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions that Black males who attend an affluent high school have about education and the factors that impact their
academic achievement in order to better understand how educators can improve the academic outcomes of Black males in general.

Research suggests that although students from high SES should achieve at a higher level, Black males from high SES encounter many of the same issues and have similar concerns as Black students from low SES. According to Kober (2001), Black families tend to have higher rates of poverty and lower levels of parental education; however, when test scores are adjusted to compensate for these factors, the gap shrinks by a third, but it does not disappear. Factors such as school, community, and home appear to have some impact on the academic achievement of both groups. Although the academic experiences and opportunities of Black males from high SES may be different from Black males from low SES, the goal of this study is to examine the responses from both groups to determine if their perceptions about school are different and if those perceptions impact their academic achievement.

The purpose of this study is one of inquiry from which educators might be able to move the discourse about the academic achievement gap beyond simply identifying factors towards finding solutions to the problem. One solution is to explore the issue of academic self-efficacy. Academic self-efficacy is the belief that one has the ability to perform an academic task. Evidence suggests that children with high academic self-efficacy in first and second grade have been found to have higher literacy and math achievement than children with low academic self-efficacy (Liew, McTigue, Barrios, & Hughes, 2008). Additional research suggests that adolescents with strong academic self-efficacy have been found to have higher achievement in school, both independently and as a function of high academic aspirations, more positive social behavior, and reduced feelings of futility and depression (Bandura, Barbarenelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996, Zimmerman, 2000, Pajares, Schunk, 2001). In essence, the way Black students
perceive themselves as students and learners has an impact on their academic achievements. Students’ beliefs in their efficacy to regulate their own learning and academic attainments contribute in turn to scholastic achievement. Their perceived social efficacy to manage peer pressure towards detrimental conduct also contributed to academic attainments, but through partially different paths of affective and self-regulatory influence (Bandura et al., 1996).

**Significance of the Study**

As a long-time educator, the achievement of Black students has been a concern of mine. Although many conversations have been generated as to why Black males continue to underperform, this is a complex problem with no clear solution. This study is important because it focuses on the perceptions of Black males who attend an affluent school district and compares their academic achievement and experiences to their White peers. It also allowed me to gather descriptive information to examine the relationships between these variables in order to make comparisons between groups that can provide insight into the complex experiences of the study participants.
Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. Do Black males who attend an affluent high school and have similar socio-economic backgrounds have similar academic outcomes when compared to their White peers?

2. Do students who did not qualify for free/reduced lunch and attend an affluent high school have similar academic outcomes compared to students who pay full price for lunch?

3. Do the perceptions of Black males who attend an affluent school differ from those of their White peers?

4. Do the number of years of district enrollment of Black males in an affluent school district increase their academic achievement when compared to their White peers?

Delimitations

This study examined the perceptions of Black males and the cultural factors that impact their academic achievements. Delimitations of this study include the following:

1. The survey was presented to a small sample of White and Black male students in grades 10-12 attending a Midwestern high school.

2. The responses of the students was limited to their personal experiences.

3. Finally, as the researcher, my primary role was to gain the trust of the students. As a teacher in the building, I had a unique perspective, because as one of only three Black professionals in the building, I had a similar story. The students and I have shared experiences, which I believe gave me more credibility as a researcher. The goal of this
study was to identify and address the cultural differences in the school system in order to offer specific strategies for Black males to be more successful at Buchanon High School in a Midwestern state. A positive aspect is the fact that the study participants are senior students and they were unknown to me because I had been employed in the district as a teacher for three years and had never had this group of students in class.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include the following:

1. This study was limited to male students who attended Buchanon High School and was an attempt to measure the different perceptions among the Blacks and White males.

2. There is the potential risk of non-response errors and a low response rate due to the limited sampling group.

3. One problem encountered was not having enough students to participate in the study. In order to find the senior students to participate in the study, I requested the assistance of teachers of senior students and asked them to identify groups of students who were willing to participate in the study. I handed out the parent assent forms to these students and sent home parent assent forms through the mail as well. Another problem was the issue of bias. As a Black educator, I have thoughts and opinions regarding student achievement in regards to minority students and the academic issues of Black males. I had to be objective and accept the findings and the results of the study. To address this issue, I requested that people of diverse cultures and experiences participate on my expert panel to ensure that my survey questions were not biased or leading in any way.
Definitions

- *Culture* as nothing, more or less, than the shared ways that groups of people have created to use and define their environment (Hilliard, 1992)

- *Perception* refers to the way you think about something or someone. (*Merriam-Webster.com*).


- *White flight* refers an occurrence in which many White people move out of a city as more and more people of other ethnicities move in. Research suggests that White flight leads to racial neighborhood segregation which impacts public schools. (*Merriam-Webster.com*).
Chapter 2 Literature Review

In the second chapter I present relevant research and theory that I will lay out in the following sections: Critical Race Theory, Factors that Impact the Academic Achievement of Black Males, Culture, Oppositional Culture Theory, Racial Ethic Identity, The Impact of Teacher Perspectives, Acting White Theory, Today It’s Called Swagger, The Lure of the Streets, The Urgency of Now, The Silent Problem, The Impact of Race on Academic Achievement, and the Shaker Heights Ohio Research.

**Critical Race Theory**

The Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a useful perspective from which to explore the phenomena of ethnicity when examining the educational experiences of Black students (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). The Critical Race Theory asserts that racism is common in America; it is not aberrant. It is situated in our cultural DNA and acted out in our everyday lives (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). It is deeply encoded in our society, legal system, and educational system. Racism is also passed down from generation to generation. In many instances, it is subtle and comes equipped with socially acceptable deniability (Hughes & Giles, 2010). The issue of ethnicity in school is a topic worthy of exploration for many reasons. Research shows that ethnicity significantly impacts academic achievement in Black students (Fordham & Ogbug 1986; Hilliard, 1978, 1992; Ogbug, 2003, 1978; Wright, 2003). According to Orfield and Lee (2005), ethnicity is deeply and systematically linked to many forms of inequality in treatment, expectations, and opportunities. Consequently, the achievement gap will continue to be a problem because culturally based education continues to be ignored.

Schools define academic achievement based on an individual’s success compared to the standards established by the school system. According to Robinson and Berin (2006), the
individual academic achievement of Black students is compared to the norm performance of White students. Additionally, Hilliard (2003) argued that the standardized, mass-produced, one-size-fits-all model of assessment and achievement lacks diversity and fails to accurately measure real achievement. He argued that there are cultural, linguistic, economic, and experiential differences among all students that should be considered; however, those considerations are not made, and Black students continue to be compared to their White counterparts (Hilliard, 2004). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2009, 2011) Black students often score 20 test score points lower than White students on the NAEP reading and mathematics assessments at the 4th and 8th grade. Additionally, on most standardized tests Black students typically score one standard deviation lower than their White counterparts (Fryer & Levitt, 2004). Although there are additional factors that impact academic achievement other than ethnicity and culture, it is important to acknowledge the relationship between ethnicity, culture, and academic achievement in Black students.

Factors that Impact the Academic Achievement of Black Students

Culture

There is a significant academic achievement gap that has been researched for decades now and what is known is that there are a multitude of factors that can be attributed to this gap. One factor is culture. What we know is that race and culture are important variables when considering the academic experiences of Black students. Educational researcher Hilliard defines culture as nothing, more or less, than the shared ways that groups of people have created to use and define their environment. According to his research, groups of people have central tendencies or styles based on race and ethnicity; these styles are more like habits, values, preferences or predispositions than they are biological dispositions (Hilliard, 1992). Hilliard
(1992) says, “Most individual Blacks are very much a part of a core Black culture, yet some may operate on the behavioral margins of their historical group of reference; while others may operate in ways that are quite outside the norms of that group. When examining the issue of underachievement in Black students, it is important to examine the issue of ethnicity as culture” (p. 371).

Through a study where he contrasted African and Black culture with European and European American culture, he identified that there are specific behaviors or styles that are cultural and therefore have academic implications, but regardless of specific behaviors or styles, all students can learn and have the ability to learn different learning styles other than their own if they are exposed to different behaviors, styles, and cognitive skills. For this study he compared two groups of students, White and Black, with the same intellectual capacity and determined that each could develop habits and preferences that would cause them to achieve in somewhat different ways. Through a review of the literature, he compared Blacks and European Americans in the areas of religion, language, and music and found that although individuals may behave very similarly to their own group, behavior is dependent on the cultural socialization process and behavioral styles. Based on his research, he found that students can master any instructional style and learn if they are in an environment where their styles are compatible with the instruction and the educational institution (Hilliard, 1992; Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ogbu & Fordham, 1986). According to Hilliard (1992), there is pedagogical value to teachers who provide stylistic diversity in their instructional practices to meet the academic needs of diverse learners.

Although further research has shown that culturally distinctive behaviors and styles do not specifically explain the academic achievement gap that continues to exist between White and
Black students, understanding the role that culture plays in the academic experiences of Blacks students can assist researchers and educators when it comes to instructional practices (Chunn, 1987; Delpit, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1998). This is important to note because according to Graybill (1997), not only does the sense of identity get reinforced by our understanding of our culture, but the way we learn is embedded in our culture.

**Oppositional Culture Theory**

According to Fordham (1985), Blacks tend to define themselves in opposition to their White counterparts, and what is perceived as appropriate for White Americans is defined by Blacks as inappropriate for them; unfortunately for some, this includes education. Fordham (1986) says, “Oppositional identity and oppositional cultural frame enter into the process of schooling through the minorities’ perceptions and interpretations of schooling as learning the White American cultural frame of reference which they have come to assume to have adverse effects on their own culture and integrity.” While some may argue that it is an issue of Black students attempting to “fit” into the dominant society, others would argue that these students are treated differently because their behaviors are not in line with the established societal norms. These norms, which were developed by the dominant group, have dictated the acceptable behaviors, attitudes, and practices of the whole, excluded many of the behaviors and ideals of Blacks along with other racial and other ethnic groups, have implications not only socially, but academically as well. According to Graybill (1997), teachers have biases based on their personal experiences, and these beliefs can negatively impact the academic achievement of Black students. Furthermore, teachers’ expectations can influence their students’ achievement, and teachers’ cultural backgrounds can also influence their perceptions of what are appropriate and acceptable behaviors. For example, Graybill (1997) noted in his study that White educators and
school personnel may hold negative perceptions about the Black students. Additionally, Graybill intimates that the school personnel may misunderstand the behaviors and attitudes of the students because of their lack of cultural awareness.

Another cultural study was run by Ogbru who suggests that the differences in academic achievement is due to the oppositional cultural theory. According to Ogbru, there are two major components of the oppositional cultural theory “societal and school forces and community and individual level forces” The societal and school forces focus on the discrimination that minorities experience at the hands of the dominant culture. Ogbru (2003) argued that because of discrimination, minority groups were denied equal access to education that was offered to the dominant group and as a result, some minority groups underperform when compared to the dominant culture.

In community and individual level forces, Ogbru (2003) argues that minorities experience oppositional culture when they believe that the educational experiences that receive are not equal to those of the dominant culture and consequently he believes that they underperform because they refuse to exhibit any behaviors and attitudes that reflect those of the dominant culture. Furthermore, he suggests that minorities behave in ways that are contrary to the dominant group such as showing up late to class, poor attitude about work ethic and school work, and for some, dropping out of school.

Although the academic achievement gap is prevalent between some minority groups, Ogbru (2003) also argues that the oppositional culture theory doesn’t impact all minority groups the same. His research suggests that depending on the experiences, abilities and willingness of one to acclimate to mainstream society are based on voluntary or involuntary immigration. He argued that Africans, who were brought to the United States hundreds of years ago, were forced
to migrate; therefore, there are social barriers that prevent them from achieving success. These social barriers manifest in the refusal of many of the White majority to discuss race relations and the refusal to acknowledge and accept that cultural differences exist among the ethnicities and have social implications that may lead to academic implications. Ogbu (2003) argues that one of the most polarizing barriers to that success is in the racial categories that separate ethnic groups. Additionally, Ogbu (2003) argues that there are American ethnicity categories that are about a social identity and do not have any biological basis. According to Pollock (2003), these categories, retooled with waves of immigration and naturalized over centuries by law, policy, and science, were created to organize slavery. Now these ethnic categories are everywhere. They are considered by some to be alternately proud building blocks of our nation’s diversity and to others the shameful foundation of our most wrenching inequalities (Pollock, 2003). For Black males, there are many implications for identifying as being both “Black” and male (Johns, 2007).

According to Johns (2007), there are social constructs such as ethnicity, gender, and class that have meaningful implications when associated with certain groups. For Black males, the implications of these social constructs are noteworthy because of the social classifications and stereotypes that are as associated with this identity. Graybill (1997) suggests that White teachers, conditioned by their upbringing and the negative stereotypes still reinforced in the media, continue to hold negative assumptions about the behaviors of Black and nonwhite students. These negative racial stereotypes can adversely impact the academic achievement of Black males and lead to prejudice and discrimination. According to Fordham, “Black students begin to doubt their intellectual ability, define academic success as white people’s prerogative and begin to discourage their peers, perhaps unconsciously from emulating white people in
academic striving. According to Green (1999) these stereotypes are dangerous for multiple reasons.

Plous and Williams (1995) suggest that African-Americans and others from racial and ethnic groups internalize negative stereotypes that can be damaging. They conducted a study to identify the impact and nature of prejudice and stereotyping of Blacks. This study reported that people who have not attained a high school degree were more likely than those with a high school diploma to believe in racial stereotypes (Plous & Williams, 1995). Using a random dialing approach, they surveyed 1,490 households in central Connecticut and asked their opinions concerning the differences among various groups in American society such as Black and Whites. Through their research, they determined that education matters in regards to stereotyping. They found that those who without a high school degree were twice as likely as those with a graduate degree to endorse racial stereotypes.

According to Green, this belief is problematic because “Many people develop expectations based on their beliefs and are inclined to ignore or reject information that is inconsistent with those beliefs. These individuals look for information that supports stereotypes” (p. 7). For Black males, stereotypes have significant implications that extend into the classroom as well. Johns (2007) explains that to be successful in schools, “Black students are forced to make sense of and find ways to successfully navigate the expectations, sometimes pejorative attitudes, and lack of culturally relevant, stimulating, and affirming experiences in the classroom” (p. 2). According to Native American educator Pewewardy (1993), one factor that can be attributed to the academic struggle of Native American students is that for decades schools have presented a traditional educational program that attempts to insert culture into education instead of inserting education into the culture. Additionally, Ladson-Billings (1995),
suggests that this is probably true for most ethnic groups that are not part of the dominant cultural group and suggests that even though Black students may encounter social inequalities and have negative school experiences, they can still experience school success; however for them to be successful, schools must acknowledge, support, and provide academic experiences that these student feel is relevant to their lives.

**The Attachment Theory**

According to Kennedy and Kennedy (2004), the Attachment Theory provides a framework that encompasses developmental processes and outcomes, both adaptive and maladaptive which facilitates assessment and intervention and offers insight into classroom and family dynamics (p. 247). Researchers suggest that secure attachment is associated with high academic outcomes and low risk factors while insecure attachment is associated with lower academic outcomes and high risk factors such as low SES (Bowlby, 1969, Ainsworth, 1970, Main & Solomon, 1986).

According to Burkam and Lee, (2002), race and ethnicity are associated with SES. For example, 34% of black children and 29% of Hispanic children are in the lowest quintile of SES compared with only 9% of white children. Cognitive skills are much less closely related to race/ethnicity after accounting for SES. Even after taking race differences into account, however, children from different SES groups achieve at different levels. What this research suggests is that SES is just as impactful. Although there is a difference in the academic outcomes of African American students when compared to their Caucasian students, this researcher was surprised to find that SES had greater implications.

Research indicates that SES is a factor in education attainment because what we know is that SES impacts what resources we have, the experiences we have, and the opportunities we are
exposed to. Additionally, "Families with low socioeconomic status often lack the financial, social, and educational supports that characterize families with high socioeconomic status" (North Central Regional Laboratory, 2004). This is critical because research indicates that children from low-SES households and communities develop academic skills more slowly compared to children from higher SES groups (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2009). Research also suggests that students from low-SES schools enter high school 3.3 grade levels behind students from higher SES schools. In addition, students from the low-SES groups learned less over 4 years than children from higher SES groups, graduating 4.3 grade levels behind those of higher SES groups (Palardy, 2008). Researchers suggest that low SES may be associated with insecure attachment and low academic achievement as a result of poor infant parent attachment (Ainsworth et al.).

Applegate and Shapiro (2005), define attachment as “access to a stable and continuous caregiving relationship (p. 60). Essentially, researchers suggest that there are four types of attachment that impact academic success in students: secure, anxious/avoidant, anxious/ambivalent and anxious/disorganized/disoriented (Bowlby et al., Dozier, Stovall, & Albus (1999), suggest that these attachments should be considered when examining how well students are able to manage their behaviors, experiences and relationships with others.

According to research, there is a relationship between academic achievement and attachment patterns (Bowlby et al., Main & Solomon, 1986). Additional research also supports that there is a correlation between secure attachment and cognitive development (Kerns, 2008). Bowlby (1969), posits that attachment behaviors are based on the early relationship that is developed between an infant and his/her initial caregiver and is critical to the child developing appropriate social, emotional and cognitive skills. Additionally, a child’s ability to connect
appropriately in future relationships is based on the very first attachment relationship that is established in infancy.

Bowlby (1969) suggests that the nature of a child’s initial attachment is secure or anxious based on the role of his/her caregiver. Researchers suggest that a caregiver that is attentive and responsive to a child’s basic needs from infancy on establishes the foundation for the child to be securely attached (Bowlby et al). Jacobsen & Hoffmann (1997), offer that securely attached students have better attention spans, participate in their learning, are more self-confident, and have better academic outcomes. Aviezer, Resnick, Sagi, & Gini, (2002) also propose that there is a relationship between secure attachment, school attitudes, and academic outcomes. Kerns (2008) suggest that securely attached students also possess a strong work ethic and determination as a result of having responsive and attentive caregivers; which according to Jacobsen & Hoffmann (1997) is how caregivers prepare children for academic success in school.

According to the National Institute of Child and Human Development (NICHD, 2008), a mother’s sensitivity and responsiveness has a direct impact on reading and mathematics. Additionally, studies suggest that teachers have different perceptions of securely attached children and insecurely attached children. Research supports that securely attached students were perceived as having better academic outcomes, and better social and emotional behaviors (Granot & Mayseless, 2001). Research also suggests that securely attached students outperform insecurely attached students because securely attached students are not fearful of new experiences and they possess a confidence that insecurely attached children do not (Granot et al, 2001).

Jacobsen and Hoffmann (1997) suggest that children who possess secure attachment characteristics are more likely to succeed in school because they are able to focus for longer
periods of time, participate in the learning, and have higher academic outcomes than students who are insecurely attached. Jacobsen et al also suggest that securely attached children perceive others as supportive helpful and positive and to view themselves as capable and worthy of respect. According to researchers securely attached children have more positive connections with their counterparts and adults in their lives and more socially engaging, and have more socially acceptable behaviors (Howes, Matheson, & Hamilton, 1994, Cassidy, 1994).

**Racial Ethnic Identity**

According to Wright (2009), Black males struggle academically and have a poor racial ethnic identity as a result of the perceived racism and discrimination they experience socially and academically. Racial Ethnic Identity (REI) is defined as the individual being aware of and able to negotiate and navigate racism and discrimination positively and at the same time demonstrates ethnic pride in oneself and one’s ethnic group. He attributes the lack of academic achievement in some Black students to poor REI and the inability to overcome the social stereotypes and stigmas that plague them.

Wright also suggests that Black male students have developed coping strategies to deal with the perceived challenges they face in school and society as a way to leverage themselves. Furthermore, he intimates that many Black males take on a “cool pose” or use their strong verbal skills to joke around with each other or play the dozens, a game in which they make fun of each other as a way to take control of a social situation where they may experience racism or discrimination from other groups (Wright, 2009).

Other researchers suggest when students have a strong sense of cultural awareness, pride and positive feelings about their academic experiences, they succeed (Ford & Harris, 1997; O’Connor, 1997). Further, Ladson-Billings (1995) suggests that this success is dependent on a
high level of cultural consciousness. She intimates that these students must “develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequalities” (p. 162).

Oyserman, Harrison, and Bybee (2001) suggest that students who have a strong REI and feel accepted in their schools earn higher grades. These researchers interviewed various ethnic groups to determine how their racial identities impact their grades, school attendance, and their mathematical performance. Their findings suggest that students who have a negative REI tend to be disengaged in school, which impacts their academic outcomes. Black students who have a positive REI tend to perform well in school. Other research (Chavous, Schmeelk-Cone, Cladwell, Kohn-Wood, & Zimmerman, 2003), suggests that students who feel alienated in the school and fail to identify with their cultural group tend to underperform in school, drop out of high school, and not attend college, while students with a positive REI tend to have positive perceptions regarding their educational experiences and attend college. They administered the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) to examine the REI in a sample of 606 12th-grade Black students to determine if these students’ perceptions of their academic experiences, outcomes, and eventual college attainment are impacted by their REI. Their findings suggest that a strong sense of self and group identity impacts academic achievement. Wright (2007) suggests that healthy REI can positively impact the academic achievements of Black males.

In contrast, other research, (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) suggests that the acting white theory that is associated with anti-intellect and anti-education is the reason why some Black students underperform when compared to their White peers. They suggest that when Black students who identify academic achievement with acting white and not as an achievement that Blacks aspire to, underperform and ridicule other Black students who perform well. Delpit (1998) suggests that
many of these Black students hold negative perceptions about their academic achievement and experiences, and, consequently, they underperform or leave school before graduation, which can have lifelong implications for Black males.

A 2007 National Urban League study reports that Black male achievement begins to decline as early as the fourth grade and that Black males are more likely to drop out of high school. Although some educators suggest that Black male students have an attitude of defiance toward their academic subjects and school, other researchers suggest that these students are internalizing the low expectations that teachers may have of them, thus creating a self-fulfilling prophesy in which the teachers’ low expectations influence the students’ academic effort and outcomes. Delpit (1992) stated that many children from minority backgrounds are placed in situations where the teacher assumes deficits in students rather than locating and teaching to their strengths.

One issue with the current educational experiences of Black students is that many of these students attend traditional schools that are based on traditional White norms and values (Hilliard, 1976; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This is noteworthy because according to Irvine (1990), Black students struggle in school due to the cultural differences that exist between them and their White teachers. For decades now, school systems have used traditional teaching methods and operate in a single set of uniform norms that do not reflect the changing demographics of many public schools today.

According to a report by The Center for American Progress (2014), 48% of students enrolled in public schools today are nonwhite (23% Hispanic, 16% black, and 5% Asian); while in contrast, 82% of the teachers are White. According to Chunn (1988), the implications of these differences are noteworthy. She suggests that ethnicity influences the expectations of teachers
because they have misconceptions about Black students based on their own experiences. Further research supports her claim. Rist (1970) studied the influence of minority students and teacher expectations. He conducted a longitudinal study where he observed a classroom of Black students from the time they began kindergarten through the 2nd grade who were grouped based on their SES. Over the course of the 3 years, he reported that there was very little movement from group to group. In fact, students from low SES were assigned to the lowest reading group and remained there through the years. Rist’s (1970) findings suggest that teachers’ beliefs are reflected in their instruction and teaching practices which may lead to poor academic outcomes for Black students. Research suggests that when teachers have low expectations those expectations can influence the academic outcomes of their students.

**The Impact of Teacher Perceptions**

According to Pang and Sablan (1995), teachers bring assumptions into their classrooms based on their personal experiences and teachings, and these beliefs influence their teaching. Additionally, teachers have a personal frame of reference or biases that can negatively impact the academic achievement of Black students and lead to misunderstandings. Other research suggests that individuals have different learning styles that have classroom implications (Hilliard, 1992, Ladson-Billings, 1995). Some students are visual learners, whereas others are auditory or tactile learners. It is essential for teachers to not only know their own personal learning styles but to also understand and utilize different learning styles so that they are able to differentiate their teaching methods in order to meet the academic needs of their diverse students. For example, Wright, (2009) suggests that Black students possess specific learning styles, such as physical movement, animation, and spontaneity. These characteristics can be misunderstood by White teachers as disruptive to the learning environment.
Further research suggests that Black males also have distinctive behaviors and styles that segregate themselves from traditional White norms and school systems and impact their academic experiences negatively; according to Majors and Billson (1991), these students have developed specific strategies to adjust to these negative experiences. Coined the Cool Pose Theory (1992), Majors and Billson suggests that as a way to control these uncomfortable social situations Black males demonstrate their social competence or cool in the way they walk, talk, and stand, which can be misperceived by White teachers as misbehaviors and consequently, they have negative academic implications. Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, and Garrison-Wade (2008) also say, “Additional research suggests that the gap between White teachers and Black students is exacerbated by powerful social conditioning that cultivates actual negative attitudes towards Black students” (p. 49). Researchers also suggest that the negative perceptions that teachers and others hold about children and their potential have a major influence on their academic achievement. (Chunn, 1987, 88; Hilliard, 1992, 1983, 1987).

Although there is an ever-increasing diversity in the cultural populations in schools today, the way in which the American school system operates has changed little to accommodate the various learning styles of these groups and remains rigid and encapsulated in a style that mimics the particular culture style of White Americans (Hilliard, 1992). Hilliard (1992) further suggests that educators tend to favor personal and professional behaviors such as those which are rules-driven, conformist, standardized, and analytical, which research has suggested are behaviors that are contrary to the learning styles of Black students (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Additionally, research by Irvine and York (1995) suggests that there are distinctions that can be made in the diverse learning styles of students based on ethnicity and race. After examining diverse groups of students, these researchers identified that Black students tend to prefer
inferential reasoning to focus on people rather than things, prefer kinesthetic learning, and are more proficient in nonverbal communications, and that students from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do well when they participate in cooperative learning activities.

The implications of this research are that the pedagogical practices in American public schools do not always support the learning styles of Black students. Essentially, the fear is that educators will treat the mismatch between some students and the school as a student deficiency. In other words, they likely view it as a problem that requires students to change as opposed to addressing the problem themselves (Hilliard, 1992).

Generally, this lack of understanding regarding the importance of acknowledging and utilizing the experiences that Black students bring with them to school creates additional conflicts. For White students, the challenge is in accepting behaviors outside of what are deemed cultural norms. For Blacks students, the challenge is in acclimating to the school environment and accepting school practices and social norms by adopting the behaviors and attitudes of others that may be contrary to their own personal beliefs. O’Connor, Lewis, and Mueller (2007), suggests that in order for Blacks to feel valued and to hold on to their cultural identities, they resist the practice of acting white and adopting what they believe to be White behaviors and attitudes (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Hilliard, 1992).

According to Hilliard (1992), the structure of the educational system that denies Blacks the ability to truly express their African identities and fails to present a curriculum that reflects that essence is at the heart of the problem. Essentially, to support the learning of Black students, schools have to offer a curriculum that not only reflects their personal ideologies, but also allows them to learn and perform in non-traditional ways (Ladson-Billings, 1995).
Ladson-Billings (1995) suggests that teachers of Black students must encourage them to actively engage in the academic process and to strive for academic success while maintaining their cultural integrity by allowing them to dress in their own style, use their own language, and interact with other students without criticism. She supports this thinking by providing examples of teachers who use rap lyrics to introduce a poetry unit and teachers who encourage their students with discipline issues to run for leadership roles in their school. She also suggests that teachers must help students to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities by acknowledging that the inequalities exist. Ladson-Billings (1995) further suggests that there is a cultural mismatch between home and school that must be addressed in order to increase the academic achievement of minority students and their academic experiences.

Irvine (1990) offers that educators examine several factors that may negatively impact the academic achievement of Black students: teacher-student interpersonal contexts, teacher and student expectations, institutional contexts, and societal contexts. Irvine (1990) further suggests that schools and teachers play a vital role in the academic achievement or lack of achievement in school and should be examined in order to identify specific factors that impact achievement and different ways that schools can promote academic achievement for Black students. In addition to examining academic factors that impact the academic achievement of Black students, it is also important to consider the cultural factors that impact academic achievement in Black students as well.

**Acting White Theory**

According to a study performed by Fordham and Ogbu (1986), Black students avoided study and good grades because their peers considered academic achievement as selling out or acting white. The issue of acting white is solely based on the accepted behaviors, habits, and
school standards that Black students have developed and as a result have achieved good grades. Due to their high academic performance, their Black peers who tended to look at studying and earning good grades in a negative way ridiculed them. The fact that students from the same racial group ridiculed theses students creates a dilemma for these students: do they continue to achieve academically and risk being ostracized by their racial group or do they underachieve to fit in with others?

According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), Black males are more likely than other racial groups to be influenced negatively by peer pressure and may deliberately underachieve. Research suggests that Black females tend to be more successful academically than Black males and are less affected by the burden of acting white because they develop a peer group of friends that support them; whereas Black males tend to underperform in fear that if they persist in their studies they will be accused of acting white (Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Ogbu, 2001). In order to avoid being pressured by their peers and avoid accusations that challenge their cultural identities, Black males may sabotage or camouflage their academic achievement to be accepted socially by their peers by acting out in class, joining an athletic team, or simply just doing enough to get by (Fordham, 1988, 1991, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Smith (1989) argued that race creates a bond and feelings of peoplehood such that individuals often define themselves in terms of racial membership in a particular group. She contends that a healthy regard for one's racial status is psychologically important for people of color. Smith also proposed that, for Black youth, racial identity has a significant impact on achievement and attitudes toward school.

For Black males, the need to fit in is so influential that instead of identifying with school norms and developing behaviors and habits that foster good grades, they tend to disassociate
with school by identifying with the cultural stereotypes that are pervasive in society (Majors & Mancini-Billson, 1992). This is especially significant for Black males from high SES. These students have economic advantages that create cultural opportunities for them that should directly impact academic achievement in a positive way. Research suggests that students from high SES have better resources, access to more highly qualified teachers, and a variety of academic courses while students from low SES do not (Reardon, 2011). Although Black students from both groups may have contrasting educational experiences, their need to fit in is the same, and they tend to struggle with racial identification as well (Ogbu, 2003).

Research shows that students with a strong cultural capital, or strong cultural background and knowledge feel that they “fit in” and that their values, traditions, beliefs, and behaviors are acknowledged and accepted by the majority fare better in school than their peers with less valuable social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Researchers found that Black students had better academic outcomes when they felt that they were treated with respect, were treated fairly and similarly to students from different ethnic groups, felt that their values and beliefs were accepted by their teachers and administrators, experienced classrooms free of bias and prejudice, were held to the same high standards and expectations as other students, and felt that their school promoted equality and academic success (Douglas et al., 2008).

Research also suggests that ethnicity and class have implications on academic achievement (Hilliard, 1992; Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ladson-Billings, 1995). What is known is that Black families of high SES tend to live in more affluent areas and send their children to more affluent schools with greater opportunities for success. However, research suggests that there is still a disparity in the IQ scores, SAT scores, and achievement tests of White students who attend affluent schools and those of Black students who attend the
same schools and have similar resources available to them (Ogbu, 2003, p. 6). Fryer and Levitt (2004) found that although Black and White students scored similarly on tests in kindergarten, the academic achievement gap increased as they grew older. Further, they found that from the beginning of kindergarten to the first grade, Black students lose 20% of a standard deviation in test scores relative to White students with similar characteristics (Fryer & Levitt, 2004).

Ogbu (2003) suggests that the disparity is due to a caste-like social construct where the minority suffers due to factors such as prejudice, either blatant or subtle. These implications are critical because lower-caste children do less well in school than upper-caste children, have lower test scores, and do not stay in school as long (Neisser, 2003). Ogbu (2003) argues that the minority is regarded as less desirable by the dominant group, and therefore minorities, such as Black males, become convinced that it is difficult if not impossible for them to advance in the mainstream by doing well in school, and therefore they drop out. Ogbu (2003) found that 10 out of 13 high school students reported that they believe that racial discrimination exists in the opportunity structure, that White people are given preferential treatment, and that it is more difficult for Blacks students to succeed compared to their White counterparts (p.146). Additional studies have identified cultural and social factors that contribute to educational inequality; what has not been identified is how these factors are converted into educational advances (Griffin & Allen, 2006; Hilliard, 1992; Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ogbu, 2003).

Today It’s Called Swagger

The Cool Pose Theory (Major & Mancini-Billson, 1992) suggests that as a way for some Black males to cope with the issue of fitting in, some have developed ritualized forms of masculinity that physically manifest themselves through culturally specific gestures, stances, walks, and handshakes and through culturally specific clothing, hair, and other "fashion" styles. Although this theory is not specific to any SES group, there are more serious implications for
Black males who attend more affluent schools. Blacks from high SES tend to attend schools where they are underrepresented, which leads to additional issues (Griffin & Allen, 2006). Additionally, researchers report that Black students who attend a school where they are underrepresented tend to experience racism, stereotyping, and discrimination that impact their academic achievement (Griffin & Allen, 2006; Ogbu, 2003; Wright 2009).

Griffen and Allen (2006) examined the college preparation of nine Black high achievers from a high-achieving suburban school system and eight academically successful Black students from a low-performing urban school system. This study compared the academic experiences of students from high- and low-performing school systems and addressed three questions: What are Black high achievers’ perceptions of school resources and their influence on college preparation? How do Black high achievers describe their school’s racial climate and its influence on college preparation? How do high achieving Black students demonstrate and foster their resilience in their respective environments? Their findings suggest that students at both schools experience barriers in racial climate and lack of resources, and may also experience a hostile environment, one in which they do not feel supported and understood, which can impact their academic outcomes. Majors and Mancini-Billson (1992) suggest that these students have developed coping strategies to help them navigate these hostile environments.

Majors and Mancini-Billson (1992) suggest that these students experience hostile environments due to cultural insensitivity and a lack of understanding from their teachers and school authorities who often perceive aspects of the Cool Pose Theory as disruptive. They suggest that Black students have developed behaviors and attitudes such as provocative walking styles, rapping, use of slang, expressive hairstyles, excessive use of jewelry, wearing hats, wearing an unbuckled belt, and wearing untied sneakers as a way to set themselves apart from
the dominant culture. White school authorities may misunderstand these behaviors and consider them to be arrogant, rude, defiant, aggressive, intimidating, threatening, and in general, as behaviors not conducive to learning. Additionally, Majors and Mancini-Billson (1992) consider this lack of cultural awareness and understanding as another form of subtle racism that has devastating consequences for Black students.

Although Lee, Winfield, and Wilson (1991) found that school affluence was connected to academic achievement for Black students, studies have also found that these affluent environments also create additional challenges for Blacks (Griffin & Allen, 2006). More affluent high schools present climates that are uncomfortable for underrepresented minority students. Griffin and Allen (2006) reported that Black students who experienced a hostile school climate felt that they were considered less intelligent and less capable of doing high quality work due to their ethnicity. The findings also suggest that these students were less likely to enroll in advanced courses and feel support and encouragement from the counseling department to take challenging coursework. Furthermore, Griffin and Allen (2006) report that a school agent’s belief about certain racial groups and their abilities may influence the access to opportunities, resources, and information for students from specific racial groups.

According to Dee (2004), Black teachers make up 8% of the teaching force, even though the population of Black students is 17%. Research suggests that there are culturally based misunderstandings based on ethnicity and social class that may serve to explain the present trends in the achievement gap (Monroe, 2005). Steele’s theory of “stereotype threat” (1995) suggests that the academic performance of Black students may be impacted by the ethnicity and low expectations of their teacher. Stereotype threat can occur in situations where individuals perceive that a stereotype regarding their ability will come into play, such as when an Black
student is taught by a White teacher and the teacher expects that student to fail. This is noteworthy because a U.S. Department of Education report (2004) states that almost 87% of elementary and secondary teachers in the United States are White, while only 8% of teachers are Black. The lack of representation of Black professionals in the schools influences how Black males perceive themselves in the world, which may be attributed to their poor academic achievement. Although there are many factors that can be attributed to this failure, one factor to consider is the lack of positive Black professionals who can be role models for Black males of both high and low SES. According to Davis (2003), consistent and positive male role models in educational settings can be emulated by young Black males. These role models provide young Black males with cultural awareness and help them to develop positive self-images and promote positive academic and social development.

Additionally, Majors and Mancini-Billson (1992, p. 14), suggest that Black students can be misperceived as being off task by their teachers because of their teacher’s lack of cultural awareness. Furthermore, they suggest that most teachers, who are White, lack the cultural insight, training, and sensitivity to recognize that young Black males may perceive expressive and cool behaviors as a source of pride and do not necessarily define these behaviors as negative and disruptive.

The Cool Pose Theory is significant because Black males from high and low SES are identifying with behaviors and ideals that are popular in the streets, which are contrary to the White cultural norms practiced in schools (Majors & Mancini-Billson, 1992). In this sense, Black males are seeking liberation from the destructive grips of White supremacy in a culturally affirming way (Lundy, 2003). They are resistant to formal standard English and studying in order to earn high grades. Instead of identifying with White cultural norms and mimicking practices
that represent what success looks like in mainstream society, Black males tend to exhibit oppositional behaviors to keep their White teachers off balance (Majors & Mancini-Billson, 1992). A major problem is that the underachievement of Black males from high and low SES tends to be viewed by mainstream America as a problem within the Black community and not a problem within the educational institution or system.

Some researchers argue that Black students are sabotaging themselves and are to blame for the achievement gap due to the Oppositional Cultural Theory formerly known as cultural ecological theory or resistance model. Ogbu (1978) developed this theory to explain the disparity between the academic achievement of Black and White students. He intimates that there are societal and school forces as well as community and individual forces at play. He further suggests that members of a minority group may be treated unfairly within a society, which leads to underachievement. This is noteworthy because Ogbu (1978) goes on to explain that Blacks are systematically denied equal educational opportunities and equal employment opportunities and thus earn less than their White counterparts. Due to this inequality, Ogbu (1978) further reports that due to these discriminatory practices, Blacks do not see the value of an education and thus underperform. However, Harris (2006) argues that treating the Oppositional Cultural Theory as an overriding explanation for racial differences in achievement might lead policymakers to narrowly conceive of the gap's causes and assume convergence is unlikely because Blacks refuse to learn.

The Lure of the Streets

We scream, rock, blow, weed, park
So now we smart
We aint retards the way teachers thought
Hold up hold fast we make mo’ cash
Now tell my momma I belong in a slow class
It’s bad enough we on welfare
You try to put me on the school bus with the space for the wheel chair
(We Don’t Care, College Dropout, Kanye West)

“The streets . . . constitute an institution in the same way that the church, school, and family are conceived as institutions” (Perkins, 1991). Although there are a number of gathering places (e.g., basketball courts, churches, parks, liquor and convenience stores, and clubs) in which Black males congregate, bond, and enact "brother-hood rites of passage and activities" (Franklin, 1999), none is more significant in constructing Black male gender identities that are associated with problematic behavior than the network of settings that are colloquially referred to by Black men as the streets. When examining the problems within the Black community, research suggests that institutions, such as the church and the family are no longer the strengths they once were.

According to a US Census Report (2013), over the last few decades there has been a significant shift in the nation’s family structure. In fact, in 2013, 68% of Black mothers who gave birth were unmarried, compared to 26% of Whites. Additionally, according to the US Census Bureau (2010), 29.3% of Blacks were married (down from 1985 when it was 46%) compared to 52.1% of White Americans, which has also shifted the family structure. The decline of the Black church is also part of the changing family structure in the Black community. What was once an institution of hope and strength that provided the community with a voice for activism, vital resources, political skills, and a spiritual and social structure has declined over the last few decades. In the 1950s and 1960s the Black church was the center of the Civil Rights Movement, and from the 1970s to 1990s it was the organizational basis of the Black electoral politics (Harris, 2012). However, due to gentrification and other economic factors, the Black church has seen a decline in numbers and consequently no longer holds the power or influence it once had.
According to McRoberts (2001), churches are often established around common ethnicity, regional or national origin, class background, political organization, life stage, or lifestyle and less on a shared neighborhood identity. One implication of this is that churches may not focus their interests on the needs of the community but rather on the issues that impact the church members who may or may not live in the community. Furthermore, the church may not have the resources to develop the neighborhood and provide services such as job training, affordable housing, educational opportunities, and social services to the community with the purpose of building up and supporting the community.

Research by The National Urban League (2007) suggests that Blacks have been denied access to jobs, education, and similar opportunities to succeed in life as White Americans. As a result, the Black community has suffered. Due to White flight, high crime, and the housing crash, many Black neighborhoods are no longer viable (Kellog, 2010). According to Ram (2012), this is also due to gentrification and urban renewal, which has changed the demographics of inner city neighborhoods. Neighborhoods that were once considered lower income neighborhoods where middle and lower class Blacks lived have now been developed into upscale communities that these Blacks families cannot afford.

Essentially, Black communities have been hit hard because their businesses, churches, and families no longer receive the support and resources that once supported their communities; the Black church, by default, was expected to assume the responsibility of addressing many urgent and unmet community needs, which was something they were ill-equipped and financially unable to do (Savage, 2012). As a result of these deteriorating institutions, the only viable institution left in many Black communities today is the school, and unfortunately, this institution continues to be part of the problem.
An NCES (National Center for Educational Statistics) (2012) report states that on average, urban public schools are more likely to serve low-income students. This research further suggests that students from schools with high concentrations of low-income students have less successful educational outcomes. According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education, (2012), only 10% of Black men were proficient in reading in the 8th grade as compared to 35% of their White counterparts. Additionally, Blacks have the lowest graduation rate among White, Latino, and Asian students. In fact, according to this report, 78% of Black males did not graduate from high school in 4 years as compared to 52% of White students. This report also proposes that states with smaller Black populations tend to have higher graduation rates for Black students than states with large Black populations. Vermont, Idaho, Alaska, and Oregon are in the top 10% nationally for graduating Black males. In Vermont, 82% of Black males graduated compared to 81% of White students; in Idaho, 71% of Black students graduated compared to 73% of White students; in Alaska, 71% of Black males graduated compared to 70% of White students; and in Oregon, 72% of Black males graduated compared to 77% of White students. These statistics seems to indicate that Blacks males on average perform better in places and spaces where they are not relegated to under-resourced districts or schools. Additionally, when provided similar opportunities, Black males are more likely to produce similar or better outcomes to their White male peers (The Urgency of Now, 2012).

According to Anderson (2009), the individual and collective perceptions of systematic exclusion from the conventional means of achieving identity and status as a man have serious implications on the ability of Black men to succeed. The lack of supportive family and community has had the effect of enhancing the attraction and institutionalization of the streets as an alternative setting in which to pursue personal and social significance. Due to a failure to
identify with school, Black males tend to identify with street culture; consequently, street-related values, norms, and roles are culturally transmitted across succeeding generations of Black males, particularly among those males whose daily lives are entrenched in the social realities and experiences of the urban underclass (Anderson, 1999). At one time, these urban experiences were limited to Black students, specifically Black males from low SES. However, with the emergence of hip hop, and the success and fame of young Black males, Black males from high SES can now emulate the urban culture they see in music videos and listen to in song lyrics. According to a 2004 CNN documentary report, affluent Black parents report that their children are turning to “rap music's gangstas and thugs” for “an alternative to be authentically Black.” Seeing good grades as acting white and education as unlikely to pay off, one youth profiled in the documentary comments, “I’m going to be a rapper...Rappers don’t study” (CNN 2004).

I'm just a young black male, cursed since my birth
Had to turn to crack sales, if worse come to worse
Headed for them packed jails, or maybe it's a hearse
My only way to stack mail, is out here doin’ dirt
(Heavy in the Game, Me Against the World)

Hip hop culture, particularly gangsta rap music and videos, has had a major influence on the evolution and transmission of contemporary street culture socialization and the social construction of gender identity among poor and non-poor Black males (Kitwana, 2002). Young Black males identify with athletes, singers, and actors whom they see on television and hear on the radio because of the lack of Black professional role models represented in their personal lives. Black males aspire to be like those they have access to and those whom they feel have reached a certain level of success; unfortunately, the success of these people is not contingent upon academic success. According Waldron (2013),
Sports have opened a mostly meritorious door to economic prosperity for African-Americans and other minorities that doesn’t exist in many other parts of society, where large education and economic gaps have perpetuated racial and social divides in our society. That sports still remain the primary way up the economic ladder for young black men in particular, though, should highlight the ways we’ve fallen short in other parts of society. Making it to the professional ranks in sports is nearly impossible — that so many young black athletes view it as more possible than achieving economic success outside of sports, or even in the coaching, management, and ownership ranks inside sports, is a tragedy that we have perpetuated and evidence that more equal opportunities need to exist in education and elsewhere. (para. 10)

**The Urgency of Now**

We live in a culture that values a quick and easy way to become rich, and consequently many Black students see athletics and entertainment as their avenue to success and fame, and not education. According to the Schott Foundation (2012), education is linked to both income potential and incarceration potential. The Urgency of Now (2012) reports that 52% of Black males graduate from high school. This is noteworthy because, according to the U.S. Department of Labor (2011), in 2009 about 50% of Black males between the ages of sixteen and nineteen were unemployed and did not attend school. According to The Center for American Progress (2011), the unemployment rate for Blacks is almost double that of Whites regardless of educational background. The unemployment rate for Blacks with a college degree was 7% while it was 4% for Whites. The unemployment rate for Blacks with a high school diploma and no college education was 16% while it was 8% for Whites and for Blacks without a high school diploma he unemployment rate was 26% and for Whites it was 12%. This is noteworthy because
this data suggests that although the unemployment rates for Blacks is almost two times the rate of Whites, education is a factor in the job market for potential employers.

What we know is that educational attainment is closely linked employment and research suggests that some Black students do not view school as an avenue for success because of disturbing trends. According to a Department of Education report (2014), minority students are dramatically underserved by the public school system compared to their White counterparts. Additionally, according to government civil rights data (2011-12), Black males are disproportionately disciplined with in-school and out-of-school suspensions and are three times more likely as Whites to be expelled or suspended. While some attribute this disturbing trend to other factors, others blame it on racial discrimination.

Research suggests that when Black students experience discrimination, they experience stress that leads to depression and anxiety, and as a result they develop coping strategies (Gaylord-Harden & Cunningham, 2009), and experience negative developmental consequences such as decreased academic motivation, low GPA, and diminished engagement (Seaton, Neblett, Upton, Hammond, & Sellers, 2011). According to Grieg (2003), identity is connected to a positive self-concept and high self-esteem, which correlates to high achievement. However, according to Lewis-Coles and Constantine (2006), when students struggle with their identity, they develop coping styles and exhibit behaviors that can be perceived as oppositional in a school setting.

According to Ogbu (1978), there are three types of oppositional beliefs that impact academic achievement in Black students: oppositional instrumental beliefs, oppositional relational beliefs, and oppositional symbolic beliefs. American students who maintain oppositional instrumental beliefs pursue alternative routes to success instead of an academic
route. Students who hold oppositional relational beliefs are disconnected from the school system. Generally, these students have a strong distrust towards their White teachers and administrators and view the rules, norms, practices, and procedures in the White organizational system as being against their personal beliefs; additionally, these students distrust the teachers and do not feel that their White teachers understand and support them. Finally, oppositional symbolic beliefs manifest as a “them” versus “us” belief system, where Black students compare their school behaviors and attitudes to the behaviors and attitudes of their White counterparts whom they perceive as different from them.

As a result, going to school, studying hard, and achieving academic success are not desirable to some Black males who do not associate schooling with success. According to Majors and Mancini-Billson (1992) Black men learned long ago that the classic American virtues of thrift, perseverance, and hard work did not give them the same tangible rewards that accrued to Whites. According to the Pew Research Center (2013), the unemployment rate for Blacks is nearly twice that of Whites. Additionally, Black men earn about 70% what White men do (Urban Institute, 2013). According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), one of the main reasons Black students do poorly in school is because there is a disconnect between effort and success.

According to Gosa and Young (2006), there are growing concerns that some Black youth are adopting identities that eschew working hard in school and shun high achieving Blacks as betraying what some Blacks perceive as what is means to be a real Black. Ogbu and Fordham’s (1986) acting white theory suggests that the lack of academic achievement in Black males can be attributed to a negative assessment of the opportunity structure, distrust in the school system, and labelling positive school behaviors and attitudes as inauthentic and “acting white.” Consequently, Black males are lured to the streets and the images of successful Black athletes,
rappers, and movie stars because they believe that a career in sports or entertainment are the only ways in which they can achieve success. Unfortunately, for some Black males, the idea of upward mobility and school are not synonymous and one is not required to have the other. These dreams of stardom are oftentimes unattainable and end up deferred.

In American society, education is considered to be essential to upward mobility (Edmund, Edmund, & Nembhard, 1994). Students are taught that if they study and work hard in school, they will earn good grades, go to college, and be successful. This message is not limited to just White and Black students in high SES but to all students. According to Griffin and Allen (2006), the value of hard work, perseverance, and patience is taught in schools every day. However, this message is contrary to what is taught in the streets. Hip hop music, music videos, gangsta films, hip hop magazines, and television programs featuring hip hop artists have provided Black youth, as well as youth and young adults of other ethnicities and class levels, opportunities to be exposed to street-related norms, roles, and activities (Kitwana, 2002).

Additionally, technological advances, mass media advertising, internet, television, and radio have all aided in the dissemination of Black popular culture and have functioned to glorify and reinforce urban street culture, particularly among those Black males who are most vulnerable to pursuing social recognition in the streets (Oliver, 2006). The images and values that young Black males see perpetuated in mass media are many times the only images they see of “successful” Black men; therefore, they aspire to be what they see. Unfortunately, in their everyday lives they do not see positive, professional Black male roles models to show them a different way.

The Silent Problem: The Achievement Gap
Over 60 years ago, school segregation was ruled unconstitutional and schools were ordered to integrate, allowing equal access to education for Blacks. Although a change has come six decades later, the issue of inequality in today’s schools is still a problem. Though there is widespread recognition of inequality in schooling between and among racial, social class, linguistic, and gender-based groups of students, efforts to remedy these inequalities have in general failed (Castagno, 2009). For example, there has been federally mandated legislation aimed at addressing the current school inequalities and the achievement gap, such as the school desegregation program and court-ordered busing of Blacks students into segregated White schools. Though these programs succeeded in opening up equal access to schooling, they have not solved the problem of educational inequality. However, they have at least brought national attention to the issue of the educational crisis amongst Black males in this country.

The Impact of Race on Academic Achievement

There are age-old traditions and norms in education that are based on a cultural system of White superiority, prompting ideas that link White students with certain academic behaviors (Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005). In fact, because of the legacy of racism, schooling is problematic for Black students, particularly those students attending predominantly White schools (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). These students’ academic achievement is oftentimes negatively affected by feeling culturally alienated, being physically isolated, and remaining silenced. Black students, specifically students from high SES, have lots of cultural capital and bring with them a plethora of experiences, ideals, and practices that are invalidated when they enter their White school world. When these students feel alienated, isolated, and insignificant, they tend not to identify with school and thus underachieve.
The Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) aims at exploring the educational experiences of Black students to understanding the true impact that ethnicity has on education and to develop practical solutions that schools can use to accept, value, and incorporate those experiences into the curriculum. For this research, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) worked with eight teachers in a small (less than 3000 students), predominantly Black, low-income elementary school in Northern California. The teachers who participated in the study were identified by the parents of the students who determined through their personal experiences and the academic and personal experiences of their children that these teachers cared and excelled in their profession. The criteria the parents included were respect by the teacher, student enthusiasm toward school and academic tasks, and students’ overall attitudes toward themselves and others. The list of teachers was then cross-checked by a list generated by principals and other teachers. The principals’ criteria for excellence included excellent classroom management, student achievement as determined by standardized test scores, and personal observations of teaching practices. Nine teacher’s names were on both lists, and only eight agreed to participate in the study.

The study was conducted in four phases and included ethnographic interviews with teachers, observations, and videotaping of teachers, and the final phase required the teachers to work together in a collaborative effort to analyze and interpret each other’s teaching styles. The parents provided vital information for the researchers regarding their children’s classroom experiences based on comparisons of teachers and how well their children performed with specific teachers. The teachers were able to reflect on their teaching practices and see first-hand how their interactions with their students influenced their learning. Through the interviews, the researcher was able to identify what was important to the teachers, and the common thread
among the group was that they care about their students and about preparing them to navigate the social structures that exist in our society. They acknowledged many of the social structures in place and were proactive in trying to help their students overcome them. Many gave examples of proactive stances they took to engage in academic practices that were more consistent with their personal beliefs and values. These teachers stood out to the parents, teachers, and administrators, and they excelled because they were able to connect to their students in a way that impacted the academic experiences and outcomes of the students.

Although there are many experiences that Blacks and Whites have in common, the connection this study intends to convey is that the cultural distinctions between Blacks and Whites have implications for academic achievement. Schwandt (2000) suggests that our systems of knowing as implied by social constructivism shows that our interpretations are contextual and informed by shared meanings, practices, and language. This idea is in stark contrast to the way educational systems were created. According to Castagna (2009), one of the major tenets of Critical Ethnicity Theory is liberalism and the belief that at the heart of liberalism is the notion of the individual and individual rights. The belief is that an individual’s rights are of utmost importance under a liberal framework, so rights such as freedom of speech, thought, conscience, and lifestyle are viewed as fundamental and worth protecting at almost any cost. This is just not the case in the field of education. What is protected is the institutional authority and anything perceived as a threat is immediately challenged or considered a problem. According to Jenkins (2006), when compounded with the intense social issues they are facing, the marginalization that Black males experience in the classroom makes the educational arena yet another system that fails to understand and adequately serve them.
One of the goals of Critical Race Theory is to bring the issue of ethnicity to the forefront of the scholarly debate on academics and the underachievement of Blacks. Ethnicity has been shown to impact academic achievement, and the fact is that Black students have competencies in many different areas outside of school that are not recognized by White educators. They have ideals, practices, and beliefs that may be contrary to those of White individuals but they are simply different and not wrong. Accepting these differences as part of the academic discourse and as a means to develop curriculum and instructional strategies and practices to meet the diverse academic needs of these students will help in closing the achievement gap. The recognition that students from different cultural backgrounds have a different set of ideas and interpretations of learning based on their personal experiences is critical to their academic development and an integrated school community.

Shaker Heights Ohio: A Study in Academic Achievement

Although a search for literature on the academic achievement of Black males from high SES netted few results, one controversial study conducted by Ogbu on an affluent school district in Ohio is noteworthy. I am presenting it here in this study because it is the most parallel study geared toward my interest.

Shaker Heights High School is an affluent community in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio, where 32.6% of Black households and 58% of White households have incomes greater than $50,000 a year and where 61% of the community were college educated (Census Report, 1990). The professional, well-educated, highly successful Black parents of this community were looking for answers to the confounding problem of why their children were failing. They, along with the school district, commissioned Ogbu and his team of researchers to find the answers to the problem of why their children who had every possible advantage that the White students in
the community also had nonetheless earned an average grade point average of 1.9 while their White counterparts earned an average grade point average of 3.45.

Ogbu and his team of researchers moved to Shaker Heights for nine months, reviewing data and test scores as well as observing students in classrooms and interviewing students, teachers, and parents. From the findings, Ogbu identified that the problems the Black students in the affluent community were having in school were not due to racial discrimination or lack of resources which had previously been found to contribute to the underachievement in Black students from low SES (Ogbu, 1978). Ogbu proposed that their problems were due to a lack of intrinsic motivation and lack of parental involvement, which he claimed were cultural issues. Essentially, he blamed the students and their parents for their failures. Although Ogbu’s (1978) findings are considered harsh by many, the controversy is that the conclusions he made were based on the responses of the students and not on any comparison studies. He did not perform any comparative research on White families and students from Shaker Heights, and therefore many parents from Shaker Heights and other researchers determined that his findings were flawed.

According to Goldsmith (2003), these findings did not go over well with the community and school district, and one parent called him the “academic Clarence Thomas.” Clarence Thomas is the first Black Supreme Court Justice, whom the Black community has accused of being a traitor to Blacks. Other researchers and scholars who also disagreed with his findings charged that he was blaming the victim. Asa Hilliard, an education professor at Georgia State University and one of the authors of Young, Gifted, and Black: Promoting High Achievement among African-American Students, states, “Ogbu is just flat-out wrong about the attitudes about learning by Blacks. Education is a very high value in the African-American community and in
the African community.” Lundy (2006) argued that the issue is not that Ogbu did not blame the achievement gap on White racism (although there is plenty of blame to be placed): the concern is that Ogbu failed to address concretely and honestly the cultural question that underlies the achievement gap. Lundy goes on to say,

More specifically, Ogbu fails to acknowledge that Blacks proceed from a legitimate and distinct cultural position, of which Africa is at its center. As a consequence, there are three fundamental flaws in Black students: (a) Ogbu does not think there is a positive Black culture that is worthy of being preserved; (b) Ogbu does not think of Blacks as Africans; and finally, (c) Ogbu blames the victim by underplaying racism and making unfair comparisons. (p. 461).

Although Ogbu’s findings suggest that the problems of student underachievement and failure in Shaker Heights were due to many factors, he ultimately stood by his findings that the Black students were failing because of “The Norm of Minimum Effort: they didn’t want to do the work” (Ogbu, 2006). Ogbu also said that the kids whose parents are doctors and lawyers are not thinking like their parents, and they do not understand what their parents had to do to be successful. They are looking at rappers in the ghettos and entertainers as their role models (Page, 2003).

While many researchers have challenged the Shaker Heights study and the incendiary remarks made by Ogbu have been considered harsh and insensitive, the study has some merit. It is one of a few studies that focuses on Black students in high SES and puts a spotlight on parents and society and the key role they play in the academic achievements of students. Though affluence does have an impact on academic achievement, this study suggests that it does not guarantee academic success. It is important to examine the key factors of success in Black and
White students from high SES that contribute to academic achievement so that those factors and be reproduced in other school systems and with other students. Many of the college-educated parents of Shaker Heights moved to the community to provide their children with one of the highest academic experiences possible. Albeit controversial, this study also suggests that learning does not occur by osmosis alone. It suggests that in order for students to have high academic achievements, they must have a vested interest in school, study, do homework, and prepare for tests. Based on the interviews of the students, many of the Black Shaker High School students were not academically successful because they did not try. They admitted that although there were other factors that impacted their overall academic achievements, they ultimately acknowledged that they possessed the skills and had the ability to be successful. However, they simply did not work hard or try to earn good grades. Although this is a reasonable conclusion to make, the Ogbu study falls short because it does not explain or identify the factors or reasons why the students are disengaged and fail to achievement at a high level. This is especially the case when one considers that they possess the necessary skills, opportunities, and resources to succeed.

It is easy to blame the academic achievement gap on racism or racial discrimination because clearly both of these causes have been substantiated as having serious implications on the academic achievements of Black students. For the last 60 years, the discourse has focused on identifying the problems associated with the achievement gap. Arguments have been made, studies have been conducted, and the findings have been reported. What is known is that there are specific and significant factors that impact academic achievement in Black students, males specifically. The stories of these students, combined with a CRT framework, can be a valuable tool for initiating conversations about the racial experiences of youth and can provide valuable
knowledge for those working towards greater racial justice within educational contexts (Rolon-Dow, 2010).

As this research suggests, there are external factors that impact the academic achievement of Black students, such as SES, school funding, and school attendance. Unfortunately, educators would find many of these factors difficult to combat. However, two factors that can be controlled are as follows:

1. The message Black students receive in school.
2. The support that Black students receive in school.

If Black students are going to excel academically they must believe that they can excel in school. They should hear this message from both parents and teachers throughout all stages of learning. Schools must also have role models in the school systems that look, talk, and act like them. If not, schools have to provide learning environments that acknowledge and accept the cultural disparities that exist between White and Black students and use those differences to create an educational system that works for Black students as well as White students.

The achievement gap between Black and White students has been at a critical level since it was first acknowledged decades ago. The factors have changed very little; the same issues that were relevant to the academic, cultural, and personal development of Black students are still relevant today. However, today, academic institutions have the knowledge and resources that can move this issue forward.

Although there is plethora of research presented in this study that has identified multiple variables that impact the academic achievement of Black students, the decades long academic achievement gap persists. One solution is to explore the issue of self- efficacy. Self-efficacy, as explained by Albert Bandura (1977), is an individual’s willingness to attempt, persevere, and
ultimately be strong enough, when the occasion demands, to stand on their own in social and academic endeavors for the duration of their existence. In essence, the way Black students perceive themselves as students and learners has an impact on their academic achievements. Student’s beliefs in their efficacy to regulate their own learning and academic attainments contribute in turn to scholastic achievement both independently and by promoting high academic aspirations and pro-social behavior and reducing their vulnerability to feelings of futility and depression. Their perceived social efficacy to manage peer pressure towards detrimental conduct also contributed to academic attainments but through partially different paths of affective and self-regulatory influence (Bandura et al., 1996).
Chapter 3 Methods

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether an academic disparity continues to exist between Black and White students by comparing their academic outcomes, then by examining the perceptions that both groups have about their academic experiences and the cultural factors that likely impact their academic success. The review of the literature suggested that although students from high SES do achieve at a higher academic level, Black males from high SES encounter many of the same issues, concerns and obstacles to academic success to those of Black students from low SES. Consequently, these impediments to learning impact their academic achievement. Although the academic experiences and opportunities of Black males from high SES may be different from those of Black males from low SES, the fact remains that they continue to underperform when compared to their White counterparts.

Research Questions

1. Do Black males who attend an affluent high school and have similar socio-economic backgrounds have similar academic outcomes as their White peers?

2. Do students who did not qualify for free/reduced lunch and attend an affluent high school have similar academic outcomes as students who pay full price for lunch?

3. Do the perceptions of Black males who attend an affluent school differ from those of their White peers?

4. Do the number of years of district enrollment of Black males in an affluent school district increase their academic achievement when compared to their White peers?
This study explored the relationship between SES, race, and test scores. Although the theories presented in the literature review are supported by research, few address the academic disparity that exists between Black and White males from an affluent community and school organization. Furthermore, the relevant literature does not provide insight into the causes of the academic achievement gap between Black males from high SES and their White counterparts.

Sample

Buchanon Public Schools Corporation is located in Hamilton County, which has the 2nd highest per capita income in the state of Indiana. Additionally, this affluent suburban school district has a median household income of $120,000 and a total enrollment of 15,000 students. The corporation has one high school that serves the entire city: Buchanon High School (grades 9-12), which has a total student enrollment of 4500 students. The student body is made up of 50% male students of which 14% of these students are minority; specifically, 3.5% of the total high school student population is Black students. The survey was administered to ninety-three 10th-12th grade students. Forty-four students identified as Black and 49 identified as White. The students in this study are all males.

A Likert-type survey was administered to 44 or (47%) of Black and 49 or (52%) of the White male students, in grades 10-12 between the ages of 15-19. The population of African-American males at BPS was small (3%), therefore all Black males in grades 10-12 were intentionally pulled from the school data. Due to the smaller population of Black students, I attempted to recruit as many students as possible; therefore, I: (1) sent letters home to parents by mail, (2) delivered letters to students during their SRT classes and, (3) personally handed out letters inviting the Black students to participate in the study during passing periods. From the 67 Black students who were eligible to participate in the study based on basic school demographic
information, 44 students returned their consent forms to participate which is approximately a 66% response rate.

The White students were selected based on their Student Resource Time class (SRT) otherwise known as study hall. The SRT classrooms are mixed with grades 10-12. SRT classrooms were chosen because every student in the building has an SRT. In order to recruit as many White students as possible, I sent parent consent forms (See Appendix B) to the SRT classes, followed up with phone calls and personal visits to SRT classrooms to solicit participation. I also handed out parent consent forms during passing times to White students in the hallways. As an incentive for participating in the study, all participants were offered a donut after completing the survey. From the approximate 120 consent forms sent out to White students, 49 students returned their consent forms which is a response rate of 41% with a total survey response rate of approximately 49%.

Measures

A main focus of this study was to examine the perceptions of Black and White students about school and how those perceptions impact academic achievement. In order to address my research questions, I used quantitative methods by accessing data from Buchanon High School (2013-14). I examined the grade point average; English End of Course Assessment or ECA; Math End of Course Assessment or math ECA; and subsidized lunch status, a proxy for SES, for each group.

Organization of the Data

This study utilized quantitative research methods to gather descriptive information and to examine the relationships among variables. The variables were measured and yielded numeric
data that was analyzed statistically. I administered the survey to male students who agreed to participate in the survey during Student Resource Time (SRT).

The student survey elicited information regarding perceptions about school and academic achievement, and was administered to Black and White males in grades 10-12. The goal of the survey was to determine if there are differences in perceptions about school and academic success in Black and White students that impact their academic achievement. The questions focused on the students’ perceptions about the high school climate and their feelings about whether they “fit in” related to whether they feel they are accepted by teachers, administrators, and students. The survey required students to answer questions about their interactions with teachers and administrators in the buildings, and whether they feel that they are treated fairly by teachers and administrators compared to other students. The survey also required the students to answer questions regarding their academic experiences and achievement at Buchanon High School. Questions focused on how much support the students felt they received in school and at home. Finally, the survey asked them to answer questions regarding their own involvement and effort in school.

Data was collected from a variety of sources. I analyzed student achievement as defined by math and English ECA and demographic data collected from the school database. The survey examined the similarities and differences in the perceptions of Black and White students regarding their academic experiences and how their perceptions may or may not impact their academic outcomes.

**Definitions**

**Free or reduced lunch:** This indicator represents the number of children receiving free or reduced price lunch at school. To receive a free meal, household income must be at or below
130% of the federal poverty threshold. To receive a reduced price meal, household income must be at or below 185% of the federal poverty threshold.

**Ethnicity:** Ethnicity is a discrete, nominal variable that is separated into two categories: White and Black. In the study, 50% of the participants sampled are White/Non-Hispanic students and 50% are Black students. The students disclosed race on their survey.

**ECA (End of Course Assessment):** Measurement of student achievement in the areas of English/language Arts, Science, and math. These are criterion referenced assessments developed specifically for student completing their instruction in Algebra 1, Biology 1 or English 10. Biology 1 is a 9th grade level assessment and 9th grade students were excluded from this assessment.

**Grade Point Average (GPA):** An indication of a student's academic achievement, calculated as the total number of grade points received over a semester. Grade point average and cumulative grade point average are calculated to represent numerically a student's quality of performance.

**Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using the following methods: analysis of variance (ANOVA), T-Test, and chi-square test.

1. A series of one-way ANOVAs with three levels to the independent variables was used to see if significant differences were evident in the two groups’ perceptions of the survey items.

2. A one-way ANOVA was used with 2 outputs (GPA and ECA). A series of ANOVAs were used after the formation of composite variables (constructs) grouping together multiple items from the survey.
3. A T-Test was used to compare the survey responses from the two groups, White male students and Black students, to discern difference in the responses from each group.

4. A Chi-square was used to understand if there is a relationship between race, SES, and academic achievement.

In this study, quantitative procedures were used to investigate the impact that personal perspectives have on the academic achievement of Black and White males from high SES in grades 10-12. What this study tests is if there are specific cultural factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males from high SES. Data that was used in this study was obtained from students from the sampled school during the 2013-14 school year. The student perceptions survey elicited information regarding perceptions about school and academic achievements and was administered to students. The students participating in the study used their student identification numbers to link their ID numbers to their responses in order to identify the responses of the Black males. I examined the survey responses of these students and compared them to their actual academic achievement patterns and SES to identify the implications of SES and academic achievement. An analysis was conducted on the variables that impact academic achievement.

Instrument

An adaptation of a “level of impact type survey” instrument created by The New York 2012 family survey was administered to both groups of students to analyze their perceptions about their academic achievement. The students responded to each item on a four-point Likert scale (from 1=disagree to 4= strongly agree). The 34 items on the survey were grouped by like items into 5 composite variables (constructs), and Cronbach’s alpha was used to test for reliability. The composite variables are as follows: school success, participation,
talking/communicating, assisting, and encouragement/support/self-efficacy. The mean scores and standard deviations for each of the 34 items were analyzed for the students, using bar charts to depict the difference between the students’ responses and the perceived impact on student achievement. Comparisons of the results for the survey were made to identify trends across the groups.

In order to test the reliability and validity of this survey, I utilized the following procedure: group like items (composite variable) among the 36 items. This process was used so that all 36 items could be analyzed, and a consensus could be reached on where each question best fit in terms of participation, school success, talking/communicating, assisting and encouragement/support, and self-efficacy. Although a few items could have been placed in more than one group, a panel of experts reached a consensus.

**Pilot Study**

The students were asked to respond to 34 items on a questionnaire that was developed based on the literature review in this study. A pilot test was conducted to assess the content validity and items selected of the questionnaire. A panel of experts, consisting Buchanan High School principals Dr. John Newton, Amy Skeens Benton, John Williams; Buchanan School Corporation Director of Student Services, Dr. Steve Dillon, and Phillip Helman; Ball State University professors Dr. Joseph McKinney and Dr. Serena Salloum were used in the pilot study. All of the educators who reviewed the survey had extensive knowledge of survey instruments and had knowledge of the research behind student achievement. The results of the pilot study provided guidance for the item pool and content validity. Items were retained, deleted, and modified based on the pilot study.
Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study of the students at an affluent high school was to examine the perceptions that Black male students have about their personal school experiences and academic achievement compared to their male White peers. Additionally, this study looked at the cultural factors that may impact academic achievement in order to identify possible relationships that exist between race, wealth, and academic success. This chapter reports the findings of the statistical analyses described in Chapter Three.

Sample

A Likert-type survey was administered to 93 Black and White male students, in grades 10-12 between the ages of 15-19. The survey was administered to forty-four Black students (47%) and forty-nine White students (52%). The population of African-American male sample at BPS was small (3%); therefore the Black males in grades 10-12 comprised the pool of subjects for the study. These student’s names were intentionally drawn from the school data. Due to the smaller population of Black students, I attempted to recruit as many students as possible; therefore, I: (1) sent letters home to parents by mail, (2) delivered letters to students during their Student Resource time classes and, (3) personally handed out letters inviting the Black students to participate in the study during passing periods. From the 67 Black students who were eligible to participate in the study based on school demographic information, 44 students returned their consent forms to participate, which was approximately a 66% response rate.

The White students were selected based on their Student Resource Time class (SRT) otherwise known as study hall. The SRT classrooms at the high school are mixed with grades 10-12. I chose SRT classrooms because every student in the building had an SRT. In order to
recruit as many White students as possible, I sent parent consent forms to the SRT classes, followed up with phone calls and personal visits to SRT classrooms to solicit participation. I also handed out parent consent forms to selected students during passing times to White students in the hallways. As an incentive for participating in the study, all participants were offered a delicious donut for completing the survey. From the approximate 120 consent forms sent to White students, 49 students returned them to me. This constituted a response rate of 41% White students with a total survey response rate of approximately 49%.

Analysis of Data

Descriptive Statistics by SES

In this study of students from an affluent high school, I examined the grade point averages (G.P.A.) of the participants in order to determine if there was a statistical difference in G.P.A between the Black and White students who receive free/reduced lunch and students who pay full price for lunch. These data are in Table 4.1. I also examined the free and reduced lunch status for each demographic group to determine if there was a statistical difference in the grade point averages, ECA math and ECA English scores for students who qualify for free or reduced lunch and those students who do not. The results from each analysis are presented in Table 4.2.

The first data analysis focused on the free/reduced and fully-paid lunch status of the students in this study and is used as a determinant for high and low SES. There were 44 total Black students who participated in the study, and fourteen of these students or 31% received free/reduced lunch. Twenty eight or 63% of the Black students, did not receive free/reduced lunch. Out of the 49 White students who participated in this study, only five students or 10% of these students had a free/reduced lunch status. Forty-four or 89% of the White students had a fully-paid lunch status. Consequently, reliable data analysis comparing SES for each racial group
could not be conducted due to the low number of students who received free and reduced lunch. However, the data did suggest that even in a high SES community, there are still differences in SES by race.

The next data analysis correlated SES and student achievement as measured by End of Course Assessment and GPA. There was no overall statistical difference in the GPA between the Black and White students that participated in the study. For Black students, the overall GPA of the students represented in this study was a 2.73, while it was a 2.89 for White students. However, there was a difference in the GPA when I examined SES or the lunch status for each group.

The data from this analysis suggested that students with a fully-paid lunch status have a higher GPA and scored higher on ECA math and English. The mean score for GPA for students who fully pay for lunch is 2.97 while students with a free/reduced lunch status is 2.25. Furthermore, the mean score for ECA math is 589 for free/reduced lunch while for students who pay for a full lunch the mean score is 672. The most notable difference can be found in the grade point averages for students who have a free/reduced lunch status versus fully-paid. Students who were on free/reduced lunch had a mean score of 2.25 while it was 2.97 for students who paid full price for lunch. This is noteworthy because according to the data from Pinnacle, the online data storage program that Buchanon Public Schools uses, there are more Black students with the free/reduced lunch status than White students.

**Table 4.1 Free/reduced Lunch by Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Fully Paid</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully Paid</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2 Academic Achievement and SES of all study participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Descriptives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Fully Paid</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully Paid</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA - English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Fully Paid</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully Paid</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA - Math</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Fully Paid</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully Paid</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics for Sample Participants by Race

Table 4.3 displays the descriptive statistics by race. Black students underperform compared to their White peers in ECA math and English, and grade point average. In fact, the mean score for Black students in ECA Math was 634 while it was 673 for their White peers (See Appendix C). Additionally, the mean score for ECA English for Black students was 436 and for the White students, 481. A disparity was also found in the grade point averages of these students. The mean grade point average of the Black students in this study was 2.73 while it was a 2.89 for the White students; which is not statistically significant in this sample group. However, when I examined the grade point averages of the males students from each group, the mean grade point average for Black students was 2.7 while it was a 3.3 for the White males overall (Pinnacle data base, 2014).

A final data analysis was conducted on student course taking patterns. A disparity was identified between the numbers of students who were enrolled in advanced placement courses based on race and SES. The results showed that 36% of the Black participants in this study and
40% of the White participants were enrolled in at least one advanced course; this may explain why there is no statistical difference in the grade point averages between each group.

It should be noted that when students take advanced placement and honors courses, they earn additional points toward their grade point average. This impacts GPAs because the maximum GPA for students who do not take AP courses is a 4.0 but for students who take honors and AP courses it can be as high as a 5.0 based on a 4.0 scale. This is important to note because AP courses are worth more points than the general education courses and fewer Black students are enrolled in AP courses than White students (Pinnacle data base, 2014).

### Table 4.3 Comparisons of ECA scores and GPA by Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA – English</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA - Math</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>634</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Academic Achievement

In order to determine if there was a difference in academic achievement between the Black and White participants in this study, I conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). I conducted The Levene’s test of homogeneity and it suggests that for GPA ($F(1,}$
89) < 1, ns) and ECA-Math score (F(1, 87) < 1, ns) the Black and White students who participated in this study have similar homogeneity. The data also suggest that SES has significant implications on GPA, F(1, 89) = 15.35, p < 0.001; on ECA-English score, F(1, 87) = 10.32, p = 0.002; and on ECA-Math score, F(1, 87) = 21.58, p < 0.001. Also, the data suggest that there is a statistically significant difference in GPA (F(1, 89) = X, < 1, ns), ECA-English score (F(1, 87) = X, < 1, ns) and ECA-Math score (F(1, 87) = X, < 1, ns) for Black and White students.

The one-way analysis of variance was considered in order to examine the academic achievements and perceptions of Black and White male students regarding their academic experiences and outcomes at Buchanon High to identify if their perceptions correlate to their academic achievement. The Levene’s test of homogeneity was conducted and suggested that (F(1, 89) = 1.23, p = .27; F(1, 87) = 3.70, p = .06; and F(1, 87) = 2.20, p = .14 for GPA, ECA-English score and ECA-Math score respectively) and the results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the ECA math (F(1, 87) = 6.37, p = .01) and ECA English (F(1, 87) = 6.36, p = .01) scores of Black and White students who participated in this study.

**Survey Constructs**

The survey instrument included four constructs: school climate, teacher expectations, parent expectations, and student expectations that may impact student’s academic outcomes. In order to create the four constructs, I examined each question and determined if the question fell under the category of school climate, teacher expectations, parent expectations and student expectations. The pilot study was also used for this purpose. All the constructs illustrate that they are reliable measures, as indicated by the high alpha levels.

**Table 4.4**
Table 4.5 - Survey responses by Group

To compare the perceptions of Black and White students from BHS, I administered a survey that asked specific questions regarding their academic achievement, school experiences, and parental involvement. I analyzed the results by question and also by construct (see Table 4.4 for reliability analysis). There are four factors and overall each one had a strong reliability: School climate has a reliability of .746, teacher expectations has a reliability of .840, parent expectations has a reliability of .834 and self-expectations has a reliability of .844.

Overall, there was very little statistical difference in how the Black students responded compared to their White counterparts on the climate survey (see Table 4.4); however, there were a few responses to questions that showed a statistical difference between the two groups. The data from this survey were analyzed to identify if any relationships exist between the perceptions of Black and White students and student achievement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Climate</td>
<td>.746</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Expectations</td>
<td>.840</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Expectations</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self- Expectations</td>
<td>.844</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 4.5 Survey Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School climate Likert mean score</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel welcome in my school.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The adults at my school look out for me.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent's expectations Likert mean score</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student's expectations Likert mean score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel welcome in my school.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The adults at my school look out for me.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student's expectations Likert mean score</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teachers and adults at my school treat all students the</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When I have a problem in class I feel comfortable talking to teachers or other adults in the school.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.868</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>.786</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If something is bothering me I feel comfortable talking to teachers or adults in the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>.887</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.769</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most students in my school help and care about each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>.601</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>.707</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most students in my school just look out for themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>.550</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.742</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most students in my school are associated with cliques or groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.741</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.743</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are ethnic groups or cliques in my school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.663</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>.597</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students of different ethnicities are treated the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>.624</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inferential Survey Analysis

A statistically significant difference was found in how Black and White students perceived their school culture. When students were asked to respond to statements about their cultural background, “BHS is a good fit for me” (See Appendix A) the mean score for Black students was 2.88 and for White students it was 3.34. Similarly, when both groups were asked if students of different ethnicities are treated differently, there was also a statistically significant difference in how the groups responded. The mean score for Black students was 2.55 while it was 2.83 for the White students.

There was also a statistical difference found in the responses to the question regarding the parental expectations of Black students compared to their White peers. Interestingly, Black students believed that their parents had higher expectations of them academically to the White students. The mean score was 3.71 for Black and 3.50 for White students regarding parental expectations.

There was also a statistically significant difference in how Black males in this study felt about the expectations their teachers had for them, and if they felt their teachers encouraged them to do well in school. The results indicated that 11% of Black students and 0% of White students disagreed with the statement that their teachers expected them to do well in school; while 25% of the Black students in the study agreed with the statement that their teachers expect them to do well in school while 45% of White students agreed.

Impact of Years Enrolled at BPS
Another statistical difference was found in the number of years a student attended BHS, which is important, because the data suggests that the longer a student attends BHS the higher the academic achievement due to high academic expectations that are also displayed in Table 4.3. The Buchanon Public Schools boast a reputation for high academic achievement and excellence has earned district accreditation from AdvanceED, the most rigorous school accreditation organization in the United States (BPS, 2015) and is an International Baccalaureate School (IB) which is recognized globally for high quality academic programs, high teaching standards and high student achievement.

BHS also has a rigorous standards-based curriculum and a comprehensive assessment system to ensure high quality instruction for students. Additionally, achievement data is used to assess student learning on all levels, and monitoring student progress is an integral part of the process. Students who attend BHS schools are exposed to a high quality instructional programming that is aligned from grade level to grade level and designed to meet the academic needs of high performing students (BHS website, 2014). This was important to consider because when students move into BHS they may not be used to the fast paced, rigorous curriculum that is the foundation of BHS academics, which may explain the relationships between length of time, academic achievement, student perceptions.

A chi-square test was used to test if there was a significant relationship between the numbers of years each group attended BHS schools. The results indicated that the White students who participated in this study attended two more years in the BHS school district\[\chi^2(2, N = 92) = 8.97, p = .01\] than the Black students.
Chapter 5

Findings, Implications and Recommendations for Practice, Policy and Research

The goal of this study was to examine multiple factors such as race and SES that are known to impact the academic achievement of Black males. In this study, I examined the academic achievement scores of the students who attended an affluent high school and compared those scores to those of their White male peers. I also examined whether the perceptions of both groups about their academic achievement and educational experiences were similar or dissimilar. Although the results from this study suggest that there is an academic achievement difference between the two groups, the greatest difference was found in the SES-related data. A major limitation of this investigation was the very small sample size (therefore a lack of generalizability). Other limitations will be addressed in “Limitations” (p. 79) and “Implications for Further Research” (p. 91). However, there are serious and far-reaching implications and recommendations for practice, policy and research related to the findings.

Discussion of Significance of Findings

Research Question 1

Do Black males who attend an affluent high school and have similar SES and academic achievement have similar outcomes as their White peers?

Yes. According to the data, there are no differences in academic achievement between groups.

Research Question 2

Do students who qualify for free/reduced lunch (the measure of SES) and attend an affluent high school have similar academic outcomes (as measured by the ECA math and English scores) as students who pay full price for lunch?
No. The results suggest that neither grouped perform as well as their more affluent peer groups. The mean score for GPA for students who had a free/reduced lunch status was 2.25 while it was 2.97 for students who fully paid for their lunch. Similarly, the mean score for students who had a free/reduced lunch status for ECA English score was 404 and for students who fully paid for their lunch it was 474. The mean score for ECA math for free/reduced lunch group was 589 while it was 672 for students who fully paid for their lunch. This is to be expected.

We know that on average students from more affluent schools tend to display higher academic achievement scores compared to students from lower SES schools. Data from this study supports that students with higher SES tend to have higher GPA scores (2.97) compared to students from low SES (2.25) respectfully. They also tend to outperform students from low SES in ECA English and math scores. Students from a higher SES have a mean score for ECA English of 474 while students from low SES have a mean score of 404. Additionally, ECA math scores support this pattern as well; the mean score for students from high SES is 672 while it is 589 for students from low SES. These data do not factor in the time in attendance at this high school, which may have contributed to lower test scores. The effects of this variable should be further investigated.

**Research Question 3**

Do the perceptions of Black males who attend an affluent school differ from those of their White peers?

Yes. There was a predictable, statistically significant difference in the perceptions of students and their peers based on group membership. The measure was a Likert-scale I devised. (See Appendix B, “Students’ Perceptions of School Climate”.) Answers were scored on the
basis of “agreement” vs “disagreement. For example, Item 5, “Given my cultural background BHS is a good fit for me“ was analyzed by race; the mean score for Blacks was 2.88 while it was 3.34 for the White students. Additionally, when the students were asked if students from different ethnicities were treated differently, (Item 21) the mean score for Black students was 2.56 and for White students it was 2.82. These data did not compare time in attendance at BHS; this finding should be further investigated.

Additionally, there was a significant difference in how the SES groups responded to the survey questions. When asked Question 5, “Given my cultural background, BHS is a good fit for me,” the mean score for lower SES students who had a free/reduced lunch status was 2.789 while it was a 3.22 for students who fully paid for their lunch. When these students were asked if students from different ethnicities were treated differently, there was a statistically significant difference. The students who had a free/reduced lunch status had a mean score of 2.36 while it was 2.79 for students who fully paid for lunch.

There is a high correlation between SES and Black students; therefore the responses may be a product of that difference. Additionally, these items and the findings may be invalid in that they come from a small sample of students who have attended BHS for less time (See Question 5.) The question results reported here to not speak to the condition of “attachment” specifically; therefore, these chosen answers do not reflect a level of attachment, a very important factor in student success (See Attachment Theory later in this chapter.) However, the responses of the participants suggest that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of the Black and White students who participated in this study.

Implications of Race
What we know is that race and culture are important factors to consider when examining the academic achievement of African Americans. The Critical Race Theory (CRT) was first used to identify and explain the educational inequalities in education. One central idea behind CRT is that racism is a natural part of American culture and the inequalities that exist in society is based on racism and discrimination. This is an important issue in education because although educational attainment for all, regardless of race, is a guarantee under the law, however, educational equality is not.

According Ladson-Billings (1994), cultural relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes. Essentially, culturally relevant teaching is about acknowledging the backgrounds, knowledge and experiences students bring to the classroom. Culturally relevant teaching is difficult at best because although over half of school aged children are minority children, over 80% of the teaching force are Caucasian women who according to research presented in this study lack cultural awareness.

This is impactful because schools continue to have the same decades old operational practices, norms, and routines that do not consider the changing demographics of the United States and of our school populations. CRT is a theoretical framework that attempts to explore the inequalities that exist in society today in an effort to better understand the relationships between race and education. Although there are five tenets of the theory, one that I would like to explore further is the permanence of racism.

When examining the population of minority students in public schools today, what is obvious and a glaring issue is the fact that the racial makeup of the educational staff does not reflect the population of students in the building. This is important to note because although
hiring African American males to teach the African American students might seem like a simple solution, it is a complex issue. Research suggests that minority teachers have positive implications for minority students (Bone, 2011). According to Bone, minority teachers serve as role models for African American students and minority teachers may have a greater opportunity to influence minority students and improve their academic success.

**Research Question 4**

Does the academic achievement of Black males differ from their White peers at an affluent high school?

Surprisingly, there is only a minimal difference. In this study there was a slight difference in the academic achievement scores of Black males and their White peers. According to the results, the GPA of Black students was 2.7 while it was 2.89 for the White students. The mean score for the ECA English for Black students was 428 while it was 448 for White students, and finally the mean score for ECA math for Black students was 621 while it was 654 for the White students. These data suggest that the quality of the education at this school and the length of time in attendance in this school may have enabled similar academic performance to be similar among groups. (See Question 5). Additionally, these data do not explore the relationship between required, high-stakes testing mandated by NCLB (2001) and the teachers’ possible “teaching to the tests” to ensure good test results. (See more in “Implications for Research. P. 91).

**Research Question 5**

Does the number of years of district enrollment of Black males in an affluent school district increase their academic achievement when compared to their White peers?
Yes. Another statistical difference was identified by the number of years a student attended BHS, which was important because the data suggest that the longer a student attended BHS, the higher their academic achievement, perhaps due to higher academic expectations. The Buchanon Public Schools boast a reputation for high academic achievement and excellence and has earned district accreditation from AdvanceED, the most rigorous school accreditation in the nation.

The results of the descriptive analysis suggested that on average, White students have attended BHS schools for 8.0 years while Black students attended BHS schools for 6.14 years. Based on the data, there was some evidence to support that the number of years a student has been enrolled in BPS is important. Additionally, this difference between the numbers of years students attended BPS also seem to have impacted their ECA scores. It is unclear why, or in what ways. White students who have attended more years in BPS have higher ECA scores than Black students who have fewer attendance years in the district. The results indicate that for the White students the mean score for the ECA Math is 673 and the mean score for the ECA English is 481, while for the Blacks the mean score for the ECA math is 634 and the mean score for ECA English is 436. These measures are not statistically significant. This may be a spurious correlation.

**Limitations**

Limitations of this study include the following:

1. This sample size was small and was limited to male students who attended Buchanon High School and my investigation was an attempt to measure the different perceptions among the Black and White young men.
2. There is the potential risk of non-response errors and a low response rate due to the limited sampling group.

3. Another problem was the issue of researcher bias. To some degree this was unavoidable, as Black educator, I have thoughts and opinions regarding student achievement with regard to minority students, especially the academic issues facing Black males. I tried to be objective and accept the findings and the results of the study. Chapter Five enabled me to suggest the study’s implications and ideas for future research.

4. To address this issue, I requested that people of diverse cultures and experiences participate on my expert panel to ensure that my survey questions were not biased or leading in any way. I should have picked a widely-used instrument to measure students’ school perceptions. That would have ensured greater reliability and validity.

**Implications for Practice: Knowledge and Application of Attachment Theory**

Cohen (2005) suggests that the social emotional development of children is based on their personal experiences, ability to express emotion appropriately, and the ability to attach securely with others. These findings speak to the importance of “attachment” in the lives of students. The survey “Students’ Perceptions of School Climate” (Appendix B) was intended to assess students’ levels of attachment; however, other measures could be more informative.

Although research presented in the literature review suggests that race and culture are important factors to consider when examining the academic achievement of Black young men, according to the results of this study, regardless of race, SES has more negative implications than race or culture. According to copious research, low SES is associated with lower academic achievement, poverty, poor health; and consequently, these factors may affect the classroom
behaviors and overall academic performance of students while high SES is associated with high academic achievement (Reardon, 2009, 2011, Jensen, 2009). The environment in which students grow up and what they are exposed to from infancy are high determinants of their social-emotional development (Saudino, 2005).

Pre-service and in-service teachers need to be exposed to and to understand the practices and implications of attachment theory. Next to the home, the school is the second most impactful agent of socialization. Bowlby’s attachment theory (1969) is a framework for understanding the complex relationship between the social-emotional relationships that children develop with their parents and others over time. This theory suggests that the essential bond that children form with their parents from birth determines whether they will have a secure and attached personality or insecure and unattached personality. This is important to note because additional research suggests that social competency and secure attachment play a vital role in the academic success of students (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Bowlby, 1969; Jensen, 2009; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004). School impacts social competency, feelings of attachment vs. alienation, and so many other developmental attributes.

According to Main and Soloman (1990), insecure attachments are commonly associated with low SES, abuse and stress, which additional research has associated with lower academic outcomes for students (Bergin & Bergin 2009; Jensen, 2009). Psychologists have identified four types of attachment: secure, insecure/avoidant, insecure/resistant, and insecure/disorganized-disoriented (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Main & Solomon, 1990). While each of these types have specific descriptors and are part of a continuum of behaviors, the secure attachment style is associated with higher SES and academic achievement while the insecure attachment style is associated with low SES and lower academic achievement, because many children who live
lower SES conditions, especially poverty, experience emotional and social uncertainty regularly due to multiple factors (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Jensen, 2009). Jensen (2009) also proposes that the lack of connectedness between students and teachers may be due to the emotional and social deficits these students possess and any behaviors and responses to situations that teachers may perceive as inappropriate. Pianta and Steinberg (1992) suggest that the relationship that students and teachers form is critical to academic success and can be compared to the relationship that the student has developed with his/her parents and can be secure or insecure based on the experiences.

Bergin and Bergin (2009) posit that security of attachment is a predictor of academic success because securely attached children are associated with positive behaviors, strong relationships with family and peers, and academic success while insecurely attached children struggle with behaviors and developing relationships of trust with others and struggle socially and academically (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Bowlby, 1969; Jensen, 2009). Bergin and Bergin (2009) also suggest that school is a social agency and that attachment impacts academic success indirectly through parents and directly through teachers and schools.

Hamre and Pianta, (2001) propose that when teachers connect with students in a positive way they nurture a supportive space where students can engage academically and socially and positive teacher student relationships are associated with closeness, warmth and positivity. Stright, Gallagher and Kelley (2008) propose that students who have secure attachments with parents and a social competency are more cooperative, interact well with teachers and students and have more academic success; while insecure children are less socially competent, struggle with developing friendships with their peers and have lower grades and test scores.
Research has demonstrated that schools have an influence on the academic achievement of students from pre-k through 12th grade (Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008; Blum, 2005; Sylva, 1994). Therefore, in order to close the academic achievement gap that continues to plague our public school systems, schools must be intentional and purposeful in how they choose to respond to the academic achievement gap. Essentially, schools must target the populations of students who underperform and provide additional instruction, support, and resources to make sure they have the necessary academic skills to succeed.

The research presented in this paper suggests that security of attachment may be a predictor of academic success and that the relationships that students form with their parents will determine the relationship that they form with their teachers which consequently impacts their academic experiences. Although school success can be attributed to several key factors, Kennedy and Kennedy (2004) propose that the development of a positive teacher-student relationship may be the most essential factor for academic success; especially for students from a low SES or insecure attachment. Additionally, Kennedy and Kennedy (2004) suggest that teachers may be the only positive adult role models these students have who provide students support and nurture in them a positive self-image and relationships with others.

However, according to researchers, if teachers are going to provide this type of support they must understand how impactful the relationship they establish is with students; especially difficult students (Howes, Phillipsen, & Peisner-Feinberg, 2000); how impactful all interactions with students are on their relationship and classroom behaviors (Pianta, 1999), and perhaps the most important, how a student’s behavior mirrors their relationship experiences and deficits and how well they deal with stress (Howes & Ritchie, 1999).
According to Jensen (2009), there are six emotional responses that every person possesses such as: sadness, joy, disgust, anger, surprise, and fear and all other responses must be taught. In order for students to be successful in the classroom, they must be taught cooperation, patience, embarrassment, empathy, gratitude, and forgiveness which are essential to a socially competent classroom. It is the job of the parent to teach these responses to their children; however, if they do not, it becomes the job of the classroom teachers and all who touch students’ lives in school. Jensen also says that there are specific strategies that schools and teachers can use to teach these responses and build social competency in students. The first step is to create a culture of respect.

Additionally, Jensen (2009) proposes that insecurely attached students do not understand what respect is or how to show it so the best way to teach respect is to model what that looks like to students. He suggests that teachers share the decision making in class, avoid direct commands, and instead maintain high expectations while allowing students to make choices and providing input, avoid using sarcasm, model adult thinking, and try to establish a positive relationship with students prior to disciplining them. Jensen also suggests that teachers start with practicing meet and greet skills and says that teachers should start with having students work on introductions to each other by facing each other, making eye contact, smiling and shaking hands when appropriate; taking turns, saying thank you, and implement a research based social-emotional skill building program in the early grades.

A final suggestion from Jenson (2009) for teacher practice is to create a familial environment by using inclusive and affirmative language. For example, always refer to the school as “our school” and “our class” and avoid using language like me and you that may lead to a power struggle; acknowledge students who are present in class and thank them for small
things; celebrate effort and achievements, praise students for reaching milestones and reaching goals, and make sure to have mini celebrations and acknowledgements daily.

Research presented in this section suggests that there is an association between attachment relationships and academic success. When students are securely attached to the adults in their lives whether it is a parent or a teacher, they will be socially competent, have higher academic grades and test scores, and positive relationships with teachers and peers. When students are insecurely attached, they will struggle with making connections with others and will struggle academically because of the social nature of schools. This is important because insecure attachments are associated with low SES and in order to support students from low SES, schools must address one of the identified factors which is insecure attachments. In addition to practical teaching changes, it is time for educational policy changes.

**Implications for Policy: Residency Advantage in Schooling**

Over the last four decades, studies have found a strong relationship between concentrated school poverty and low achievement (Orfield & Lee, 2005). These studies show that there is a discrepancy between the academic scores of students who attend high achieving schools and those students who attend low achieving schools. According to Orfield and Lee (2005), low achievement scores are strongly linked to school racial composition; and schools where the majority of the students who attend are minority are almost always high poverty schools. Additionally, these schools tend to have fewer highly trained and qualified teachers, have a less rigorous curriculum, and lack resources. Studies have also shown that students who have highly qualified and experienced teachers tend to have higher achievement scores.
Education has been called the key to future success, the great equalizer, and the pathway to the American Dream. However, for some students, the dream of a quality education that should be the key to the American dream eludes them because they come from a low SES background and attend a school that is underfunded and lacks many resources that are needed for them to be academically successful (Jensen, 2009).

**Inclusionary Zoning Programs**

Neighborhoods must be realigned and districts be differently integrated if we are going to demand that schools be heterogeneous and multicultural. One policy change that would dramatically impact schools and the academic success of low SES students is to require a state inclusionary zoning program in affluent locales with high performing school systems. This program would mandate that real estate developers build rental properties and offer homes for sale that are below market prices so that low-income families can afford to live in affluent areas and send their children to high performing schools. Research has shown that schools with large populations of low SES students underperform when compared to schools with smaller populations of low SES students (Schwartz, 2010). Additionally, Schwartz also posits that the academic success disparity between high and low SES schools has not decreased over the last decade and in fact, it is higher than the academic achievement gap between Black and White students. An inclusionary zoning program will give low SES children the opportunity to attend high performing schools. One successful example of how inclusionary zoning programs can work for the school systems and the families is in Montgomery County, Maryland.

For example, Montgomery County, Maryland is one of the most affluent counties in the nation. In fact, ninety-five percent of its residents live above the poverty line compared to eighty-five percent nationally (Schwartz, 2010). What is unique about this county is that based on
zoning laws, low income families are able to afford housing within the affluent subdivisions because the public housing authority purchases a third of the land in each subdivision and builds low income housing that these families can afford. This is impactful because the students must attend the school that is within their attendance zone; consequently, low income students attend the same schools as middle and high income students because they live in the same attendance zone.

Schwartz, who examined the school performances of about 900 low income students who attended Montgomery County schools for seven years, found that the students who attended the most affluent schools had better academic outcomes in math and reading than those who attended low-income low performing schools. Schwartz (2010) also found that the low income families who took advantage of this housing opportunity had more stable housing patterns and on average stayed in their homes for eight years which meant that their students were not exposed to many high poverty experiences. This research supports that there is a relationship between the length of time a student lives in a stable environment and his/her academic outcomes.

According to Rothstein and Santow (2012), recent research also confirms that integration not only benefits black students but also does no harm to white classmates, provided the concentration of disadvantaged children is not great enough to slow the instructional pace or deflect time from academics to discipline. When children who have strong educational backgrounds and experiences make up a strong classroom majority, all students benefit from the academic culture established by that majority. To reorganize the current education system and close the achievement gap it is imperative to examine the issue of *residential segregation* and how it impacts the academic outcomes of minority students. In order to make lasting and meaningful reforms, we must start with residential housing.
The 1966 Coleman report concludes an amazing finding: the school based variable that has the greatest impact on school performance is the socio-economic composition of the school. Additional research supports that poor children perform even better when they live in an affluent area (Schwartz, 2010). According to Schwartz (2010), children from low SES who live in neighborhoods where more than eighty percent of the elementary population was middle to high SES significantly outperformed students from a similar low SES and lived in neighborhoods with a greater population of SES. Research indicates that there are gross inequalities in school funding and the schools that serve the neediest students receive the fewest resources (Baker & Corcoran, 2012). In order to address these inequalities, we must also reform school funding.

Reforming School Funding Policy

Baker and Corcoran (2012) explain that local revenues fund school systems, which are primarily based on a school system’s capacity and preparedness to raise tax dollars for its schools. Basically, property or income is higher in more affluent school systems and lower in high poverty school systems. Consequently, poorer school systems struggle to raise money than more affluent systems to provide additional resources or to make school improvements. The basic problem for high poverty school systems is that the money that is allocated to them is based on the amount of money the community has and can generate and not based on student need.

According to Baker and Corcoran (2012), each state has a school finance system that is comprised of state and local funds that are allocated to schools. This system is very complex because different school systems may be funded by additional local income or county level taxes that are allocated to the school which is where the inequalities come into play. High poverty
school systems receive more state funding because they raise less in local revenues while low poverty school systems receive less state funding because they raise more in local revenues.

While the goal of state funding is to make up for any funding differences that local public school systems may experience due to the lack of generated revenues, a disparity in school funding continues to plague our school systems (Baker et al, 2012). Consequently, children from low SES backgrounds continue to be denied access to high quality educational opportunities and experiences because they are forced to attend underfunded and poorly resourced schools.

Change needs to occur at the state level. According to Smith and O’Day (1990), change at the state level is critical because the state sets policy and policy interventions that influence all aspects of the system. The state provides coherent leadership, resources, and influences all parts of the k-12 system: curriculum and curriculum materials, teacher training and licensure, assessment, and accountability efforts for the entire state education system. To that end, state institutions must (a.) Provide legislation for funding reform that protects and ensures equal access to equal educational experiences for all. (b.) Provide equal funding to schools based on academic needs. States agencies should (c.) Provide state level district and building audits that determine how much money school districts need and receive. These audits should identify the schools with the most needs and monies should be distributed according to need and (d.) State agencies should give low-income schools the necessary finances to purchase equipment, resources, hire and train teachers and staff, and perform maintenance on buildings; while high achieving schools should be provided with funds to support the programs and educational experiences they already have in place. Essentially, high poverty schools would receive more funding and high achieving schools would receive enough money to maintain their programs.
Although the redistribution of funding may seem like an obvious solution to the issue of education inequality, there are political and economic challenges to consider.

**Educational Policy: Give Voters a Chance for Real Change**

In order to for the government to redistribute funding to public schools, there simply has to be support. In our democratic society, there has to be collective decision and the people have to vote for funding reforms. The problem is that financial inequality is a way of life and is imbedded in the basic fabric of our lives; there are the rich and poor, and the haves and have nots. The expectation is that the rich will have more and the poor will have less; and this idea transfers into the educational arena. In order to address the inequitable funding in the school systems and provide equal educational experiences to all students, there has to be a redistribution of funding. The poorer achieving school districts must receive more funding than high performing affluent school districts to ensure that the students have the similar resources, qualified teachers, and course offerings. Although a difficult proposition to sell, essentially, the rich would have to agree to pay more but receive less, and the poor would pay far less and receive far more. An issue that arises is that families invest in, pay higher taxes and live in certain communities because there are benefits to living in those communities; such as free quality education. Redistributing funds to make the educational experiences and outcomes more balanced for all students from all walks of life may seem like an obvious solution; however, it would also make an already inequitable system even more inequitable and problematic.

Addressing these practical issues alone and providing funds to ensure and meet the basic needs of students will have a direct impact on overall student outcomes. If the intention is to continue to provide adequacy of support for students, school districts will continue to be inequitable and provide unequal educational experiences for students. Students in poorly funded
schools will continue to underperform while students from higher funded schools will continue to have higher quality resources, experiences and achieve at higher rates. In order to create a more equitable public school system, not only must there be changes in school funding but in residency as well.

In order to provide equal educational opportunities to students and really level the playing fields, the way that states allocate funds to school systems must change. States must have a progressive funding program to meet the educational needs of the most disadvantaged students. If school systems received funding based on need, they could provide the necessary resources for students to be academically successful. The public must be given a chance to approve genuine, equitable educational reform.

**Implications for Further Research**

Although there is a lack of research on Black students who attend affluent and suburban public schools, Ogbu’s book (2003), *Black Student in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement* examined the academic achievement of Black students from an upper-middle class suburb and compared their achievements to those of White students in the same school. Ogbu found that there was an academic disparity between the two groups in academic assessment scores, course level enrollment, grade point average, high school graduation, and college attendance. Though Ogbu attributed much of the academic disparity to the lack of academic effort and concern to the Black students, the data presented in his work also indicated that there are systemic factors that must also be considered.

The goal of my dissertation research was to explore into the factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males by comparing them to those of their White peers, in relation to SES, academic achievement and their perceptions of school climate. Data presented in
this study show that although there is slight different in the academic outcomes between the Black males and their White peers, in this study agrees with many others that there is an even stronger association between SES and academic achievement as measured by GPA and standardized test sub-scores.

Although the purpose of my study was to examine the academic outcomes of Black males from an affluent high school to compare them to their White peers, the data did not answer fully my research questions. Therefore, additional research needs to be done on the subject. To that end, I suggest many recommendations for future research investigating school disparities between Blacks and Whites, or all underrepresented groups, who attend affluent high schools:

1. Further similar research should use a standardized measure of perceptions of school climate. A widely-used assessment would likely have more items, more categories, and have been tested for reliability and validity through wide use with various populations.

2. A case-study or other qualitative methodology could include student and teachers voices. Statistics show patterns, but this sort of investigation needs student and teacher voices.

3. If the study were qualitative, additional measures of academic achievement could include reports of teacher assessments of students.

4. New research with similar problems to study should include women to compare differences in responses by sex.

5. New research could include districts that include Latino/Hispanic students.

6. New research could include disabled/physically challenged students: those with IEPs.

7. The results from this investigation suggest that it not be replicated; instead, the literature review should be expanded to suggest the disparities by using additional achievement measures, different student groups and the possible effects of pressures from mandated
standardized testing to “teach to the test” which may explain closer test scores of the two targeted groups.

**Conclusion**

This study is only a beginning. My Chapter Five enables me to be theoretical, based on my study’s findings. The sample and data in this study are not sufficient enough to make every finding conclusive, yet the data does show educational realities. However, I propose that the data presented in this study suggest that there is herein evidence to support that the perceptions that these different students have about their school, their personal experiences and the school culture, negatively impact their academic achievement. Though the sample is small, the study demonstrates that there is a disparity in the SES status, academic achievement and the perceptions about school between the Black and White students in this study. The findings are broadly generalizable due to the support in the literature review. In many ways, this inquiry speaks to many real educational disparities among “racial” groups of male high school students – all underrepresented K-12 students—that should not persist in 2015.

During different historical periods, well-though inequitable policies such as Jim Crow thwarted the Civil War amendments supposed to ensure “equal protection under the law.” *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1869) made education in America “separate but legal:” *Brown v. Board* (1954) decided that school segregation should end “with all deliberate speed.” These litigations challenged the role of government in regards to public education, the protection of all citizens’ rights, and forced the governing bodies to create legislation that ensured that public education was accessible for all; albeit, these litigations did not ensure that the educational experiences were equal. Essentially, throughout the history of this country, when there is educational
inequality, it has taken a government intervention to remedy the inequity and enforce educational reforms.

However, sadly, until true education reformers become policy makers who should replace the elite policy makers who often have no credentials in education and know nothing of children and schooling but think more testing will benefit “underrepresented “groups, and until the federal, state and local governments study and enforce policies that ensure “equal education for all,” considering gender, “race,” class, dis/ability and age, dreams will be deferred.

NB: The categories of “Black and White” are outdated, according to the APA style manual. Therefore, I follow APA guidelines and refer to my subjects as Black and White (2010, p. 75).
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Appendix A

**Study Title**  “What Happens to a Dream Deferred? A Study in the Academic Achievement of Black Males from High SES”

**Study Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this research project is to examine the factors that impact the academic achievement of African American students. Findings from this research may help educators understand why the academic achievement gap persists between White and Black males.

**Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

To be eligible to participate in this study, your child must be between the ages of 14-17 or a sophomore, junior or senior in high school and a male student.

**Participation Procedures and Duration**

For this project, your child will be asked to complete a survey about his academic experiences and achievements. It is a 36 question survey and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

**Data Confidentiality or Anonymity**

All data will be maintained as confidential. The students will report their student identification numbers as part of the coding system for analysis.

**Storage of Data**

Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office for three years and then be shredded. The data will also be entered into a software program and stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer for three years and then deleted. Only Dr. McKinney, my supervisor and advisor at Ball State University and I will have access to the data. After 3 years, the paper data will be shredded and data stored onto a software program will be erased.

**Risks or Discomforts**

The only anticipated risk from participating in this study is that your child may not feel comfortable answering some of the questions. Your child will be informed during the assent process that he or she may choose not to answer any question that makes him/her uncomfortable and he/she may quit the study at any time.

**Who to Contact Should Your Child Experience Any Negative Effects from Participating in this Study**

Should your child experience any feelings of anxiety, there are counseling services available to you through The Carmel High School Counseling Department.
Benefits

One benefit your child may gain from participating in this study may be a better understanding of how they perceive their academic achievements and experiences.

Compensation

For completing this survey, your student will be offered a donut.

Voluntary Participation

Your child’s participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this Parental Permission form and at any time during the study.

IRB Contact Information

For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.

Study Title  “What Happens to a Dream Deferred? A Study in the Academic Achievement of African American Males from High SES”

**********

Parental Consent

I give permission for my child to participate in this research project entitled, “What Happens to a Dream Deferred? A Study in the Academic Achievement of African American Males from High SES”. I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my permission for my child to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

___________________________________  __________________
Parent’s Signature  Date

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator:  Faculty Supervisor:
Melita Walker Graduate Student  Dr. Joseph McKinney
Department of Educational Leadership  Department of Educational Leadership
Ball State University  Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306  Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone: 765-285-8488  Telephone: (765) 285-8488
Email: mjwalker@bsu.edu  Email: JMCKINNE@bsu.edu
Appendix B

**Students’ Perceptions of School Climate**

Describe your study and let respondents know that their participation is voluntary and that their data is confidential.

**Demographics**

Age: __________________________________________________

Ethnicity: __________________________

Student ID#: __________________________

Years in the Buchanan School Corporation: __________________

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**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel welcome in my school</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The adults at my school look out for me</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The teachers and adults at my school treat all students the same</td>
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<td>4. Given my cultural background, CHS is a good fit for me</td>
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**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about being successful at your school?**

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<th></th>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly</th>
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<td>Agree</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>The adults at my school help me understand what I need to do to succeed in school</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I need to work hard to get good grades at my school</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Students who get good grades at my school are respected by other students</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>My teachers expect me to do well in my classes</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>My teachers are available to me when I have questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>My teachers encourage me to do well in school</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>My teachers expect me to continue my education after high school</td>
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</table>

**How comfortable are you talking to teachers and other adults in your school about:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>When I have a problem in class I feel comfortable talking to teachers or other adults in the school</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>If something is bothering me I feel comfortable talking to teachers or other adults in the school</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Teachers in my school treat students with respect</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>My teachers inspire me to learn</td>
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</table>
16. My teachers connect what I am learning to life outside of the classroom | 〇 〇 〇 〇
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. Most students in my school help and care about each other</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Most students in my school just look out for themselves</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Most students in my school are associated with other cliques or groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. There are ethnic groups or cliques in my school</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Students of different ethnicities are treated the same</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. My parents are really involved in my education</td>
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<td>23. My parents care about my grades in school</td>
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<td>24. My parents expect me to go to college after high school</td>
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<td>25. School is a priority in my home</td>
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<td>26. Both of my parents have college degrees</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. At least one of my parents has a college degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. Neither parent has a college degree</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29. I care about school</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I care about my grades</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. I feel included in my school</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. I feel accepted in my school by teachers, administrators, and students</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I participate in school activities (dances, clubs, groups, games,)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. I know what I want to do after graduation</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. School is preparing me for my future goals</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I plan to attend college after high school</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

**Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SchlYrs Including this</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>6.837</td>
<td>3.9510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school year, how many</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>years have you attended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel Clay Schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.P.A</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>.4706</td>
<td>4.2161</td>
<td>2.821915</td>
<td>.7652351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EnglishECAScore</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>460.18</td>
<td>87.173</td>
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<tr>
<td>English ECA Score</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MathECAScore</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>655.39</td>
<td>74.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math ECA Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CulturalBckgrnd</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.130</td>
<td>.6666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given my cultural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>background, CHS is a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good fit for me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DifEth Students of</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.707</td>
<td>.6553</td>
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<tr>
<td>different ethnicities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are treated the same.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

T-Test – Comparing Ethnicity for measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Statistics</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>What is your Ethnicity? (1= Black, 2= White)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SchlYrs Including this school year, how many years have you attended Carmel Clay Schools?</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5.721</td>
<td>3.5478</td>
<td>.5410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7.816</td>
<td>4.0603</td>
<td>.5800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.P.A</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.737643</td>
<td>.6677807</td>
<td>.1030408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.894149</td>
<td>.8399592</td>
<td>.1199942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English ECA Score</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>436.24</td>
<td>74.448</td>
<td>11.488</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>481.57</td>
<td>92.770</td>
<td>13.532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math ECA Score</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>634.39</td>
<td>63.687</td>
<td>9.946</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>673.33</td>
<td>79.414</td>
<td>11.462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Bckgrnd Given my cultural background, CHS is a good fit for me.</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.884</td>
<td>.5859</td>
<td>.0894</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.347</td>
<td>.6630</td>
<td>.0947</td>
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<tr>
<td>DifEth Students of different ethnicities are treated the same.</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.558</td>
<td>.6656</td>
<td>.1015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.837</td>
<td>.6241</td>
<td>.0892</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix E

**Independent Samples Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sch'yrs</td>
<td>5.509</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>-2.618</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-2.642</td>
<td>89.999</td>
<td>.010</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.P.A</td>
<td>1.225</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>-.972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.990</td>
<td>88.532</td>
<td>.325</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA Score</td>
<td>-2.554 86.051 .012 -45.336 17.750 -80.623 10.05</td>
<td>-0.123 86.681 .012 -38.943 15.166 -69.109 -8.777</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CulturalBck</td>
<td>5.559 .021 -3.529 90 .001 -46.32 13.133 -7.240 20.244</td>
<td>-3.557 89.994 .001 -46.32 13.023 -7.219 20.455</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DifEth Students of different ethnicities are treated the same.</td>
<td>3.016 .086 -2.071 90 .041 -2.786 .1345 -5.458 .0113</td>
<td>-2.062 86.668 .042 -2.786 .1351 -5.471 .0101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>