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African American Students' Experiences, Achievement and Outcomes; Examined through the Lenses of Teacher Expectations, Racial Congruence and Stereotype Threat

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AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES, ACHIEVEMENT AND
OUTCOMES; EXAMINED THROUGH THE LENSES OF TEACHER
EXPECTATIONS, RACIAL CONGRUENCE
AND STEREOTYPE THREAT

by

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AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES, ACHIEVEMENT AND OUTCOMES; EXAMINED THROUGH THE LENSES OF TEACHER EXPECTATIONS, RACIAL CONGRUENCE AND STEREOTYPE THREAT

Carla Postell, Ed.D.

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The phenomenological study examined the retrospective perceptions of academic experiences and outcomes of 13 African American full or part-time college students enrolled in either a community college or university located in an urban area. For the purpose of this study, educational experiences are defined as self-reported academic achievements and perceived success levels attained by participants during high school. Academic outcomes are the self-reported academic achievement and success level attained at their colleges and universities. The researcher interviewed participants, using a one-on-one interview process to conduct the interviews.

This study examined influences of race congruence between students and teachers. This topic was studied to determine if students find that being taught by a person who is of the same or different race influences their educational experiences and outcomes. African American college students' retrospective appraisal of the role that teacher expectations, teacher-student racial congruity, and stereotype threat played in their high school education, guided this study. Findings from the participant interviews produced four major themes: perceptions of teacher expectations, stereotypes, stereotype threat, and racial congruence.

Examining this concept gives educators the opportunity to understand how African American students view their educational experiences and the role these theories plays in students' academic outcomes. Results from the present study provide data to better understand the achievement gap and how to bring closure to the gap, helps educators and policymakers reset their perspectives and priorities as they relate to African American students, encourages and suggests the implementation of diversity training programs and curriculum as they relate to African American students, and reflects teacher expectations and perceptions of African American students.

Recommendations for further research include: (a) examining how teacher expectations, racial congruence, and stereotype threat, as they relates to African American students, might be impacting the achievement gap, (b) conducting a longitudinal research design to extend the study by following students throughout college to graduation to determine how racial congruence between instructors and students in college influenced their college outcomes, and (c) using a mixed-method research design to study a multicultural group of students (e.g., Black, White, Hispanic, Asian) and teacher racial congruence.

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my mother for teaching me faith and perseverance and to my father, although you did not get to see me complete the task at hand, remembering your words of encouragement and support helped me stay strong and get to the finish line.

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Carla Postell

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Going from being "one of many" to being "the only one" is how I best can describe my academic experience. In my early years, I recall having classmates and teachers that looked like me. I witnessed and lived this experience from kindergarten through fourth grade. During this time, I attended a private school in Detroit where accelerated academics and character building was a major focus of the academic program. All of my teachers were African American, as well as all of my classmates. I cannot recall ever feeling anxious, left out or having to prove a point.

This situation changed when my family made a move to the opposite side of the city. With this move, came a major change in what I understood to be the typical school environment. When I entered fifth grade, my world changed.

No longer did I have faces that looked like mine in front of the classroom or even sitting in the desk next to me. No longer was I part of "one." I was now part of "the only one" bunch. I was one of four African American students in my class. In the new school, all teachers were White, and only a handful of other African American students were distributed among the grade levels. At this time, I was attending a K-8 Catholic school in a Detroit suburb. Reflecting on this experience from a social point of view, I do not recall any major problems or issues either in the school through participation in extracurricular activities or in my neighborhood interacting with friends. However, I do recall my first experience with negative teacher perceptions and low teacher expectations. Based on this experience, I believe my world began to change.

As a fifth grader, I loved to read. I entered fifth grade with this passion for reading due to the accelerated reading program at my prior school. Because of this passion for reading, I considered myself to be a pretty good reader. My grades and standardized test scores supported my opinion. Nonetheless, my fifth grade teacher and school principal perceived my abilities differently (if they could see me now as an English teacher working on a dissertation). They believed I was reading below grade level, was holding the class back, and would do better in a lower level reading class. In addition to recommending this lower level reading class, they suggested that my mom should have me tested in reading to make sure that there were no serious problems taking place.

Of course, my mom was furious with this recommendation, as I was always a good reader, scored well on reading tests, and received multiple awards in reading at my former school. At this young age, I was unaware of what was happening, but my mom knew there was something larger in this situation. To appease the teacher and principal, and to ensure that my reading skills were at grade level, my mom had me tested and evaluated by a psychologist and a reading specialist. As expected by my family, my reading scores were up to par. In fact, they exceeded the fifth grade level. Because of this ordeal and my mother's belief that oftentimes as an African American you must work twice as hard to be considered knowledgeable, she paid for a tutor to ensure that I would always remain ahead of my classmates. As a fifth grader, I was unaware of what was happening, and I did not realize the impact that this experience would have on me psychologically and academically in the future.

In the seventh and eighth grades, I was still in a school environment where I was part of "the only one" bunch. During seventh and eighth grade, I was one of three African

American students in my class and I stood alone as the only African American female. I now attended a neighboring Catholic K-8 school that was similar in program and culture to the school I attended in fifth grade. My previous K-8 school had closed due to declining enrollment. Again, I do not recall many social issues or constraints, but I do recall feeling intimidated, with a need to prove myself "right" at all times, or else I and perhaps the other two Black students in my class, would be perceived as failures. I did not realize it then as I do now, but my fifth through eighth grade experiences, at a time when much molding and shaping of my self-esteem and self-concept were being established, set the tone for my future educational experiences.

When I entered high school, the environment was similar to the previous K-8 schools, as they fed into the Catholic high school. My fear of not knowing enough and the fear of possibly living up to negative stereotypes placed upon the African Americans followed me to my Catholic High School. Due to family financial constraints, I had to leave my private Catholic high school and enroll in one of the city's top three magnet high schools. I had some fears about attending this public school, as I had never attended a public school in all my years of education. However, to my surprise, I adjusted fairly well in this new environment. Though my environment was much different from my previous schools, I was no longer one of only a few African American students in my class or school building. I still felt apprehensive and intimidated. I still questioned if "am I good enough." I constantly second-guessed my knowledge and skill base even though I had honors classes, was in the National Honors Society, received scholarship money to attend college, and was accepted into every college to which I applied for admittance. This anxiety almost caused me to decide not to attend University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

because I thought I was not smart enough to attend such a university and would not be successful at such a competitive institution. Two degrees later from University of Michigan (i.e., Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts), I now understand how those years of beliefs about my teachers' perceptions and low expectations that I felt the teachers had for me (especially my fifth grade teacher and principal) had an impact on my educational experiences.

As an undergraduate at University of Michigan- Ann Arbor, I continued to feel anxious when I attended many of my classes. My anxiety was based on a fear of being viewed as a negative stereotype of the African American student. I was the only African American in many of my classes. The pressure was on me whenever I spoke in class to ensure that I did so in such a way that disproved the negative stereotype of African Americans. This anxiety was especially true because of perceptions that many African Americans were believed to have been admitted to the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor due to affirmative action laws.

With these academic experiences under my belt, I am now working as a teacher with African American students in an academic setting with student and teacher racial congruence similar to my educational experience after fifth grade. I let my experiences academically, personally, and professionally motivate my interests in this study.

Justification of Research

Research Problem Statement

The achievement gap between African American and White students at the high school level has been attributed to many causes, such as sociocultural factors, motivational differences, and teacher expectations (Booker, 2006; Farkas, 2003; Farrell

& Erwin, et al., 2007; Graham, 1994; Henfield & Moore, et al., 2008; Michie, 2007; Parsons & Travis, et al., 2005; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Russell, 2005; Singham, 2003; Steele, 1992). The literature has moved away from single-factor or inherent racial or ethnic explanations for the gap, and has started to focus on dynamics of the school systems. As a result, two major constructs have been studied that are believed to have a major influence on African American student achievement: teacher expectations and teacher-student racial congruity (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006; Bondy & Ross, 2008; Carter, 2006; De Leon, 2006; Jamar & Pitts, 2005; Kyburg & Hertberg-Davis, et al., 2006; Lane & Wehby, et al., 2006; Love & Kruger, 2005; Olson, 2008; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005; Rubie-Davies, 2003; Singham, 2003; Wentzel, 2002). In the early 1990s, Steele (1998) could not explain why African American college students continued to score lower on standardized tests when all other factors were equal (that is, all students had similar high-quality high school educations and came from higher-income backgrounds; Altermatt & Kim, 2004; Aronson, 2004; Brown & Dobbins, 2004; Cabrera, 2006; Osborne, 2007; Osborne & Walker, 2006; Seiler & Elmesky, 2007; Steele, 1998). African American students may be dealing with stereotype threat, which was defined as African American students who perceived that their performance levels might confirm negative stereotypes, they underperformed. This theory has received considerable attention in the literature, enhancing its power. To determine the extent to which these factors are perceived by African American college students to have limited their education in high school, studies of student perceptions were reviewed. These studies verify that while teacher expectations can impact their education negatively, teacher-student racial congruity and stereotype threat present more complicated scenarios (Brown

& Dobbins, 2004; Dolan, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005; Henfield & Moore, et al., 2008; Kaufman, 2006; Marx & Stapel, 2006; Mason & McFeetors, 2007; Smith & Hopkins, 2004). Published research is lacking when the idea of race is added as a factor in the student-teacher dyad. The influences of race congruence between students and teachers has not been examined to determine if being taught by a person who is of the same or different race influences educational experiences and outcomes. Research is needed on the retrospective appraisal of African American college students regarding the role that teacher expectations, teacher-student racial congruity, and stereotype threat played in their high school education.

Research Questions

The primary research question that guided this study is:

What influences do teacher perceptions and expectations have on African American student perceptions of their educational experiences including academic achievement, and academic outcomes, when examining their experiences through the lens of (a) teacher expectations, (b) racial congruence, and (c) stereotype threat?

The following sub-questions served as research questions as well. They are as follows:

1. Do African American students have different perceptions of White teachers' and African American teachers' expectations of them? Who contributed more positively? How did they contribute more positively? (teacher expectations and racial congruence)

2. How do African American students feel based on their African American teachers' perceptions and White teachers' perceptions of them as students? (racial congruence, teacher expectations and stereotype threat)

3. Do African American students feel pressured to fight a negative stereotype? If so, does it affect their performance? (stereotype threat)

Practical Problem Statement

Although a body of literature and research focuses on teacher expectations and its influence on academic achievement, in this study I took the relationship between teacher expectations and academic achievement one step further. This study asked students to look back at their high school teachers' expectations and reflect on how those experiences impacted their academic experiences and outcomes. Examining this concept could give educators the opportunity to understand how African American students view their educational experiences and the role it plays in their academic outcomes. I also studied student perceptions of teacher practices, expectations, and the influence they can have on academic achievement and outcomes. Last, the results from this research can (a) provide data to better understand the achievement gap and how to bring closure to the gap, (b) help educators and policymakers reset their perspectives and priorities as it relates to African American students, (c) encourage and suggest the implementation of diversity training programs and curriculum as it relates to African American students, and d) reflect teacher expectations and perceptions of African American students.

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine the retrospective perceptions of the academic experiences and outcomes of 13 African American full or part-time college students enrolled in either a community college or university located in an urban area. For the purpose of this study, I operationally defined educational experiences as the self-reported academic achievement and perceived success level

attained by the student during high school, and academic outcomes as the self-reported academic achievement and success level attained after high school.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Overview

Claude Steele's *stereotype threat* served as the theoretical frame for this study. Steele's (1992) stereotype threat suggested that when students are in situations where they perceive that a stereotype regarding their ability will come into play-such as when a Black student is taught by a White teacher, they tend to perform based on the ability they perceive the person posing the threat believes them to perform. Steele (1992) believed that the stigma of devaluation that Blacks face in our society and schools play a major role in the academic success of African American students. He asserted that this theory is its own condition of life and is different from class, money and culture. Steele stated that, "despite their socioeconomic disadvantages as a group, Blacks begin school with test scores that are fairly close to the test scores of Whites their age. The longer they stay in school, however, the more they fall behind" (p. 68). At every academic level, regardless of the level of academic preparation, African Americans achieve less than their White counterparts do. Steele believes that this finding has to do with the process of identifying with school. Because Blacks have been stigmatized as poor learners, many feel that they have to work very hard to succeed and prove themselves as capable in each classroom setting they encounter. This is not to say that students of other racial and/or cultural groups do not or should not work hard, however this theory is emphasizing the mental and emotional processes that Black students experience due to the stigma that has been placed upon Blacks in society. Because of this constant type of strained mental and emotional stress, one's self-esteem can easily become very low. For this reason, many

Blacks pull away from the world of academia, thereby putting their educational experiences and outcomes at risk in order to protect their self-esteem. This is type of interaction with schooling is what Steele believes leads many Blacks to not being able to identify with school.

African American Students and Self-Perception

This study also incorporated an aspect of psychology due to the fact that data pertaining to how one perceives him or herself or others were used to answer the research questions that guide this study. In psychology terms, self-perception and self-concept both are defined as one's belief about oneself (Omrmrod, 1995, p. 90). According to Campbell-Whatley and Comer (2000),

> Self-concept includes self-image, self-esteem and attitudes toward self. It is shaped and molded by a person's unique experience in an interactive system that includes the family and its primary social network of friends and kin and meaningful organizations. (p. 19)

As stated by Kuykendall (1989), self image is the way people view themselves. Children's self images develop from how they think important adults in their lives perceive them. For this reason, understanding how students perceive their self-image can influence the likelihood of academic success. As stated by Gilmore (as cited by Kuykendall), "Students who feel good about themselves and who score high on self-esteem are also the highest achievers. Thus, the development of a child's self-image is perhaps the most important barometer of future success" (Gilmore as cited in Kuykendall, 1989, p. 1, &3). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the terms self perception, self-esteem, self-image, and self-concept are used interchangeably.

Based on the history of African American students education, often times their education is "marked by restricted opportunities, inequitable funding, segregation and

institutional racism" (Holliday, 1985, p. 71). Because of these hardships faced by African American students, many of them have low self-esteem or a low self-concept, especially in comparison to White students that can affect their academic achievement. However, "literature reviews of comparisons of American blacks' self-esteem to American whites' self-esteem show either no significant differences between the races in reported self-esteem or reports of higher self-esteem among African Americans" (Frisby & Tucker, 1993, p. 148). These findings are baffling to the world of academia as it relates to African American students. If African American students self-perception is the same or higher than their white counterparts, then why is their academic achievement and outcomes generally lower. According to Kuykendall (1989), much of this is attributed to the negative experiences many of them begin to face from the majority culture. These experiences create the belief that academic achievement did not benefit them in any way. Academic achievement did not help them face the many hostilities they face from the majority society. At this point, Black students begin to adapt to this belief system by focusing less on their education. This reflects back to the Steele's (1992) stereotype threat theory.

Teacher Perception, Expectation and Attitude and Student Achievement

"Black children's achievement is affected by teachers' expectations, perceptions, behavioral styles, and the type and frequency of their interactions with children" (Holliday, 1985, p. 71). Teacher perceptions, expectations, and attitudes all play a major role in the academic success of a student. Teachers' perceptions (i.e., how they perceive the student), teacher expectations (i.e., what they feel or think the student is capable of doing, and teacher attitudes (i.e., how they interact with the student based on their

perceptions and expectations) all impact student achievement. Teachers' attitudes and expectations can influence classroom climate, shape what they teach and how they teach it, and influence student achievement (Graybill, 1997).

Teachers play a major role in shaping the self-image of a child. "Teachers shape a students' self-image either deliberately or inadvertently" (Kuykendall, 1989, p. 2, &3). What teachers say and do on a daily basis plays into the creation of either positive or negative self-images of Black students. "Teachers who have negative attitudes toward their students contribute to the massive educational failure of Black children" (Levy as cited in Kuykendall, 1989, p. 3, &1). However teachers who focus on the strengths and positives to foster high academic achievement among Black students can contribute to improved academic success. According to psychologist, Alvin Poussaint, (as cited in Kuykendall, 1989), Black students need reinforcement. He argued that Black children have a strong need for achievement and approval. When those needs are not met, their self-concept can suffer.

Considerable research has indicated that teachers with positive dispositions toward students can help improve academic performance (Oates, 2003); therefore, this information must be considered when investigating the academic achievement of African American students. Do White teachers and Black teachers have positive perceptions and attitude toward their Black students? The research indicated, "unfavorable teacher perceptions, even if justified by prior performance and other relevant information, may more strongly undermine the performance of African American students" (Oates, 2003, p. 508).

African American students are part of a fragile group that has always been considered inferior academically. Therefore, in a case where the teacher's perception is unfavorable, the weakened academic performance of African American students is nothing more than a self-fulfilling prophecy. For instance, the teacher has low expectations for a student and communicates this perception in numerous ways during classroom instruction. In turn, the student's academic performance is low due to the lack of quality instruction or unfavorable teacher attitude. According to Ormorod (1995), a teacher's expectation leads to teacher behavior that affects student performance and results in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Therefore, in the example discussed above, the teacher's negative perceptions, attitudes, and expectations toward students were fulfilled when students gave low performance back to the teacher.

It is an assumption that an African American student would learn more when being taught by an African American teacher because they can understand each other culturally. However, Ferguson (1998) stated that "all children learn more when their home and school environment are well matched, and same race teachers are better able to provide black students with cultural congruence between home and school" (p.345). This assumption is implied because the research indicates that Black teachers "have higher expectations for and interact more positively with Black students than other teachers, thereby increasing the motivation and self-esteem Black students need to take on the challenge of rigorous coursework" (Klopfenstein, 2005, p. 2). According to King (as cited in Klopfenstein, 2005):

> Black teachers have personal experience as well as institutional
> knowledge that can be particularly valuable for young black students
> making their way through white-dominated society. African American
> teachers are able to communicate with African American students about

the personal value, the collective power and the political consequences of choosing academic achievement as opposed to failure. Such a communication process between African American teachers and students includes African American teachers' ability to involve students in exchanges which help students to become empowered and involved in their own education. (p. 118)

Nonetheless, other studies indicate that there is no relationship between the academic achievement of African American students and White or Black teachers. However, there is a wealth of research that indicates that African American teachers believe that there is more to educating the African American student than substantive knowledge. African American teachers teach about life and why education is important to their, African American students, overall success. As stated by Foster (as cited in Tyson, 2003), "to effectively educate Black students it involves the added roles of "admonisher, urger and meddler. Foster referred to this part of black children's schooling, in which Black educators explain to Black students the "political reasons" for "investing in learning" (p. 13) . Ladson-Billings (as cited in Tyson, 2003), refers to this same concept as the "hidden-curriculum." It teaches African American students the importance of education for them as African Americans in this mainstream society. This hidden curriculum imparts more than substantive knowledge, it teaches African students how to position themselves successfully as minorities in mainstream society without losing their identity. As Delpit (1995) stated, "positioning minority students for mainstream success requires a delicate balance of explanation and affirmation, for with out this balance, there is a danger of sending messages of cultural deviance to students" (p. 40). As Tyson (2003) stated, the African American teacher imparts both the dominant culture to the African American student, as well as affirms their own Black culture. This hidden message in the

curriculum taught by African American teachers provides African American students with stability that can lead to academic success.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

According to Creswell (2003), the use of delimitations are to narrow the topic of study, whereas the limitations are to identify the potential weakness of the study. The limitations in this qualitative, phenomenological study can lend itself to the purposeful sampling procedure.

Because the focus of this study is on a central phenomenon, which is how a group of Black students perceived being taught by Black and White teachers in terms of their academic experiences and outcomes, the conclusions may not be generalized beyond these participants. However, educators may gain insight to how African American students view their educational experiences and the role of teacher-student race congruence plays in their academic outcomes.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature focuses on the perceptions of college students regarding whether or not they experienced positive or negative outcomes from teacher expectations during high school, as well as whether or not they believe they were placed in situations which caused stereotype threat to activate (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006; Bondy & Ross, 2008; Carter, 2006; De Leon, 2006; Jamar & Pitts, 2005; Kyburg & Hertberg-Davis, et al., 2006; Lane & Wehby, et al., 2006; Love & Kruger, 2005; Olson, 2008; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005; Rubie-Davies, 2003; Singham, 2003; Wentzel, 2002). The literature on stereotype threat in particular were reviewed, as the theory continues to garner considerable support as a reason for the achievement gap in high school regimes characterized by standardized testing (Altermatt & Kim, 2004; Aronson, 2004; Brown & Dobbins, 2004; Cabrera, 2006; Osborne, 2007; Osborne & Walker, 2006; Seiler & Elmesky, 2007; Steele, 1998). Finally, student opinions about whether or not they learn better with an African-American teacher are reviewed, as are their views on teacher-student racial congruity. Though Steele developed his construct of stereotype threat using college students, studies of the perceptions of African American college freshman of the degree to which teacher expectations, stereotype threat and teacher-student racial congruity contributed to their having reached college are less common (Brown & Dobbins, 2004; Dolan, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005; Henfield & Moore, 2008; Kaufman, 2006; Marx & Stapel, 2006; Mason & McFeetors, 2007; Smith & Hopkins, 2004). Thus, this

study adds to the body of literature on the role of student retrospective perceptions in determining the validity of these constructs.

Statistics on high school outcomes of African American students remain bleak (Booker, 2006; Farkas, 2003; Farrell et al., 2007; Graham, 1994; Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008; Michie, 2007; Parsons, Travis, & Simpson, 2005; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Russell, 2005; Singham, 2003; Steele, 1992). A recent study found that 59% of African American students graduate from high school and in big cities (i.e., New York and Chicago) 70% of Black students fail to graduate (Michie, 2007). Studies examining why this problem persists indicate that African American students begin to receive differential treatment as soon as they enter school, and this treatment snowballs into a permanent gap. For example, studies find that African American students are "referred to the office for infractions that are more subjective in interpretation" (Michie, p. 5). Most Black students receive harsher punishment than White students for their infractions. African American students are also placed in special education more often, and fail to enter gifted programs at disproportionate rates.

The achievement gap between White middle-class students and Black students is not limited to a particular locale, but is found across all school districts across the United States. Disparities also exist "at all levels of education" (Parsons & Travis, et al., 2005, p. 184). African American children enter kindergarten only able to recognize 57% of all letters, as opposed to 71% for Caucasian children. By the time Black children enter fourth grade, they are two years behind White children, and these gaps "increase as children matriculate through the education system" (Parsons & Travis et al., p. 185). In high school, only 1 in 100 of African American students, versus 1 in 12 Caucasian students, is

able to read and comprehend specialized text. Also, "one in every 10 Euro-Americans compared to only one in every 100 African Americans could easily solve an elementary algebra problem" (Parsons & Travis et al., p. 186). Another study found that most African American students at twelfth grade have "reading and mathematics skills equivalent to those of their Euro-American counterparts in grade eight" (Parsons & Travis, et al., p. 185). Finally, African Americans are half as likely as Caucasians to graduate from college, and in 2001 African American students accounted for only 9% of baccalaureate degrees obtained (Parsons & Travis, et al., 2005). In science, 76% of degrees in science are awarded to Caucasians, with only 7% awarded to African Americans. In general, graduating from college, "only 18 per cent of graduating black students had grade averages of B or above, as compared with 64 percent of the whites," a result that renders a degree "essentially 'terminal'" in the sense that it ends any hope of attending graduate school (Steele, 1992, p. 71).

Socioeconomic Factors

The research acknowledges that the origins of the achievement gap may lie in socioeconomic factors which are beyond the ability of the school system to address. For example, one third of African American children live in poverty, as opposed to 10% of white children. Most African American students attend schools where 50% of the student body is poor, compared to White students attending schools where only 25% of the student body is of low socioeconomic status (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). In 1966, the Coleman Report concluded that the racial composition of the student body was the most important factor in determining a student's achievement level. The report included what is termed the middle-class peer effect that found "the achievement level of all racial and

ethnic groups was higher in schools with higher proportions of White students because of the better educational backgrounds and higher aspirations of White students," (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005, p. 2002) which was the basis of the push for school desegregation. While more recent studies have found these claims to be less than conclusive, educators still claim that desegregation is beneficial for all students, because peers influence students, either creating a "culture of success" or a culture where achievement is not valued (Rumberger & Palardy, p. 2008). Peer pressure also is believed to be a more powerful influence for students with low-socioeconomic statuses (SES), who have less support at home. Schools with large low-SES student populations are more likely to lack basic resources, with student outcomes negatively affected. In their study, Rumberger & Palardy (2005) focused on the causal mechanisms that related student body composition to achievement levels. They found that the composition of the student body still matters to achievement levels, with the SES, not the racial, composition influencing overall student achievement.

The achievement gap may also be related to the fact that urban African American adolescents have to deal with many more daily stressors in life than others, and that the "frequency with which youth witness or experience such events [is] associated with both internalizing and externalizing problems" (Farrell et al., 2007, p. 414). Daily hassles have been found to negatively impact African American youth more than others. Moreover, "experiencing daily hassles have been related to internalizing disorders including anxiety and depression and externalizing disorders including conduct problems and drug use" (Farrell et al., p. 415). The Urban Adolescent Life Experiences Scale and other scales have been developed to measure the overall or "pile up" effect of stressors on African

American youth. Farrell et al. (2007) interviewed middle school-level African American students in Virginia to determine the impact of daily stressors in school on their overall well-being and academic achievement level. In addition to peer and family-related stressors, the students also mentioned unsupportive or untrained teachers, and "being part of a non-need-meeting school environment" as significant stressors in their lives (Farrell et al., p. 439). Students were aware that class-size and supervision problems "interfered with their ability to succeed academically" (Farrell et al., p. 440). Many viewed their teachers as "unfair, incompetent, nonsupportive and not invested in their safety and education" (Farrell et al., p. 451). Because many hassles weaken their interrelationships with others, many students were frustrated by the resulting lack of power they had regarding actions of others and circumstances in their lives. On the basis of these findings, the authors recommended that empowering programs should be established to "enable autonomy, meet their needs and support (youth) in achieving their life goals" (Farrell et al., p. 452).

The Matthew Effect

Disparities in achievement levels between African American and other students have been linked to the Matthew Effect, or the concept that the rich get richer and the poor poorer. According to this concept, "those who develop an early lead tend to increase that lead over time, whereas those who fall behind early tend to fall even further behind over time" (Farkas, 2003, p. 1121). Because some African American children enter the educational system at a disadvantage created by family and social problems, they may, according to this theory, fall behind early, and have difficulty in catching up with their peers. Studies have shown, for example, that even at the preschool level, African

American children have "lower levels of school readiness than do White and Asian children" (Farkas, 2003, p. 1121). One study found that social class differential accounts for "fully three-fourths of the African American cognitive skills gap" (Farkas, 2003, p. 1121). Another study found that because White middle-class families tend to use more words when speaking and have more extensive vocabularies when they speak, children from these homes begin to show increased vocabulary skills as early as 36 months of age (Farkas, 2003). As the years pass, these early disadvantages only increase. A study found that "whereas African American children begin elementary school approximately one year behind Whites in vocabulary knowledge, they finish high school approximately four years behind Whites" (Farkas, 2003, p. 1123). This difference often is because less-demanding curricula are in place in low-income schools, with African American children in these schools actually learning less than White middle-class students in middle and high income schools. Increasingly, African American students become less engaged in school, and an African American student remarked that "my friends make fun of people who try to do well at school" (Farkas, 2003, p. 1127).

In studies of middle school African American student achievement, socioeconomic differences or differences between schools are sufficient to explain achievement level differentials. Research related to middle and high school students has focused on teachers' perceptions and expectations. Study results have shown that "teachers' perceptions, expectations and behaviors probably do help to sustain, and perhaps even to expand, the Black-White test score gap" (Farkas, 2003, p. 1129). The quality of teaching has become a primary concern of researchers attempting to understand problems associated with the achievement gap. Ability grouping, disproportionate grade

retention, equally disproportionate placement of ethnic minorities in special education, and tracking are believed to reflect either prejudicial views or outright misconceptions of African American learning styles by White middle-class teachers. When asking if teacher prejudice plays "at least some role in the limited opportunities to learn experienced by ethnic minority and low-income children" Farkas (2003) answered, "they probably do" (p. 1141). Moreover, while overt prejudice may be declining, covert prejudice in the form of low expectations still linger.

African American Students and College

Once in school, the achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students is explained by a number of theories, all of which have "some element of truth" and thus persist as espoused myths (Singham, 2003, p. 586). One major aspect of the achievement gap is differences in graduation rates and access to college. During the past 20 years, the gap in access to college between Black and White students has narrowed. However, "the gap in degree completion remains 20% or higher" (Singham, p. 587). In examining this issue, SES is less of a factor than academic resources received by students during high school (Singham, 2003). One study supported this point by indicating that "students in the lowest two SES quintiles, but with the highest academic resources, graduated at higher rates than the majority of students in the highest SES quintile" (Singham, p. 587). Singham (2003) concluded that "improving the high school curriculum has a disproportionately positive effect on students from groups that traditionally underachieve" (p. 587). Improving curriculum is even more pertinent in mathematics, where studies indicate that degree completion is directly impacted by how high a student progresses in math. Thus, "finishing a course beyond the level of Algebra

2 more than doubles the odds that a student who enters college will complete a bachelor's degree" (Singham, p. 587). Mathematics may be a key gatekeeper course in terms of access to and completion of college. To ensure that all students are able to complete higher levels of math successfully, "strong implementation" of math reform is needed in schools. When strong implementers establish evidence-based process-oriented mathematical thinking-rich courses, math performance levels increase for all students, with the gap between Whites and underrepresented minorities vanishing. Study results indicated that "it is possible to greatly reduce the gap in mathematics achievement through educational measures that do not directly target the achievement gap" (Singham, p. 589).

Sociocultural Explanations

Researchers have also sought to determine the cause of grade differentials by looking at contextual issues such as identification, engagement, relatedness, and school belonging (Booker, 2006). According to the sociocultural view of education, "students need a sense of community or connection to others in order to maximize student learning, motivation and engagement" (Booker, p. 1). When student perceptions of their teachers reflect support and encouragement of academic success, then the probability of dropping out of school decreases (Booker, 2006). School belongingness in particular has been found to be a predictor of better student grades and higher levels of content comprehension. Booker's study used the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale as well as the Self-Perception Profile for Children Scale to measure the relationship between belongingness and grades, and found a difference in academic self-concept among students who perceived they belonged in school. The relationship between

belongingness and achievement was particularly strong for low-income African American students. At the same time, Booker cited other studies that have found a weaker link between school belonging and achievement levels. He suggested that "by virtue of their minority status, African American students can be more sensitive to environmental incongruence" (Booker, p. 3). If educated in primarily White schools, African American students may begin to suffer from what Booker (2006) termed the identification-connection divide. While they understand the concept of the importance of school, "the specific educational environment in which they are educated may not be conducive to establishing a sense of belonging" (p. 4) primarily because of negative interactions with majority students. The identification-participation model developed by Finn suggested that school belonging can be enhanced by student involvement in extra-curricular activities. High school, however, is exactly that point where students begin to disengage from school and participate less in extra-curricular activities. At this age, African-American urban students often begin to sense that their efforts may not result in better careers and therefore begin to "devalue the importance of schooling and choose to engage in behaviors that are counter to those that result in high academic achievement" (Booker, p. 5).

Teaching Quality

As strong teaching is important to student success, it is troublesome that "Black students receive a disproportionate amount of poor teaching" (Singham, 2003, p. 589). He found that Black eighth grade students are "twice as likely to have teachers who place little emphasis on developing lab skills, four times as likely to be assessed using hands-on activities once or less per grading period, twice as likely to have a science teacher who

does not emphasize development of data-analysis skills" (p. 589) as well as other weaknesses. While noting that teachers are extremely important in the academic success of African American students, family and peer support perhaps are even more important (Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008). While studies have shown that negative attitudes about academic success by peers can cause some African American students to do poorly purposely, this effect appears to be mitigated if students have aspirations to go to college, (Somers et al., 2008). This difference is because "those students with intentions to complete high school are likely motivated to achieve by future possibilities" rather than present circumstances (Somers et al., p. 8). Giving students more personal control over their long-terms plans can enhance positive aspirations to complete high school.

Tracking and other practices also can limit educational outcomes of African American students. Many African American students, when they falter in mainstream curricula, are shifted into a vocational education pipeline where the focus is on learning a trade and manual level training. This practice of tracking African American into vocational education was begun more than a century ago at Hampton Institute by General Samuel Armstrong "who espoused the educational philosophy that African Americans were intellectually and innately inferior to whites" (Russell, 2005, p. 168). Tracking is reinforced by a "contest society" ideology that there has to be winners and losers in society. This way of thinking "demarcates equality as an equality of opportunity, as opposed to an equality of outcomes" (Russell, p. 169) and encourages students to accept this competitive socialization process as a fair and just process between competitors with equal status. Tracking in this context represents a sorting device to direct the "losers" of the contest to lower levels of achievement. Tracking may be responsible for so few

African Americans being prepared to study science in college or enter science as a career. The hidden curriculum of many high schools also posits the ideology that "science and mathematics are White, male subjects" (Russell, p. 171). Teachers contribute to this division of labor by having lower expectations for African American students in science, and offering less encouragement to proceed to advanced placement courses. Studies also indicate that "inadequate career guidance in high school contributes to the underparticipation of African American students in science and mathematics courses" (Russell, p. 173). Teachers often then come to believe negative stereotypes of students and make matters worse by watering down the curriculum. These negative perceptions often are internalized by African American students, who come to think of themselves as not smart enough to take science.

African American Students and Motivation

Other studies have purported to discover a different level of achievement motivation in African American students, primarily a lower level of motivation. The concept of the achievement syndrome, which situated the development of motivation to achieve in how one was raised by one's parents, emerged in the literature on the achievement gap. Parent socialization, parental aspirations and expectations of offspring and parental "perceptions of whether they trained their offspring for independence and achievement" were studied as factors contributing to low motivation among African American youth (Graham, 1994, p. 67). However, these findings were problematized in the 1970s and at present "the evidence for race main effects in the strength of achievement motivation is far from definitive with no study after 1969 documenting unambiguous differences favoring Whites over Blacks" (Graham, p. 69). The theory that

the African American family is responsible for lack of achievement motive has also been disproved by studies which take a less negative view of the African American family. Research has moved on to study how causal beliefs, including locus of control, may impact motivation. While studies appear to find that African Americans are more external than Whites in their locus of control beliefs, Graham, (1994) argued that "the necessary empirical work to examine this question has not been done" (p. 77). The idea that low SES contributes to external locus of control, often tested in the literature, has also produced less than conclusive results. Attributional theory was then used to find more or less adaptive patterns in African American as opposed to White students, with less adaptive attributional thinking roughly paralleling external locus of control, but still with mixed results. "From the locus of control research on generalized causal beliefs, there is only suggestive evidence that Blacks may believe more in external control than do Whites, but there is no clear evidence that this externality has negative motivational consequences" (Graham, p. 94). The same is true for the attributional literature. Graham (1994) argued that, in both lines of research, "there is a need to move beyond racial comparisons of the content of causal beliefs and toward the study of complex sets of relations between perceptions of causality and other cognitive and affective determinants of behavior" (p. 94). Finally, the literature once found that African Americans have less positive appraisals of future success, but recent research "does not support the view that African Americans have negative self-views" (Graham, p. 99). In this area of research, it was also found that persons in stigmatized groups use three different strategies to sustain their positive views, including attributing their failure to external forces such as prejudice, making comparisons with others only inside one's own group, and devaluing

the importance of the area of failure, such as devaluing academics. Even though these arguments have been found to be "compelling," "in truth they find little support in the general motivation literature" (Graham, p. 100). The general motivation literature finds that African Americans attribute success to personal striving, value achievement, and have strong vocational aspirations. Overall, then, the literature which has tried to link the achievement gap to weaknesses in motivation or self-appraisal by African Americans is termed by Graham (1994) as "disappointing" and some other approach must be sought to determine why the achievement gap persists. In reviewing the literature, Graham (1994) argued that the primary problem with this approach may be methodological, in that comparing White and Black subjects may not be a valid way to proceed, ignoring in-group variation and essentializing ethnicity as it does. By contrast, in the study of why the achievement gap persists in education "how people deal with negative feedback from others, relinquished effort, dashed hopes or achievement-related shame becomes a key construct" (Graham, p. 107). Thus it is not race per se, but how race combined with social class develop in complex relations in society that matters. Thus, socialization, treatment of African American students in the system, teacher expectations, teacher-student racial congruity and stereotype threat are important determinants of achievement, not any innate quality in the African American student.

Following on this line of research, Steele (1992) argued that American schooling fails to treat African American students as "a valued person with good prospects" (p. 73). In short, they are stigmatized as poor learners. From his observation of this phenomenon, Steele (1992) developed his theory of stereotype threat, which is the idea that "blacks have the extra fear that in the eyes of those around them their full humanity could fall

with a poor answer or a mistaken stroke of the pen" (p. 74). Adding to this is that Black students learn that because society is preconditioned to see the worst in them, they will have to work hard to succeed, and have to prove themselves again in every classroom they enter into (Steele, 1992). More often, however, in order to protect their self-esteem, African American students will begin to disidentify from the academic domain, and while rescuing their self-esteem undermine their future.

Teacher Expectations and Achievement

Studies have shown that not only are teacher expectations important, but that the impact of teacher expectations is "three times as great for blacks as for whites and also larger for girls and children from low-income families" (Singham, 2003, p. 589). Overall, in numerous studies looking at teacher expectations as early as middle school, high teacher expectations are related to positive student goals and interests, while negative feedback is related to poor performance (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006; Bondy & Ross, 2008; Carter, 2006; De Leon, 2006; Jamar & Pitts, 2005; Kyburg & Hertberg-Davis, 2006; Lane & Cooley, 2006; Love & Kruger, 2005; Olson, 2008; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005; Rubie-Davies, 2003; Singham, 2003; Wentzel, 2002). Wentzel (2002) examined if student motivation was improved when a teacher modeled his or her relationships with students on a parenting socialization model. The primary elements of this model are "warmth, the absence of conflict and open communication" (Wentzel, p. 288). In the study, Wentzel (2002) found that "adolescents' perceptions of parenting styles as defined by Baumrind (1971) appear to be significant predictors of academic performance for European American but not for African American adolescents" (Wentzel, 2002, p. 290). The study also found, with regard to the issue of racial congruity

between teacher and students, that "race did not appear to act as a lens through which students interpreted the type of teacher behavior assessed in this study" (Wentzel, 2002, p. 298).

The Wounded Student

Olson (2008) argued that "reluctant learners are reluctant for a reason" and that the primary reason is that teachers have made wounding comments to them over the years (p. 47). This leads to a vicious cycle by which the student is removed from advanced placement courses, and over time is made into a poorer student. For this reason, Kohl and others posit that "not learning is an expression of positive resistance in a system that does not seem to value them or have high expectations for them" (Olson, p. 47). Olson (2008) argues that "hidden school lacerations" are taken as deeply personal by wounded students and directly relate to their reluctance to learn (p. 48). Thus, "wounding a student's creativity involves not honoring unusual or nonstandard ways of thinking" (Olson, p. 48). As a result, Olson (2008) argued that how schools judge, sort and classify students is one of the primary reasons for reluctance among some students to learn. Removing even unconsciously wounding talk from teacher interaction with students is also necessary. Because so many teachers are unconscious of the fact that they rate and sort in their talk, "simply becoming aware of how they classify and label students in casual language is a first step in ending a cycle of wounding" (Olson, p. 49).

More studies have analyzed the failure of teachers in inner-city classrooms and found that it is linked to their failure to communicate caring to students. As a result, some research is calling for teachers to assume a stance called "the warm demander," which "communicates both warmth and a nonnegotiable demand for student effort and mutual

respect" (Bondy & Ross, 2008, p. 54). It is believed that this stance can work against student academic disengagement. According to the construct of warm demandingness, if the teacher establishes early that they believe students can achieve, even the occasional harsh comment is interpreted by students "as statements of care from someone with their best interests at heart" (Bondy & Ross, p. 55). These teachers adopt a "no excuses" philosophy with regard to schoolwork, and yet offer unconditional positive regard especially when students act up. Warm demanders also "observe students closely to learn more about their idiosyncrasies, interests, experiences and talents" (Bondy & Ross, p. 56). In terms of expectations, warm demanders have high expectations and insist that the students reach their goals. Warm demanders also adopt a mastery style of teaching, in which they seek to connect the curriculum to student interests. One study asked disengaged students why they had lost interest, and many of them reported that they were "bored with the curriculum" (Bondy & Ross, p. 57). While many regular teachers blamed these students for their failures, warm demanders intervened by altering the curriculum to meet student interests. In studies of warm demanding, many examples come from African American teachers with African American students.

Expectations of Social Behavior

Studies of teacher expectations also include teachers' expectations of social behavior in the classroom. Lane & Wehby, et al.(2006) studied teacher expectations of behavior in all grades, finding that high school teachers rated skills assertion as more important than self-control, and that teachers at high-risk schools "viewed self-control and assertion skills as more critical for success than did teachers at low-risk schools" (Lane, Wehby, & Colley, p. 153). Behavioral expectations interact with academics in so

far as teacher emphasis on minimizing disruptions at low-income schools, so that they can focus on lessons, is in contrast to their expectations at high-performing schools, where expectations are "related to maximizing instructional opportunities" (Lane et al., p. 158). "Teachers at high-risk schools may view assertion skills as more necessary to meet their education needs given the tendency for students to enter and leave school at an increased rate and participate in fewer enrichment experiences relative to students at low-risk schools" (Lane et al., p. 165). Lack of resources at high-risk schools may also lead teachers to expect students to be more self-reliant in their education. The study inferred that teacher concerns and expectations regarding behavior may negatively impact pedagogy and learning in high-risk schools.

Expectancy Theory

The theoretical basis for worrying about the impact of low expectations is expectancy theory, which showed that "when teachers held expectations of particular students they interacted with their students in differing ways such that their initial ... expectations were fulfilled" (Rubie-Davies, 2003, p. 289). This is called in the literature the self-fulfilling prophecy effect. This effect has been studied since 1970 when an empirical study found that "teachers were more likely to praise correct answers from high-expectation students than they were to praise such answers from low-expectation students even though the latter occurred less frequently" (Rubie-Davies, p. 290). As studies progressed, teachers were distinguished as either high- or low-differentiating teachers. High-differentiating teachers "espoused a fixed view of ability, placed students in fairly inflexible ability groups" and differentiated their teaching to high- and low-expectation students (Rubie-Davies, p. 292). By contrast, low-differentiating teachers

"held incremental notions of intelligence, mainly used interest-based grouping, emphasized task-mastery goals and created positive relationships with students" (Rubie-Davies, p. 292). The latter kind of teacher appeared to hold high expectations for all class members, not just for a particular ability grouping. Likewise, some teachers taught high-expectation content to all, and only later allowed students to choose their level of activity, while others divided their pedagogy according to level. Rubie-Davies (2003) examined the practice of 12 primary school teachers in New Zealand to determine if expectations could be measured by interactions such as feedback, questioning and other classroom management strategies. The results indicated that high-expectations teachers made many more "teaching statements" about instruction and explanations than low-expectations teachers. They also took more time to familiarize students with the topic and link the current lesson with previous lessons or prior student knowledge, something which low-expectation teachers did not practice. High-expectations teachers also provided students with scaffolding and sought to "ensure that (students) had a clear understanding of the concepts being introduced before the students proceeded to their activities" (Rubie-Davies, 2003, p. 300). They also provided more feedback, making students more aware of their progress, a finding which is significant as feedback has been found to be critical for improved student learning in all students. Finally, high-expectations teachers asked more open questions than other teachers, who focused on closed questions, with low expectations teachers asking fewer questions overall (Rubie-Davies, 2003). High expectation teachers also asked students to engage in critical thinking more often, and asked students "to make inferences, to think beyond the information they already had" (Rubie-Davies, p. 302). This too corresponds to findings that open questions are one

means of "enhancing students' levels of cognitive functioning" (Rubie-Davies, p. 302). In these and other ways, then, Rubie-Davies (2003) found that in the day-in day-out interaction of teachers with students, teacher expectations are conveyed to students. Low expectation teachers practice teaching, moreover, in a way that inhibits student learning and may cause students to disengage.

Expectations and "Educational Racism"

Rozansky-Lloyd (2005) examined teacher expectations of African American students in math and science, describing negative teacher views as part of a broader syndrome termed "educational racism" (p. 596). First, teacher views are rendered negative by the deficit ideology which is built on the notion that "when students do not demonstrate the same types of achievement as the 'norm', they must have some deficiency which requires remediation" (Rozansky-Lloyd, p. 596). After interviewing a number of teachers and administrators in a school district serving African American students in a Midwest city, Rozansky-Lloyd (2005) found expressions of educational racism in several categories. Some teachers blamed the district for promoting students who had not reached the grade-level curricula, others put the responsibility of learning on the student, still others argued that parents were not doing their jobs, and others blamed previous teachers. Moreover, many teachers continued to maintain a deficit perspective on African American students, though many stated that they believed that the system perpetuated racism. In his study, Rozansky-Lloyd (2005) found that many informants held views of African American achievement potential which were "racist, routine and a matter of course" (p. 603). For example, some teachers "resented having students who

lacked the prior knowledge they expected in their classrooms, whether due to district promotion policies or perceived student deficits" (Rozansky-Lloyd, p. 603).

Changing Pedagogy to Improve Teacher Expectations

A number of studies have found that "African American students might learn best in an environment whose style is relational and personal, like an extended family" (Love & Kruger, 2005, p. 87). The studies found that successful teachers of African American children, "draw on African culture and history, promote the location of self in a historical and cultural context, help students create new knowledge based on life experiences, and treat knowledge as reciprocal" (Love & Kruger, p. 87). In a study of African American teachers in a public school serving primarily African American students the teachers believed that "students' race and culture are essential elements in teaching" and even saw "race and family as indistinguishable" (Love & Kruger, p. 87). This helped them create a learning community between teachers and students. In three short studies of the degree of cultural awareness in a population of teachers, Love & Kruger (2005) found that, in spite of espoused cultural sensitivity, a number of teachers continued to exhibit what Lewis has called "dysconscious racism" by offering a color-blind curriculum that sought to "avoid confronting the racial realities that surround them" (Love & Kruger, p. 95). It was also found that although some of the teachers did work to create a learning community, they "did not necessarily hold students accountable for one another's success, as may be expected in a traditional African American extended family context" (Love & Kruger, p. 96). Thus, while the teachers generally have culturally-responsive tendencies in their views, elements of teaching practice remain out of step with beliefs, thus limiting their effectiveness with students of color.

Teacher expectations of students may also be inadvertently negatively framed by limited pedagogies. In diverse classrooms, it is more common that "educators do not necessarily understand the multiple ways that their students make sense of the world" (Carter, 2006, p. 352). This is especially true for students from marginalized backgrounds, whose knowledge "is often misunderstood and/or devalued" (Carter, p. 352). For example, teachers who uphold a traditional conceptualization of literacy tend to privilege "certain ways of engaging in the world and meaning-making over others" (Carter, p. 353). By contrast, teachers who adopt a multiple literacies perspective of communication come to appreciate the different ways in which social groups with different cultural ways try to communicate in the world. Teachers who take a traditional view of privileging one type of communication over another may find the passionate ways by which African American girls, for example, communicate to be "loud and/or disrespectful" or view their use of African American Language negatively, as representing a deficit in communication skills (Carter, p. 353). Generally, if a teacher holds a power-related competitive sense of literacy achievement they will likely "other" ethnically diverse students and view them as "powerless, failing, struggling, and/or having low literacy achievement, while viewing those from Eurocentric and upper- or middle-class backgrounds as successful" (Carter, p. 354). By contrast, a teacher with a multiple literacies perspective "recognizes that it is the constant acting, reacting and interacting that help make visible multiple literacies and the multiple ways that people negotiate their identities" (Carter, p. 354). Carter provided a case study of two African American high school girls who were fully aware of the power relations based on literacy

going on in their classroom and utilize their language skills to "in ways to protect and affirm their cultural ways of knowing and meaning making" (Carter, p. 357).

A number of schools have been created to accentuate positive expectations from teachers. Small community-run schools based on the theory of "funds of knowledge" are believed to create inner-city schooling environments where "high quality interpersonal relationships and high academic expectations" are valued (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006, p. 210). These schools are based on teacher caring theory, which "assumes a causal relationship between student achievement and caring behavior on the part of the teacher" (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, p. 212). As corollaries to this idea, "caring community theory acknowledges the capacity and obligation of schools and communities to provide caring contexts for students who may be lacking caring experiences in their lives and difference theory recognizes varied definitions of caring among social, ethnic, class and gender groups" (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, p. 212). In the context of this theory, some educators have critiqued "the colorblind assumption in White feminist notions of caring as an emotion-laden practice characterized by low expectations motivated by taking pity on students' social circumstances" (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, p. 212).

Another theory, an anti-oppression pedagogy, a critical form of pedagogy that examines the political and social nature of representation and communication with regard to minorities, is also believed to engage African American students. Thus, a class would examine how African American males, in particular, are routinely represented as "criminal, deviant, sexualized and unruly" in the mainstream media (De Leon, 2006, p. 264). Critical discourse analysis, moreover, "exposes language as a tool for the perpetuation of domination and oppression and the active discursive reproduction of

ideologies such as racism or sexism" (De Leon, p. 264). These discourses can reduce the feelings of alienation that many African American experience in classrooms.

Teacher-Student Racial Congruity

Studies in general have begun to determine that the ethnicity of a teacher "has little effect on student performance" (Singham, 2003, p. 589). One study showed that, regardless of race, 81% of Black females and 62% of Black males want to please a teacher more than they want to please a parent (Singham, 2003). This finding was compared to 28% of White students who felt this way, indicating that "the impact of the teacher is far greater for minority students" and, indeed, one study found that providing good teachers for minority students can improve outcomes by six times (Singham, p. 586). Thus, Singham (2003) argued that teachers ought to be provided with sustained professional development, to ensure that all teachers are capable and actually teach students.

In spite of these results, racial incongruity between teacher and student has been cited as a reason for a number of problems experienced by African American high school students (Brown & Dobbins, 2004; Dee, 2004; Hendrix, 2007; Hyland, 2005; Lewis, 2006; Michie, 2007; Monroe, 2005; Parsons & Travis, et al., 2005; Singham, 2003; Williams, 2006). African American students are disproportionately subjected to suspensions or expulsions in public schools, for example. In seeking to determine why this is so, some studies have taken a cultural point of view, arguing that cultural misunderstanding between White teachers and Black students is the problem. In so far as culture is defined as "the shared ways that groups of people have created to use and define their environment" among African American men culture means "rhythmic and

confident interpersonal styles, …distinctive forms of dress and body ornamentation" and often exuberant and playfully aggressive even exaggerated forms of interaction with each other (Monroe, 2005, p. 319). In terms of speech, African Americans often use call and response, tonal semantics, and more narrative and associative styles of interaction than others. In a school system where 68% of students are ethnic and 87% of teachers are White, cultural mismatch between teacher and student more likely is to blame for negative student outcomes than Ogbu's idea that African American students have developed an anti-intellectual stance. Thus, a White teacher will expect clear "turn-taking" in speaking, whereas Black students are more comfortable with "demonstrative displays and opportunities for overlapping speech" (Monroe, p. 321). White teachers may often also misunderstand the direct and authoritative style of communication in African American speech. Body language also more often accompanies speech by African Americans, and studies have found that many teachers view these body movements as "inappropriate behaviors in school contexts" (Monroe, p. 321). Another study found that Black students "ready themselves for academic tasks through stage-setting behaviors," such as rearranging learning materials, and that this process was often misread by White teachers as off-task behavior (Monroe, p. 321). Misunderstanding student behavior is most likely to happen when teachers "neglect to question why and how their disciplinary practices and beliefs are culturally based" (Monroe, p. 322). Teachers have been reported to reprimand and refer African American students engaging in "verbal and physical displays of aggression for amusement" (Monroe, p. 322) to discipline. In the same way, whites often misread Black overlapping speech as "rude or offensive conduct" (Monroe, p. 322). Studies have also found that "teachers who overlook the salience of culture in

relation to behavior may be likely to attribute forms of perceived misbehavior to negative intrinsic qualities among students or poor parenting practices" (Monroe, p. 322). Monroe (2005) also argued that improving the cultural sensitivity of white teachers will improve their level of expectations for African American students. Moreover, studies in African American education "argue that low-income black students are most successful when taught in culturally-relevant ways" (Monroe, p. 323). As noted above, many Black teachers adopt the "warm demander" attitude toward students of color, and White teachers ought to consider this approach as culturally-responsive as studies of student response to even the harsher moments of warm demanding indicate that they "view such actions as demonstrations of care and concern" (Monroe, p. 323). Comic interaction "grounded in references to Black culture" moreover, "was one of the most common discipline tools present" in middle-school classrooms of African American students (Monroe, p. 323). Community-based techniques, in which the teacher models approaches found in student home environments, have also been found to be helpful in assisting African American students to adapt to school. By and large, then, Monroe (2005) proposes that white teachers can not only teach students of color better, but develop higher expectations for them, by adopting some tested teaching techniques used by African American teachers, often paralleling culturally-based discipline and learning methods in students' homes.

At present, research knows "very little about how differences between a teacher's race and those of her students affect the learning environment" (Dee, 2004, p. 54). Using data from a study in Tennessee, Dee (2004) found that "Black students learn more from Black teachers and White students from white teachers, suggesting that the racial

dynamics within classrooms may contribute to the persistent racial gap in student performance" (p. 54). A same-race teacher might relate to students better, and students in turn might see this teacher as a role model (even though "there is actually little direct empirical evidence" for this effect (Dee, p. 54)). Steele's construct of stereotype threat (see below) could come into play in a White teacher-Black student interaction, with Black students suspecting that White teachers holds stereotyped views about them. This dynamic could be operationalized subtly through the amount of time or effort a teacher devoted to students. One study found that "teachers, in allocating class time, interacting with students, and designing class materials, are more favorably disposed toward students who share their racial or ethnic background" (Dee, p. 55). Observation of White teachers with Black students found that Black students "receive less attention, are praised less, and are scolded more often than their White counterparts" (Dee, p. 56). In Tennessee's Project Star it was found that "having a Black teacher for a year was (for a Black student) associated with a statistically significant 3 to 5 percentile-point increase in math scores" (Dee, p. 59). These results, analyzed to ensure that teacher quality was not the responsible variables, "support the conventional assumption that recruiting minority teachers can generate important achievement gains among minority students" (Dee, p. 61).

African American Teacher Shortages

Regardless of whether the literature finds that race congruity between student and teacher at the high school is positive or negative, the point may soon become moot, as the number of African American teachers at the high school level is declining, and "African American male teachers are on the verge of extinction within the U.S. teaching profession" (Lewis, 2006, p. 224). At present, African American students comprise

approximately 20% of the population of U.S. public schools, while only 1% of all teachers are African American. This discrepancy presents a serious problem because African American male teachers have been found to be excellent teachers and are known for establishing strong, mentor-like relationships with students – especially African Americans. Moreover, studies have shown that "test scores of African American students who spend at least 1 year with an African American teacher improve by 4 percentage points", apart from the advantages of having a same-race role model (Lewis, p. 226).

Humanizing Education

Michie (2007) argued that White teachers, like himself, could learn to teach students of color effectively if they adopted Freire's notion of humanizing education, and stressed the co-creative and dialogic nature of education. As for the teachers, they must see themselves as a "continual learner, a teacher in the midst of an ongoing personal transformation" (Michie, p. 3). In interviewing both White and Black teachers of African-American students, one study found that "a clash of expectations" was even more important than skin color. The primary problem is the clash between "teachers who expected to be viewed as authority figures simply by virtue of their positions and students who believed adults should earn their authority by showing they knew how to exercise it" (Michie, p. 4). This conflict means that White teachers must abandon color-blind perspectives and begin to talk about race. "Good liberal intentions are not enough" and White teachers must deconstruct the privilege of Whiteness as it has and continues to apply to their practice. Mostly middle class White teachers also must seek "political clarity" and better critique their place and status in society as compared to their students of color. The myth of the "White savior" is a particular trap into which many novice

White teachers fall, as, in fact, "children of color don't need to be rescued by anyone" (Michie, p. 8). Overall, however, White teachers must remember that "no teachers should be exempt from the hard work of critically examining [themselves] and the larger social context of [their] teaching" (Michie, p. 9).

Hyland (2005) argued that teachers can help reduce the achievement gap between Black and White by altering their pedagogical orientation. He asserted that multicultural researchers have identified the norms of culturally relevant or culturally responsive teaching, to help White teachers be more effective in diverse classrooms. Overall, few White teachers have been identified as being culturally responsive. Another approach is to argue that "successful teachers of color identify the public school system as racist and see themselves as part of a larger political struggle for racial justice" (Hyland, p. 430). According to this model, the practices adopted by teachers "are not determined by the teacher's race" but by their efforts to identify and resist racism (Hyland, p. 430). To what degree most White teachers are "good teachers" in these terms remains a question, although most teachers describe themselves as good teachers.

Hyland (2005) examined the ways that White teachers in a primarily African American school performed, either critiquing or further contributing to institutionalized racism in schools. One teacher conceived of herself as a helper or benefactor to students of color, but based on critical race theory, it was seen that her metaphor for herself and her way of interacting with students only served to "perpetuate a racist status quo" (Hyland, p. 440). In serving the students, "she saw students and their families as quite needy and in some ways incapable" (Hyland, p. 440). Her actions demonstrated a sense of superiority over students of color, and disrespect for the students' home culture. The

teacher's paternalistic attitudes manifested themselves negatively. As a special education teacher, she never attempted to declassify students from special education because of her expectations that they would always need help (Hyland, 2005). Another Latina teacher, having begun to identify herself as an assimilated White person, acted in the capacity of a role model for students of color "who could choose to be White" (Hyland, p. 442). He also found that teachers often exaggerated instances of misbehavior by students of color, often as a "way to code language about race without mentioning race" (Hyland, p. 446). Her racially coded language, privileging Whiteness, "can function to harm students of color and limit their opportunities for academic success" (Hyland, p. 446). Another teacher, who described herself as an intercultural communicator, appeared to imitate cultural behavior without deeply understanding worldviews. When discussing how she had to alter the way she communicated with Native American and African American students, the teacher imitated ethnic types of communication, which was offensive to the students. The teacher "saw culture as depoliticized and did not view her actions as White appropriation and essentialization of the norms of marginalized cultural groups" (Hyland, p. 449). Nor did she realize that "the Eurocentric curriculum of the typical American school reinforces White culture as the norm" (Hyland, p. 450). Although she claimed to communicate interculturally, this teacher tacitly was forcing her students "to conform to and assimilate into dominant White ways of being" (Hyland, p. 450). Overall, this study problematized the issue of student-teacher racial congruity by determining that even with good intentions, some White teachers still failed to fully extricate the norms of "White ways of learning" from their teaching (Hyland, p. 452).

Michie (2007) also argued that White teachers can help students of color only if "they have explored their personal histories and value systems; developed an understanding, respect and value for other cultures; and expanded their reference group membership to include others" (p. 7). Through caring, teachers also should have high expectations, which are "necessary to help the students emancipate themselves and to move beyond their current situations" (Michie, p. 9). Teachers should not view African American students through deficit lenses, because it may be an inaccurate picture, especially "if teachers believe Black males are destined for failure and apathy, their pedagogies will be saturated with low expectations" (Michie, p. 8).

Culturally Congruent Teaching

Culturally congruent instruction is believed to be a strategy that can improve academic outcomes for African American students. This type of instruction "incorporates" home practices into classrooms to affirm students' community cultures. According to Boykin (as cited in Parsons & Travis et al., 2005), the Black Cultural Ethos (BCE) curriculum consisted of "spirituality, affect, harmony, orality, social perspective of time, expressive individualism, verve, communalism and movement" (p. 189). Verve, for example, depicts a predilection toward high physical motivation and has two components, intensity and variability, both of which contribute to an environment's liveliness. Studies by Boykin found that African American students achieve better outcomes when working in communal contexts that encourage the expression of verve. Introducing a BCE curriculum that promotes communalism and verve into an eighth grade science class found that a BCE curriculum had a positive effect on improving outcomes of African American students. The study provided evidence that African

American teachers using a BCE curriculum can help African American students achieve more in school (Parsons & Travis, et al., 2005).

Williams (2006) also offered an example of how African American teachers improved African American student outcomes by adopting a multiple literacy approach to language learning as opposed to more unitary theories of language. This approach was apparently motivated by the teacher's personal experience as "an African American language speaker navigating language use across both home and professional environments [affirming] students' home language and culture as a means to provide effective classroom instruction" (Williams, p. 348).

Teacher-Student Incongruence and Stereotype Threat

While Brown v. Board emphasized only positive outcomes of contact with people from other groups, Steele (as cited in Brown & Dobbins, 2004) introduced the idea that "contexts in which stereotypes are salient may detrimentally affect the performance of students of color as well as their expectations for their experience in the classroom" (p. 159). Brown and Dobbins (2004) argued that in addition to experiencing stereotype threats, concern over being stigmatized is reflected in "negative views of their instructors" (p. 159). "A context in which students believe they may be negatively judged according to a stereotype is a context in which they perceive that their instructor may be prejudiced" (Brown & Dobbins, p. 159). Studies have shown that Blacks hold beliefs, or "metastereotypes," that Whites have stereotypical perceptions of them. As a result, many African American students do not trust the evaluations of non-African American teachers. Studies of teacher perceptions and behaviors towards ethnically-diverse students appear to confirm these fears. According to Brown and Dobbins, teacher attitudes

regarding relations with students were more likely to be positive if students were of the same ethnicity as the teacher.

Stereotype threat. The construct of stereotype threat was affirmed in research as African American college students scored lower on standardized tests and these outcomes could not be explained by any other factor (Altermatt & Kim, 2004; Aronson, 2004; Brown & Dobbins, 2004; Cabrera, 2006; Osborne, 2007; Osborne & Walker, 2006; Seiler & Elmesky, 2007; Steele, 1998). Steele (1998) posited that "stereotype threat occurs when one recognizes that a negative stereotype about a group to which one belongs is applicable to oneself in a particular situation" (p. 680). Awareness of stereotype threat is said to increase anxiety in the context and can contribute to poor performance. Steele's original studies were conducted with African American students at elite universities in the U.S. to make the point that students have to care about academics and their academic performances if they were going to be concerned about the possible applicability of the negative stereotype of African American intellectual capabilities. "Few people enjoy being reduced to a stereotype, especially when the stereotype has negative associations, so we often change our behavior to avoid being viewed and treated as though the stereotype were true" (Aronson, 2004, p. 14).

The idea of stereotype threat was developed to explain why Black college students who had entered college with similar skills and preparation as White students were more likely to perform more poorly (Aronson, 2004). When Black and White students were matched in terms of parental income and the quality of the high school they attended, Black students performed more poorly than their White peers. Thus, "something else" was to blame for the performance difference, with response to

stereotypes the missing factor. In exploring this issue, research found that by age six most

children are aware of cultural and racial stereotypes. Moreover, stereotypes are widely

believed by many people. "African Americans are well aware of their group's negative

reputation [and as a result they tend to be] hyperaware of the negative expectations about

their group and to considerably overestimate the extent to which the mainstream sees

them as less intelligent" (Aronson, p. 15). When Black students are placed in an

"evaluative situation, [they] experience an additional degree of risk not experienced by

nonstereotyped students" (Aronson, p. 16). These situations are perceived by African

American college students as unnerving and unfair. They fear that "their failure will be

seen as evidence of an unalterable limitation rather than as the result of a bad day"

(Aronson, p. 16). Aronson's (2004) research confirmed Steele's (1998) findings that the

existence of stereotype threat reinforced the theory that "human intellectual performance

is far more fragile" (p. 17) than originally conceptualized. Threats to an individual's

sense of competence or feelings of belonging can "dramatically influence [their]

intellectual capacities and motivation" (Aronson, p. 17). Responses to stereotype threats

are met with various levels of effectiveness. For example, one response to stereotype

threat is that the person will take on an "I'll show them" attitude and try harder. However,

studies show that while this approach might work for simple tasks requiring brute force,

the key to performance on standardized tests is relaxation, and that "anything that

compounds performance pressure is likely to be a handicap" (Aronson, p. 17). In this

way, a poor performance on a test may not "reflect a lack of effort, but rather the fragility

of intellectual performance" (Aronson, p. 17). Again, this conjecture is supported by

studies that show vulnerability to stereotype threat is present most in students "who care

the most and who are most deeply invested in high performance" (Aronson, p. 17). Another response to stereotype threat adopted by African American students is that they often "avoid challenge when they are being evaluated" and select easy, success-ensuring tasks (Aronson, p. 17). However, Aronson noted that this solution is hardly optimal, as "one of the most pernicious effects of stereotype threat is that it creates an atmosphere in which looking smart is more important than getting smart" (p. 18). Teachers have been able to reduce stereotype threat by assigning group projects and teaching students that intelligence is malleable not fixed. These strategies have been found to improve student grade point averages. Thus, "stereotype threat can be overcome with the proper mind-set about the nature of ability, and this mind-set can be taught" (Aronson, p. 19). In contrast, the standardized tests mandated by No Child Left Behind tend to maximize stereotype threat by increasing stigmatization and a student's sense of belonging to school. As a result, "many states have witnessed a rise in dropout rates among disadvantaged minorities since the law went into effect" (Aronson, p. 19).

Stereotype threat and anxiety. Due to its apparent success in explaining why African Americans perform poorly on standardized tests, Steele's (as cited in Osborne, 2007) concept of stereotype threat has received attention in the literature. The construct posited that anxiety increases when students of color detect they are in situations where they are being "viewed through the lens of the stereotype." Their feelings that they have to exert energy to fight against the stereotype, or worry that any poor performance by them confirms the stereotype has had a powerful explanatory impact. The construct operates according to the idea of anxiety, which is believed to "decrease performance on the tasks at hand, but also makes the situation aversive to the student, leading him to seek

escape from the situation" (Osborne, p. 135). This idea has support from psychological theories, such as processing efficiency theory that suggested when anxiety increases, cognitive efficiency suffers. Thus, "anxiety increases task-irrelevant intrusive thoughts that can disrupt the working memory resources and the efficiency of the cognitive process" (Osborne, p. 137). Regulating one's attention is more difficult, with performance decreasing as well. Studies have shown that increased anxiety interferes with academic tasks, "particularly when those tasks are challenging (i.e. not automatized or overlearned)" (Osborne, p. 137).

Reducing stereotype threat. Since Steele's (1998) idea is situation-specific, some efforts have been made to reduce the Black-White achievement gap by minimizing stereotype threat in testing situations. Thus far, the research in this area has been promising. One study found that stereotype threat anxiety explained 38.8% of the differential between White and Black students taking a test, with reduction of stereotype threat erasing the difference. Osborne (2007) argued that studies are not specific enough about the elements associated with anxiety arousal and the role they play in stereotype threat, thus he decided to "explore the link between stereotype threat and physiological indicators of anxiety or arousal" (Osborne, p. 141). The study "showed evidence of physiological reactance in girls (measured as skin conductance, surface skin temperature and diastolic blood pressure) under high stereotype threat conditions that are consistent with an anxiety or autonomic arousal reaction" (Osborne, p. 150). This finding served to "explicate the mechanism through which stereotype threat manipulations achieve the performance effects noted in many other studies (Osborne, 2007). Blascovich, Spencer, Quinn, and Steele (2001) studied incidents of stereotype threat that contributed to high

blood pressure among African American students. The stereotype threat construct contained a suggestion of high stress, as stereotype threat occurs "in situations in which other people may view them stereotypically in ways likely to increase performance pressures" (Blascovich et al., p. 225). High blood pressure in Black populations can be related to anger or having to work harder than others to prove oneself. The study included 41 African-American college students who were asked to perform tasks where stereotype threat was present, then measured their blood pressure. The study found that "African Americans open to stereotype threat on a cognitive task exhibited greater blood pressure increases than European Americans" while their blood pressure remained the same as European Americans when the stereotype threat was absent (Blascovich et al., p. 228).

As a result of the strength of the stereotype threat construct, other interventions have been developed to counteract stereotype threat developing in African American children. Cabrera (2006) reported on an intervention where middle school students were asked to write an essay of self-affirmation describing what excites them and what values they hold, as well as how they are good people. The exercise was found to improve the academic achievement level of African American children. Their D or F grades went down from 20% Ds or Fs to 9%, suggesting that self-affirmation cancelled out the negative effects of stereotype threat (Cabrera, 2006).

Stereotype threat and symbolic interactionism. Osborne and Walker (2006) explore stereotype threat from within the framework of symbolic interactionist theory, which argues that only if feedback from the environment is related to a domain that is central to one's self-concept will that feedback impair one's self-esteem. According to this model, then, "outcomes in a domain will only affect an individual's global self-

esteem to the extent that an individual is identified with that domain" (Osborne & Walker, p. 564). This concept is relevant as studies have shown that "changing identification with academics appears to be one prominent self-defense mechanism people employ in protecting and maintaining their self-esteem" (Osborne & Walker, p. 564). "For students not identified with academics there should be little motivation to succeed in academics because there is no contingency between academic outcomes and self-esteem" (Osborne & Walker, p. 565). Students who perform poorly in school for extended periods often protect themselves by reducing their identification with school. Osborne and Walker (2006) argued that "the more strongly a student of color is invested in academics, the more likely that student is to experience stereotype threat" (p. 565). According to stereotype threat, this syndrome is most threatening to African American students who are invested in school and generally are the highest-achieving African American students. These students are caught in "a particularly divisive paradox" (Osborne & Walker, p. 568). To determine if this is true, Osborne & Walker (2006) tracked ninth grade African American students for two years. The study found that identification with academics leads to higher grades, with these high-achieving students "more likely to withdraw from school because stronger identification makes school a more aversive environment" (Osborne & Walker, p. 573). To reduce this danger, better coping, ways to reduce stereotype threat, and other strategies designed to help high-achieving African American students stay in school are needed. Finally, as high-achieving students are more likely to go on to college, a review of perceptions by those who graduated and attended college might serve to demonstrate the validity of this theory.

The emergence of stereotype threat situations in diverse classrooms continue to pose challenges to teachers and students. For one thing, in mixed-race or ethnicity classrooms, members of a group may "try to surmount his/her own stereotypes of members of other groups" while "he or she may work to avoid being the target of others' stereotypes of his or her own groups" as well (Brown & Dobbins, 2004, p. 158). If the teacher is of one's race or not also is an issue. One study found that "when [college] students of color envision an evaluative interaction with a European American teaching assistant, their expectations regarding how they would feel in class are less positive than when they imagine interacting with an ethnically matched TA" (Brown & Dobbins, p. 158).

Seiler and Elmesky (2007) believed that teachers could learn to respond more directly to the needs of African American students and avoid stereotype threat situations if they adopted practices linked to West African traditions. According to Boykin, communalism, or being concerned with the welfare of others, is a fundamental element of African American culture. They studied how bringing communalism into classrooms resulted in the accumulation of capital and generation of positive energy and motivation. In terms of classrooms, communalism referred to placing greater emphasis on shared decision making and learning than the individualized focus of mainstream Western classrooms. At present, in science classrooms, the primary method of teaching is teacher-led questioning, "which by nature inhibits student-to-student interactions and promotes competitive pursuits to individually develop a 'correct' response for the teacher" (Seiler & Elmesky, p. 398). The focus on individual responses to questions creates interactions that "truncate the expression of a core African American cultural dimension, namely

communalism" (Seiler & Elmesky, p. 398). In their study, Seiler and Elmesky (2007) found that "communal ways of being are particularly salient in the cases of students who lack economic capital that can be exchanged for position and respect in relation to peers in science class" (p. 404). Seiler and Elmesky presented several vignettes that detailed the ways in which communalism was practiced by African American students. The purpose of these vignettes was to increase their capital in class and allow them to improve their learning outcomes as well. Teachers, therefore, must work to create classroom structures that allow African American students to "feel right" by encouraging communalism in shared learning as a legitimate way to learn science.

Student perceptions and stereotype threat. Stereotype threat has been cited as a major reason why so few African American students enter gifted programs. The standardized tests used to admit students into these programs are believed to elicit stereotype threat response from African American students (Kaufman, 2006). Creativity tests have been proposed as an alternative way of testing intelligence to reduce stereotype threat and admit more students of color into gifted programs. Creativity studies have found few differences across ethnicities, regardless of the type of measurement. This lack of difference may be because creativity tests do not cause stereotype threat response to emerge, as do intellectual-based ability tests. Such testing can be refined further to avoid stereotype threat if research can discover how different ethnicities "perceive their own creativity across multiple domains" (Kaufman, 2006, p. 1069). Kaufman interviewed approximately 2,000 college students from psychology classes to determine how they self-report their creativity through the Creativity Domain Questionnaire. The results indicate that as many African American men as women report themselves as being

visual-artistic in their creativity, meaning that by and large African Americans use less gender stereotypes in discussing creativity. Overall, the study results "support the idea that a sophisticated creativity measure that incorporates multiple domains could increase fairness as a supplement to intellectual assessment" (Kaufman, p. 1084). The implication of the results was that surveyed African American college students felt academic tests they had taken to determine admission to gifted or other programs were unfair.

While stereotype threat can compromise standardized test performance by minority students is a well established fact, Marx and Stapel (2006) pointed out that the "precise feelings that targets experience during the testing sessions…is not as clear-cut" (p. 687). Marx and Stapel hypothesized that stereotype threat is in the timing, that is, that the effect occurs when students "expect to be tested (anxiety) or have been tested already (frustration)" (p. 688). For this reason, stereotype threat could differ depending on when it is measured. Some basis for this argument exists in the literature, with one study interviewing female test-takers after having taken the test. The females were feeling dejection but not anxiety. Other tests have measured emotions during testing, with one study finding that students who were experiencing stereotype threat during testing displayed more non-verbal cues of anxiety than other students. According to Marx and Stapel (2006), most tests have methodological problems. Therefore, Marx and Stapel (2006) hypothesized that female test takers could experience more anxiety before a test and frustration and upset emotions after taking a test. They interviewed 133 undergraduates in a Dutch university to determine if female test takers experienced more anxiety was true. The results confirmed the hypothesis, revealing that stereotype threat manifested itself in different emotions depending on timing, either before or after the test.

This conclusion expanded the literature that those who experience stereotype threat enter into a "global adverse state" but less was known about the specific emotions that occur at different stages of being confronted by negative stereotypes. In general, the study found that the original negative anxiety resulting from stereotype threat is short-lived, but then is "replaced by feelings of frustration after having underperformed on a test" (Marx & Stapel, p. 697). The study also confirmed that college students believed in the reality of stereotype threat.

As noted, Steele's (1998) classic test of the stereotype threat concept occurred with college students. The students were assigned to one of two groups. The first group was told that the test was being used to determine their intellectual ability, with the second group not being given any information about the test. Students who were told that the test measured intellectual ability performed worse on the test than the control group, indicating that these students, being alerted to the fact that the test may bring into play stereotypes of African-American intellectual ability, experienced more anxiety during test-taking and did more poorly (Steele, 1998).

Response to stereotype threat was measured in another study of college students that found that when students were alerted to the fact that a test might cause stereotypes to arise, they answered questions with more self-doubt words. When asked about their music preferences, began to offer fewer choices, apparently out of fear that their choices would confirm a stereotype. Smith and Hopkins (2004) argued that an affirmative cultural identity and a positive sense of self can mitigate the impact of stereotype threat. To test this idea, they administered the African American Acculturation Scale to 160 college freshmen in traditionally Black universities to determine the students' sense of

cultural identity and then measure the extent to which identity moderates stereotype threat. The results indicated that most of these students did not factor stereotype threat in to their response to testing situations because they already had a high level of academic performance. Smith and Hopkins (2004) conjectured that even if these students were aware of stereotypes, "their sense of competence overrides the debilitating affect of the threat" (p. 320). In seeking reasons for these findings, Smith and Hopkins (2004) argued that having been raised with a strong cultural identity that was founded on stories of ancestors who rose above prejudice could provide support for students regarding their own cultural identity, resulting in them having an internal locus of control. Moreover, the collectivist nature of African American life also is said to help motivate individuals to do well, "because of their role in collective survival" (Smith & Hopkins, p. 320). As a result, some college students, having built up a strong cultural identity, may be more or less immune from stereotype threat and perhaps began to overcome it during high school. In this situation and in other areas of research, asking college freshmen to review their high school career and provide feedback on the issues regarding teacher expectations, teacher-student racial congruity, and the presence of stereotype threat that impacted their education, could further clarify the overall relevance of these constructs.

Student Perceptions of Teacher Expectations

Teacher expectations may be limited by perceptions of the importance of high school on the continuum of helping students progress to college. High school mathematics courses, for example, have long been known to serve primarily as gatekeeper courses, separating college-bound students from noncollege-bound students (Mason & McFeetors, 2007). Most schools, however, "are expected to shift from

maintaining gate-keeping and filtering roles towards practicing inclusive and transformative success-for-all principles" (Mason & McFeetors, p. 292). Most mathematics courses continue to serve "as a critical filter that distinguishes students' readiness for further learning" (Mason & McFeetors, p. 294). Mason and McFeetor started the Trajectories Project to gain a better understanding of how students fare during a rigid filtering process, as well as their perceptions of decisions made moving through the system. The study found that students have "more at stake than credentialing" in that their identities appear to play a part in their outcomes (Mason & McFeetors, p. 213). Students were fully aware that "credentials in academic mathematics [were] essential to maintaining one's options for further study," meaning that they understood the [mathematics] courses acted as gatekeepers (Mason & McFeetors, p. 213). Students also were aware that in most of these courses, they were more likely to be taken out of the classes than provided help if they experienced problems. Most students in the course focused on doing the work, not on the learning process. The students generally were unable to "provide any indication of tactical support with becoming effective learners" (Mason & McFeetors, p. 292). As a result, the study found that most mathematics courses are "more effective as gate-keeping mechanisms than as opportunities for students to improve and succeed" (Mason & McFeetors, p. 292). This study provided support that teachers had limited expectations of students, as well as limited expectations in using the course as a gate-keeper, tracking students.

Student Perceptions and Teacher-Student Racial Congruity

Some case studies of African American college students drew conclusions regarding the importance of racial congruency between students and teachers in college.

One study asked African American students at a historically Black college in Texas if it was an advantage for their mentors to be African American (Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008). Most students reported that having a professor "regardless of race, who cares about their future and who is interested in their education" (p. 434) was more important than the race of the mentor. Henfield et al. (2008) conducted a more detailed study of the viewpoints of African American college students and confirmed this result. Thus, they recommended that the retention rate of African American college students could be improved if these students were assigned to mentors who had "a track record of providing mentorship to students" than worrying about racial congruity between teacher and student (Henfield et al., p. 435).

Adding to the discussion on student-teacher racial congruity were studies of African American students at predominately White colleges. Evidence indicated that African American students were less likely than White students to interact with faculty outside of the classroom and tended to be less academically integrated in campus life (Guiffrida, 2005). According to Guiffrida, African American students often have trouble "developing positive relationships with White faculty" (Guiffrida, p. 701). Many African American students have found that White faculty are unapproachable "because of their stereotyped comments, insensitivity to African American culture, and generalizations of students' opinions as representing those of all African Americans" (Guiffrida, p. 703). African American students also reported that White faculty was insensitive "when they fail to acknowledge or incorporate culturally diverse perspectives into their curricula" (Guiffrida, p. 704). These findings are troubling as studies have shown that the quality of faculty-student contact improves student outcomes. With regard to students of color, the

solution to this problem appears to be in "like-person role models," (i.e., connection with African American faculty). Positive connections between African American students and African American faculty have been found to improve the self-efficacy of these students. A paucity of research has explored how positive relationships are built between African American students and African American faculty. Guiffrida (2005) conceptualized the traditional idea of "othermothering" in the African American community as a possible framework for understanding why African American faculty-student interactions are helpful. In interviews with college-level African American students, student-centered teachers were described as those who went above and beyond their usual duties by providing advisement on career, academic, and personal issues. These teachers also had a more holistic view of students, asking them to make regular appointments to keep track of their progress in all areas of their college life. In contrast, Guiffrida argued that White faculty generally did not reach out to assist African American students with their problems. African American students also reported that White faculty often gave them unwarranted praise for minor tasks, which they interpreted as a sign that White faculty had low expectations of African American students' abilities and thus recognized them for "meeting minimal expectations" (Guiffrida, p. 713). African American faculty by contrast repeatedly stressed the need to increase expectations of achievement levels among African American students. Using the framework of othermothering, the relationship between African American teachers and students extends beyond mentoring, to a holistic support and encouragement.

Studies have also shown that African American students throughout the high school years tend to prefer to be taught by ethnically-matched teachers. Brown and

Dobbins (2004) found that "students had more positive expectations of the culturally tolerant instructor than of the culturally intolerant instructor" (p. 170). In general, Brown and Dobbins (2004) found that African American students held positive views about classroom interactions, but began to shows signs of stereotype threat response when asked to imagine how they would interact with nonethnically-matched instructors in an evaluative or testing context. Thus, the result was "consistent with research revealing the type of context that evokes a concern for possibly confirming a negative stereotype" (Brown & Dobbins, p. 170). In contexts where evaluation apprehension emerges, these situations "evoke less positive expectations of interethnic interactions between students of color and their European American instructors" (Brown & Dobbins, p. 170).

Dolan (2007) interviewed a number of college students about the nature of their mentoring relationship with ethnically-diverse persons. Students of color found that same-race mentors were more likely to provide moral support when students felt ostracized because they were part of a minority (Dolan, 2007). The same-race or same-minority mentors "didn't shy away from conversations of difference" , which benefited the student (Dolan, p. 27). At the same time, some interviews revealed that many same-ethnicity mentoring relationships were counterproductive. However, same-ethnicity mentoring was perceived as a safe haven where issues of prejudice and discrimination could be discussed openly. Dolan also suggested that, as a result of differences of perspective, cross-race mentoring requires extra sensitivity, familiarity with research topics on color, and, indeed "may often mean expressing views that the scholar of color feels strongly about but might be afraid to raise in public meetings" (Dolan, p. 31).

Summary

Differences in achievement between African American and White high school students has been associated with many causes (Booker, 2006; Farkas, 2003; Farrell & Erwin, et al., 2007; Graham, 1994; Henfield & Moore, et al., 2008; Michie, 2007; Parsons & Travis, et al., 2005; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Russell, 2005; Singham, 2003; Steele, 1992). Research has begun to focus on dynamics of the school systems instead of using single-factor or inherent racial or ethnic explanations for the gap. As a result, two major theories, teacher expectations and teacher-student racial congruity, have been researched. These theories are thought to have a major influence on African American student achievement (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006; Bondy & Ross, 2008; Carter, 2006; De Leon, 2006; Jamar & Pitts, 2005; Kyburg & Hertberg-Davis, et al., 2006; Lane & Wehby, et al., 2006; Love & Kruger, 2005; Olson, 2008; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005; Rubie-Davies, 2003; Singham, 2003; Wentzel, 2002). In the early 1990s, Steele (1998) was not able to explicate reasons that African American college students continued to score lower on standardized tests than White students when all other factors were equal (that is, all students had similar high-quality high school educations and came from higher-income backgrounds; Altermatt & Kim, 2004; Aronson, 2004; Brown & Dobbins, 2004; Cabrera, 2006; Osborne, 2007; Osborne & Walker, 2006; Seiler & Elmesky, 2007; Steele, 1998). African American students may be dealing with stereotype threat. This threat was defined as African American students underperformance when they perceived that their academic levels might confirm negative stereotypes. This theory has received considerable attention in the literature, enhancing its power. To understand how African American college students perceive these factors have limited their

education in high school, studies of student perceptions were reviewed. These studies provided verification that teacher expectations can impact their education negatively, they also showed that teacher-student racial congruity and stereotype threat could present more complicated scenarios (Brown & Dobbins, 2004; Dolan, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005; Henfield & Moore, et al., 2008; Kaufman, 2006; Marx & Stapel, 2006; Mason & McFeetors, 2007; Smith & Hopkins, 2004). Additional research is needed on the retrospective appraisal of African American college students regarding the roles that teacher expectations, teacher-student racial congruity, and stereotype threat played in their high school education.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The methods that were used to collect the data needed to address the research

questions developed for the study are presented in this chapter. The topics included in

this chapter are: purpose statement, research design, setting for the study, participants,

instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Each of these sections is presented

separately.

Purpose

Although a body of literature and research focuses on teacher expectations and its

influence on academic achievement, in this study I took the relationship between teacher

expectations and academic achievement one step further. This study asked students to

look back at their high school teachers' expectations and reflect on how those

experiences impacted their academic experiences, including stereotype threat, self-

reported academic achievement, and academic outcomes. Examining this concept could

give educators the opportunity to understand how African American students viewed

their educational experiences and the role it plays in their academic outcomes. I also

studied student perceptions of teacher practices, expectations, and the influence they

could have on academic achievement and outcomes. Last, the results from this research

could (a) provide data to better understand the achievement gap and how to bring closure

to the gap, (b) help educators and policymakers reset their perspectives and priorities as it

relates to African American students, (c) encourage and suggest the implementation of

diversity training programs and curriculum as it relates to African American students, and

d) reset teacher expectations and perceptions of African American students.

Research Design

A qualitative, phenomenological research design was used in this study. "The

basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon

to a description of the universal essence (a 'grasp of the very nature of the thing,'

vanManen. . .)" (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 58). By exploring the "lived experiences,"

phenomenology is considered both a philosophy and a research method. In this type of

research, a small group of participants can be studied through personal interviews to

obtain information that can be analyzed to determine if patterns and relationships exist

within the group (Moustakas as cited by Creswell, 2003).

Phenomenological research can assume two forms: hermeneutical (van Manen as

cited in Creswell, 2007) or empirical, transcendental (psychological) phenomenology

(Moustakas as cited in Creswell, 2007). Hermeneutical phenomenological research

focuses on the lived experience (phenomenology) and "interpreting the 'texts' of life (van

Manen as cited in Creswell, 2007). In contrast, psychological phenomenology is

concerned with the participants' experiences of a shared phenomenon (teacher-student

race congruence) and not the experiences of the researcher (Moustakas as cited in

Creswell, 2007). For the purpose of this study, the research design used a psychological

phenomenology approach. According to Creswell (2007), specific steps are used in

phenomenological research. These steps include:

- Determine if phenomenological research is the best approach. This determination can

  be made if the participants have shared the experiences being studied.

- Recognize and specify broad assumptions of phenomenology. To accomplish this objective, the researcher must "bracket out" to the greatest extent possible their experiences with the phenomenon.

- Data collection, including in-depth and multiple interviews, are completed by the researcher. Polkinghorne (as cited in Creswell, 2007) suggested that a researcher should interview 5 to 25 participants who have had experiences with the phenomenon.

- Two broad questions are asked of all participants:

  1. "What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?"

  2. "What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?" (Moustakas as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 61).

  Other open-ended questions can be asked, but the two required questions provide data that can result in "textural" and "structural" descriptions of the shared experiences.

- Data analysis of phenomenological research builds on the data from the two required questions. The researcher reads through the transcripts of the remaining questions highlighting significant quotes and statements to develop an understanding of the phenomenon (horizonalization). The researcher then clusters the significant quotes and statements into themes to develop "clusters of meaning;" Moustakas as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 61).

- Develop a textural description that is based on the themes and significant quotes and statements developed from the clusters of meaning of the experiences with the phenomenon. The context or setting that influenced the experiences with the

phenomenon are used to write a "*imaginative variation* or *structural description*" (Moustakas as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 61).

- A composite description is then written using the textural and structural descriptions that presents the "essence" of the phenomenon. This section is concerned with presenting the common experiences that participants had with the phenomenon (Moustakas as cited in Creswell, 2007).

Participants

The population defined for this study was traditional African American students enrolled in freshman classes in postsecondary institutions. To be included in the population, the students had to have graduated from high school in 2008, be African American, and 18 years of age or older. These students were enrolled either full or part-time in college level classes at a community college or university located in an urban area.

Sample

A convenience sample of 13 African American freshman students were asked to participate in the study. The primary criteria for inclusion were the race/ethnicity and age range of the students.

The researcher contacted students who graduated in 2008 and ask for referrals from freshman students in their classes. She contacted the referred students to determine if they met the criteria for inclusion in the study. She explained the purpose of the study and discussed their roles in the study and answered any questions they had about their participation. A mutually agreeable time was decided for meeting with the students. The time and place were at the convenience of the students, although the researcher who was

employed full time only had evenings and weekends available for the interview process. The referral process continued until 13 African American freshman college students had been recruited for the study.

Instrumentation

A set of interview questions was developed for the study. These questions were based on the review of literature and the researcher's personal experiences with teacher race/ethnicity congruity and experiences with teachers during high school. To ensure that the interview questions have good content validity, the researcher had three high school teachers who had knowledge of student/teacher race/ethnicity congruity reviewed the interview questions. They were asked to provide suggestions on the wording and indicate if any questions should be eliminated or additional questions were needed.

In addition, the participants were asked to complete a demographic instrument that had been developed specifically for the study. The items on this survey provided information on the personal characteristics of the students and obtained specific information regarding educational experiences, such as the race/ethnicity of a teacher that most influenced the participant. The items on this survey used a combination of forced choice and fill-in responses. The information obtained from this survey were used as background data.

Pilot Testing and Training for Coders

The codebook was developed by the researcher to detail the specific terms that were expected to be included in the participants' responses to the research questions. After reviewing the codebook, the researcher coded the responses.

Data Collection

The freshman students who agreed to participate in the study were interviewed by the researcher. The one-on-one interviews followed the procedures outlined by Creswell (2007). The first step was determining the type of interview that was most effective in collecting the data needed to address the research questions and describe the phenomenon of interest. The types of interviews that could be used included: telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, and focus groups. Telephone and face-to-face interviews are conducted with each participant separately. Focus groups use 8 to 10 people to discuss a topic that is being studied. The people who are included in a focus group generally have certain common characteristics or exposure to similar situations. The use of focus groups allows data to be collected on several participants simultaneously, with participants each providing information on the topic being studied. The synergy that can develop within a focus group helps generate additional information. However, if the experiences are personal, a focus group may not be the best method for collecting data. Telephone and face-to-face interviews are similar, but researchers cannot observe the participant's body language and facial expressions during the interview process. The advantage of face-to-face interviews is the ability of the researcher to continue to probe or drop additional questions based on the reactions of the participants to the questions being asked. For the purpose of the present study, face-to-face interviews were held with each of the students.

Creswell (2007) suggested that adequate recording procedures should be used when conducting face-to-face interviews. Audio recording devices should be used, as well as field notes recorded by the researcher. The audio recording devices need to be tested and new tapes used to assure that all information is being recorded.

The interview protocol needs to be designed that includes an appropriate number of open-ended questions. The protocol should be typed, with each question at the top of a separate page. This format allowed the researcher to make adequate notes on each question. A separate protocol was used for each participant.

The researcher and interviewee should agree on a place at which the interview could be conducted. The place should be quiet and easily accessible. The site should be comfortable and have a place that can accommodate audio recording equipment (Creswell, 2007).

Creswell (2007) suggested that after meeting at the site, the researcher should provide the interviewee with an informed consent form that describes the purpose of the study, amount of time that would be needed to complete the interview, and use of information obtained from the interviewee. This consent form also should detail the voluntary nature of participation, provide assurances of confidentiality, and discuss the benefits and risks associated with participation in the study.

The researcher should ask each question and encourage the participant to add any comments they may have that can provide additional explanations of the response. However, the researcher should be cognizant of the time factor and conclude the interview during the agreed upon time. At all times, the researcher must be polite and respectful. After completing the interview, the researcher should thank the interviewee and offer to provide a copy of the completed study if interested.

After completing the interview, the audio tapes were transcribed by an experienced transcriptionist. The researcher reviewed the transcribed interview and added any additional information from the field notes. The transcription was verified by having

another person listen to the audio tape and read the results. A copy of the transcribed interview was sent to the participant who was interviewed. He/she was asked to read through and make corrections and/or additions to the transcribed interview. After the researcher received the corrected interview, the changes were made to the computer file. Upon completion of all of the interviews, the data were ready for analysis.

Data Analysis

The first phase of the data analysis used frequency distributions to provide a profile of the participants. These data included gender, age, high school attended, self-reported grade point average to develop a demographic analysis of the individuals who participated in the study.

The second phase of the analysis adapted the content analysis steps detailed by Neuendorf (2001). The steps used in the present study are presented in Table 1.

A codebook was developed by the researcher using the terms she expected to find in the interviews. This codebook was used to develop the dictionary used with a computer program, such as SPSS Text Analysis for Surveys, to look for commonalities among terms used by the interviewees. This analysis provided information leading to themes and patterns among the interviews, as well as comparisons and contrasts that were inherent in the responses. The researcher read the interviews to obtain additional insight into trends and patterns in the data that provided information to address the research questions.

Table 1

Content Analysis Research Process

Step	Process
1	*Theory and rationale* – The development of the research questions and/or hypotheses
2	*Conceptualization* - This step reflects how you will answer the research questions. Here you must define what variables will be used in the study and how you will define the variables conceptually.
3	*Operationalization* – This step reflects the how you will measure the variables. Your measures must match your conceptualizations (internal validity). An a priori coding plan that provides a description of all measures must be created (Face and content validity are assessed at this point).
4	*Coding* – Either human coding or computer coding can be used. With human coding, you need to create a codebook where all variable measures are fully explained and a coding form. With computer coding, a codebook of sorts is needed with a full explanation of your dictionaries. A standard dictionary or an original dictionary created by the researcher can be used.
5	*Sampling* – At this step, determine the sampling plan (random sampling, census of the population).
6	*(A) Human coding*: The interviews will be coded by the researcher. *(B) Computer coding:* Apply dictionaries to the sample text to generalize per unit frequencies for each dictionary. Check sporadically for validation.
7	*Tabulation and reporting* – At this step, the material is coded and analyzed. After that is completed, you may proceed with reporting the results, using an appropriate format.

The demographic analyses are presented in tabular format in Chapter IV.

Frequency distributions were used to summarize the responses to each of the items on the

demographic survey. Results of the content analysis also were presented in Chapter IV.

The qualitative analysis was used to address each of the research questions separately.

Full transcriptions of the interviews, with all identifying information removed, were

included in an appendix. Conclusions and a discussion of the findings are presented in

Chapter V.

Summary

The qualitative analysis that was used in this study used a phenomenological approach to examining teacher/student ethnic congruence and its effect on first-year college outcomes. The 13 African American participants selected for the study have completed their education in school districts with both African American and Caucasian teachers. These students were able to provide answers that reflected their experiences with ethnically congruent teachers and those who were not ethnically congruent. Content analysis was used to summarize the interview responses to address the research questions.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the retrospective

perceptions of the academic experiences and outcomes of 13 African American full or

part-time college students enrolled in either a community college or university located in

an urban area. As stated in Chapter I, I present educational experiences including the self-

reported academic achievement and perceived success level attained by the student

during high school, and academic outcomes as the self-reported academic achievement

and success level attained after high school.

This chapter presents the results of my study. The first section includes a table of

participants (see Table 2) that offers demographic information pertaining to the

participants in this study. This section also included participant profiles that give more

background information about each participant. Following Table 2 and the participant

profiles an analysis of the data is presented. The analysis is a synthesis of the interviews

that identified four major themes and sub-themes. The final section is a brief summary of

the chapter findings.

Participant Profiles

Thirteen African American students between 18 and 22 years of age participated

in the research study. All student participants have completed high school in the

Metropolitan Detroit area, and were in their freshman year or have completed their

freshman year of college. Seven females and six males participated in the research study.

Each profile briefly details participant background information gathered during the interview process. Lastly, numbers were assigned to each participant to protect their identities. Table 2 presents the demographic profiles of the students.

Table 2

Demographic Profiles of the Students

Participant	Gender	Age	HS Location	HS GPA	College
1	M	22	Urban	3.5	Eastern Michigan University
2	M	22	Urban	2.7	Eastern Michigan University
3	F	18	Suburban	3.0	Oakland University
4	F	19	Suburban	4.2	Saginaw Valley State University
5	F	18	Suburban	2.7	Livingstone College
6	F	19	Suburban	3.0	Henry Ford Community College
7	M	18	Urban	3.3	Michigan State University
8	F	18	Urban	3.0	Oakland University
9	F	19	Suburban	3.3	University of Detroit Mercy
10	M	22	Suburban	3.5	Eastern Michigan University
11	M	19	Urban	3.3	Saginaw Valley University
12	F	20	Suburban	4.0	Purdue University
13	M	20	Suburban	3.5	Wayne State University

Participant 1

Participant 1 is a 22-year-old male who currently attends Eastern Michigan University. He attended an urban high school. Participant 1 described his high school experience as encouraging. He felt that some of his teachers went above and beyond their duties as a teacher to make sure he was getting the tools that he needed. He stated that he had two teachers who positively influenced his educational experience because the kept it "real" with the students by discussing life experiences in and out of the classroom. Participant 1 also stated that approximately 80% of his high school teachers were African

American, and 15% were Caucasian. Upon graduation, Participant 1 plans to enroll in a MBA or MBA/JD program.

Participant 2

Participant 2 is a 22 year-old male who attends Eastern Michigan University. He classified his high school as urban. Participant 2 describes his high school experience as "pretty decent, yet nothing special." He did not feel that his experience was very encouraging because other students who wanted to learn were separated from those who did not want to learn. Participant 2 had a Math teacher who took a special interest in him and always encouraged him to do his best. He stated that she helped build his confidence level. He discussed how this teacher broke his fear of presenting and speaking in front of the class. Participant 2 was also an athlete. He played basketball and ran cross-country. He stated that his grades during high school were a reflection of his attempts to balance playing sports and school. Participant 2 currently is studying sports management and would like to become a sports agent. He also indicated that he would like to go back to law school to become a lawyer who conducts contract negotiations. Lastly, Participant 2 stated that approximately 98% of his high school teachers were African American, and 2% were Caucasian.

Participant 3

Participant 3 is an 18-year-old female who attends Oakland University. She classified her high school as suburban. Participant 3 stated that she had a good high school experience. She felt that her experiences were very encouraging because she mostly had teachers who would be willing to help her and promoted positive school experiences. A teacher she had in middle school most affected her educational

experiences and outcomes. She classified him as a bad teacher because he was rude, did not provide help when needed, and acted like a racist. Although she thought of him as a bad teacher, she described him as a teacher who made her aware as early as middle school that while education is supposed to be free, students must be willing to work hard because teachers like her middle school math teacher may not want to give students the education they deserve. Participant 3 plans to major in counseling or child development. She would like to become a counselor to help kids. She attributes her career goals to all the teachers she had that were able to connect with their students. Lastly, Participant 3 stated that approximately 25% of her high school teachers were African American, and 75% were Caucasian.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is a 19-year-old female who attends Saginaw Valley State University. She classified her high school as suburban. Participant 4 stated that she had a fun educational high school experience. She enjoyed learning and always went to class ready to learn something new. Although she experienced some personal tragedies during high school, Participant 4 stated that she would classify her life while at school as encouraging. She stated that her English teacher influenced her high school educational experiences and outcomes most. This teacher affected her in a positive way because she was a Black teacher with a voice, setting the tone that her class was about business. Participant 4 stated that her English teacher made her feel confident and always encouraged her about her writing. She also mentioned that this teacher was one who never put anyone down and always was willing to help her students learn. Participant 4 stated that she also had teachers who encouraged her, although they lacked high standards

and expectations. She stated that, "Some teachers dropped their standards and I was able to see that, which made me work harder…It made me self teach…encouraged me to do more because I knew that we should have been doing more that what the teacher had us doing at the time".

Participant 4 plans on graduating with a B.S. in Nursing. She would like to obtain an internship during her 3rd year in college that would allow her to gain some experience working in the hospital. In addition to continuing her undergraduate studies, Participant 4 would like to continue expanding her cleaning company, which she currently operates even as a full-time college student. Participant 4 stated that approximately 5% of her high school teachers were African American, and 90% were Caucasian and 5% were other.

Participant 5

Participant 5 is an 18-year-old female that attends Livingstone College. She classified her high school as suburban. Participant 5 described her educational experience starting from middle school throughout high school as very difficult. She stated that she was faced with racism and favoritism. Racism due to some of the stereotypical statements that teachers made like, "all Black people are the same." She felt teachers played favorites by interacting more with the students who were labeled as smart. Most of these students were White or a few Black honor students. Because of this, Participant 5 preferred to have Black teachers rather than White teachers. She implied that the Black teachers took time to understand students and their situations more than the White teachers. Participant 5 indicated that the Black teachers were more understanding of her seizure disorder, while White teachers wanted to write her off as learning disabled. Her impression was that White teachers really did not care about her disorder, yet Black

teachers took time to understand the disorder and understood that she could not get stressed out, therefore they gave her more time to complete certain tasks. She stated that of all the White teachers she had, only one appeared to be open to understanding the Black students.

Participant 5 described her high school experience as very discouraging. She stated that she considered herself a failure because of the belittling comments from her teachers. Participant 5 described the White Algebra teacher she had during her junior year in high school as a teacher who most influenced her educational experiences and outcomes. This teacher used racial slander towards her such as, " all you Black people are the same," and " You're all dumb." Participant 5 stated that her mom took this teacher to the school district's board of education regarding her conduct with Participant 5. Although the experience with her Algebra teacher was negative and a hindrance in her educational experience as a high school student, Participant 5 began to view this teacher's negative behavior as helpful when she was faced with having her again as a senior in high school. She turned her negative situation into a positive. Participant 5 stated that, " I showed her that I could actually do well. I proved her wrong…that I was not dumb at all. I'm glad I went through that experience because it shows that when I put my mind to it, I can really do something and prove you wrong." Participant 5 currently is in her freshman year of college where she is deciding between computer information systems or psychology as her major. Participant 5 stated that approximately 85% of her high school teachers were African American, and 10% were Caucasian.

Participant 6

Participant 6 is a 19-year-old female who attends Henry Ford Community College. She classified her high school as suburban. Participant 6 described her high school educational experiences as good because it helped prepare her for college. She stated that her English class in particular helped prepare her with analyzing and writing at the college level. For this reason, she feels that her high school experiences were encouraging. Participant 6 stated that her AP English teacher affected her educational experiences and outcomes most because this teacher always set high expectations for students in her class, and she worked hard to meet and/or exceed those expectations.

Participant 6's immediate academic goal is to raise her college GPA to a 3.5. She currently is studying graphic design at the community college level. Her career goals are to graduate from the community college, and move on to a university to improve her skills and obtain a bachelor's degree. Participant 6 stated that approximately 25% of her high school teachers were African American, and 75% were Caucasian.

Participant 7

Participant 7 is an 18-year-old male who attends Michigan State University. He classified his high school as urban. Participant 7 described his educational experience as "not focused on the right things." He stated that during high school, the primary focus should have been reading, math and science to better prepare students for college. Participant 7 stated that some experiences were encouraging in high school because some teachers taught students things that would "help you overall, help you in life". Whereas, some teachers just wanted students to get by or helped them negatively by being more like a friend than a teacher.

The teacher that most affected Participant 7 was his physics teacher, although he was very tough, and had a "if you get it you get, if you don't you don't attitude." Participant 7 indicated that his physics teacher held all students to high standards or they did not pass his class. He thought this rigor helped him understand that people must work hard at what they want, despite how others view or feel about them. Being in this teacher's class helped shape Participant 7's academic and career goals. His goal is to maintain a 3.5 or higher while in college and to become a mechanical engineer. He also aspires to become an entrepreneur. Participant 7 stated that approximately 10% of his high school teachers were African American, and 90% were Caucasian.

Participant 8

Participant 8 is an 18-year-old female who attends Oakland University. She classified her high school as urban. Participant 8 described her educational experiences as very easy in comparison to college. She thought that greater one-on one connections with her teachers made her easier to handle. Although she described her experience as easy, Participant 8 felts that 50% of her academic experiences were encouraging and 50% were discouraging. She explained that the encouraging experiences were due to the teachers who were supportive, and the discouraging experiences were the result of teachers who had a nonchalant attitude towards students' academic achievement.

Participant 8 had two teachers who positively influenced her educational experiences and outcomes due to their content area background and their concern in Participant 8's success in science because she wanted to major in nursing in college. She stated that both science teachers were positive and encouraged her to do her best at all times. Participant 8 stated that she would like to maintain at least a 3.6 GPA. She also

indicated that she would be majoring in nursing and wanted to become a pediatric or obstetric nurse. Participant 8 attributed her participation in a female mentoring program while in high school to wanting to become nurse. She also aspires to complete a Masters of Nursing. Participant 8 stated that approximately 6% of her high school teachers were African American, and 94% were Caucasian.

Participant 9

Participant 9 is a 19-year-old female who attends University of Detroit Mercy. She classified her high school as suburban. Participant 9 described her high school educational experience as extremely easy when compared to college. She said she never had to study in high school and rarely had homework. However she had a rude awakening after entering college because things were different. Homework and studying were required. Participant 9 believed that her high school experience was easy due to the lack of rigor in the curriculum at her school. She felt as if the teachers catered the curriculum to the population of students, which were mostly students who were learning English as a second language (ESL). She thought this favoritism caused students like her to fail to get the education they deserved. Looking back, Participant 9 stated that she thought her school should have broken up the classes and/or ability levels per core subject areas. Because of this experience, Participant 9 considered her academic experience as discouraging because school is about learning and that did not truly take place at her school.

Participant 9 stated that her English teacher was most influential because she was very encouraging and provided students with basics about life after high school. Although Participant 9 thought that her English teacher was positive and helped her

educational experience, she too believed that because the teacher not have a rigorous curriculum, she did not teach her all that she needed to know to be well prepared for college.

Academically, Participant 9 plans to complete the Nursing program at her university successfully. She also aspires to complete a Masters of Nursing program and eventually teach future nurses. Participant 9 stated that 100% of her teachers were Caucasian.

Participant 10

Participant 10 is a 22-year-old male who attends Eastern Michigan University. He classified his high school as suburban. Participant 10 described his educational experiences as college prep. He had honors and advanced placement courses, and for this reason he felt well prepared for college. He also described his experiences as encouraging because of the expectations his parents set for him, the expectations he set for himself, and the expectations his teachers had for him. The teacher that most affected him during high school was his English teacher because this teacher made sure that all of his students knew how to write. He described this teacher as one that would stay after class to review work with a student, and as a teacher, he discussed the importance of college with his students.

Academically, Participant 10's goal is to maintain a high GPA and to graduate with honors. His ultimate career goal is to become a judge. Therefore upon graduation from college, he is planning to apply and attend law school to become an attorney. Lastly, Participant 10 indicated that approximately 2% of his high school teachers were African American, and 98% were Caucasian.

Participant 11

Participant 11 is a 19-year-old male who attends Saginaw Valley State University. He classified his high school as urban. Participant 11 described his overall educational experience as mostly encouraging due to having helpful and caring teachers. However his experiences were discouraging at times due to the student population making if difficult for teachers to teach, and difficult for students who wanted to concentrate in class. Participant 11 indicated that his English teacher was the teacher who affected him most while in high school. He described her as a firm Black teacher who made sure that all students were on track for college. He personally felt that she helped him learn to express himself more in public. Although he was in her honors class, she used advanced placement materials to make sure that students were receiving rigorous coursework. Because of her high expectations, Participant 11 believed that her teaching style was a big help. He felt that he was prepared for college because of the reading materials that she provided and the writing skills she taught her students.

Participant 11 wants to obtain his Master of Social Work immediately after completing his undergraduate degree. His career goal is to become a clinical social worker. Participant 11 indicated that approximately 5% of his high school teachers were African American, and 95% were Caucasian.

Participant 12

Participant 12 is a 20-year-old female who attends Purdue University. She classified her high school as suburban. Participant 12 described her high school experience as college prep. She stated that she had a very rigorous course load. In fact, she maintained a 4.0 throughout her high school career. Participant 12 had good

relationships with all of her teachers; however, she wished that the student population had been more diverse. There was only one white student in her class, and she was in direct competition with that student in regard to grades, scholarships, colleges, awards, etc.

Looking back on her high school experiences, Participant 12 felt that her high school experience was encouraging because the teachers did a good job at creating the idea that she and her classmates were going to be prepared for college with the coursework that they were given in class. However once she became a college student, she did not feel as prepared as her teachers had led her to believe. She feels discouraged now because she really was not as prepared as she thought she was for college.

Participant 12 indicated that her English teacher affected her educational experiences and outcomes most because she made sure that students knew how to communicate properly both verbally and in written form. She felt that her English teacher was a great help because she pushed students to do their best. She also described her English teacher as her mentor.

Academically, Participant 12 stated that her goal is "to do the best she can and learn the most she can." Participant 12 is interested in majoring in business. Participant 12 indicated that approximately 80% of her high school teachers were African American, and 20% were Caucasian.

Participant 13

Participant 13 is a 20-year-old female who attends Wayne State University. He classified his high school as suburban. Participant 13 described his educational experiences from elementary to high school. During elementary school he attended a charter school. He stated that the school placed a heavy emphasis on reading, writing, and

math. Once in middle school, he attended his neighborhood public school. He felt that his experiences changed at this time because the teachers did not appear to be as focused as they were when he was in elementary school. In high school, Participant 13 stated that he had very encouraging experiences, with the exception of one Math teacher. He thought that she had very low expectations for African American students. He stated that she related to the African American students based on stereotypical thoughts and views. Participant 13 believed that his White math teacher favored the one White student in his class over the African American students by the taking a special interest him/her.

Participant 13's reported that his English teacher greatly affected his educational experience because she took pride in the accomplishment of all of her students. She appeared passionate about teaching and did a great job preparing him for college. For this reason, he felt as if she had a positive influence on his educational experiences in high school.

Participant 13's academic goal is to earn a 4.0 the remainder of his college career. His career goal is to become a physical therapist. According to Participant 13, approximately 80% of his high school teachers were African American, and 20% were Caucasian.

Presentation of Results

This section presents the findings in the interview data. The data is grouped together by major themes found during the analysis stage. The Content Analysis Research Process described in Chapter III was used to analyze the data.

Four major themes reflect the results of this study. Although it was not planned part of the study, three of the themes found were reflected in the theories and research

questions that guided this study, whereas the fourth theme was found during the coding process. During the coding process, the researcher analyzed the interview questions in search for common responses. The common responses where then categorized into the four major themes. The four themes are defined and discussed in narrative form, using the data gathered during the interview process.

Each theme contains sub-themes, which are not addressed separately, but considered a part of the major theme. Sub-themes reflect responses that were stated by several participants that relate to the major theme. Some of the sub-themes that are presented during the narrative account to further explain the major themes. A table is presented following the discussion of each theme. The table presents the theme of focus and sub-themes, which were the most frequent responses from participants. When appropriate, outliers, "a response that one or a few of the respondents in the research study stated" (Sproull, 2005), is noted because the response is important to the study, although the response was few in number.

The primary research question that guided this study was:
What influences do teacher perceptions and expectations have on African American student perceptions of their educational experiences, including academic achievement and academic outcomes, when examining their experiences through the lens of (a) teacher expectations, (b) racial congruence, and (c) stereotype threat?
The following sub-questions served as research questions as well. They are as follows.

1. Do African American students have different perceptions of White teachers' and African American teachers' expectations of them? Who contributed more positively?

How did they contribute more positively? (Teacher expectations and racial congruence)

2. How do African American students feel based on their African American teachers' perceptions and White teachers' perceptions of them as students? (Racial congruence, teacher expectations, and stereotype threat)

3. Do African American students feel pressured to fight a negative stereotype? If so, does it affect their performance? (Stereotype threat)

Theme One: Perceptions of Teacher Expectations

All 13 participants stated that teacher expectations played an important role in how they viewed their educational experiences. Teacher expectations were defined based on how the participants viewed their African American and Caucasian teacher's expectations of the students in their classes. Student responses were synthesized into two subthemes, Black teachers had higher expectations than White teachers and Qualities of White Teachers with High Expectations. Table 3 presents the themes and subthemes for Theme 1.The subthemes are presented in the following narrative analysis.

Black teachers had higher expectations than White teachers. Sixty-one percent of the participants indicated that their Black teachers had higher expectations for academic performance than their White teachers. Many participants specified that their Black teachers pushed them more and always encouraged them to do their best. Participants also thought that their Black teachers had higher expectations in comparison to their White Teachers because the Black teachers set high standards for all of their students. For instance, when asked who had higher or lower expectations of her while in high school, Participant 4 replied:

Table 3

Theme 1: Perceptions of Teacher Expectations

Sub-Theme	Responses
Black teachers have higher expectations than White teachers	• Black teachers always kept high standards, while White teachers lowered their standards when students couldn't or wouldn't achieve • Black teachers always encouraged students to do their best • Black teachers have higher expectations because of racial congruence • White teachers made it easy to pass class due to low level work required
Qualities of White teachers with high expectations	
Building relationships	• White teachers who were viewed to have high expectations built relationships with students • White teachers who wanted to push students to achieve, but were not sure of how to motivate students
Favoritism	• White teachers had high expectations for the smart "Black" students

> I think Black teachers had higher expectations. They really wanted me to
> excel. They had a standard and they kept it. They did what they had to do
> to get you to that standard, not lower it and just let you meet it. That's not
> what they did… Caucasian teachers lowered the standard when they said,
> you guys are not passing the test so now I'm going to make it easier, and if
> that's not easy enough, I'll just give you the answers. Or, I'll walk around
> and help you while you are taking the test. That's not a test.

When asked the same question, Participant 13 replied:

> Black teachers have higher expectations for Black students because I
> believe Black teachers really want to see the Black students flourish. I feel
> as if not all the White teachers felt the same way. I feel like a lot of White
> teachers just wanted their Black students to "just pass", to just do good,
> good enough to pass. Whereas, I felt the Black teachers wanted their
> students to do their best.

Participant 13 also told the story of a White math teacher that he had during most of his

high school career that he felt set low expectations. In this teacher's classes, the student

witnessed low-level work being distributed, inflated grades, blatant favoritism, and

distribution of answers needed to just get through the lesson instead of really teaching the

subject matter. Unfortunately, he attributed much of his struggle with math as a college

student to low expectations and standards that this teacher had for him and the other

students while in her class. A few other participants who had attended the same school

and had courses with this math teacher described similar experiences. When describing

his experience with his White math teacher, Participant 13 shared the following:

> My math teacher had very low expectations for her class. I feel as if she
> really never expected the Black students to do exceptionally well in her
> class. She never pushed us to do well. She never set any kind of bar or
> expectations due to her belief in the stereotype portrayed by the media of
> Blacks. [This teacher] applied this stereotype to her students instead of
> getting to know them. Because of this I would walk into her class with a
> defeated attitude.

Other participants stated a similar view of Black teachers having higher

expectations when compared to their White teachers because many felt as if their White

teachers made it easy for students to pass the class by providing low-level work because

they thought the teacher assumed that the academic level of the Black students in the

class was low. Participant 4 described a situation in her math class where low-level work

was given to the student because in her opinion the teacher's expectations were low for

the Black students in the class. Participant 4 described her experience with being given

low-level work in her math class by saying:

> Some of them [White teachers] came from schools with predominantly
> White kids and when they came to our school it was totally different. They
> [White teachers] automatically felt like they had to be easy. One of our
> math teachers actually brought in, and it made me feel really bad, addition,
> subtraction and multiplication sheets that I did in 2nd grade. I had to fill
> worksheets like this out in one minute in 2nd grade and have all the
> answers correct, but in high school we had to work on this for the entire
> hour. It made me feel really bad. We were actually doing math problems
> from a workbook for elementary school.

The Black teachers of participants was also viewed as having higher expectations in comparison to their White teachers because many participants felt that the Black teachers provided more positive words of encouragement and support. The participants thought that the Black teachers appeared to want to work with all of their students regardless of race, behavior, or academic ability, whereas the majority of their White teachers did not provide the same type of encouragement and support. For instance, Participant 5 stated:

> It was a few White students and she [White teacher] would explain the material more to them than she would to the Black students. There were four White students that she [White teacher] made sit directly in front of her. She would always want us [Black students] to sit in the back of the classroom because she said we were just going to be bums on the corner and all this other stuff. She [White teacher] really didn't care that much. The White Teachers really didn't like to help the Black students. It was only a selected few [Black students] that they would help. Whenever you would ask them [White Teachers] for help, they would say they were busy and didn't have time. . . . The Black teachers were more hands on and they didn't care what race you were. They would help you more. They cared more about all of their students. They would stay after-school to help you if you asked them to, and they would explain it as if they were in your shoes. They would tell their story and let you know, I'm just like you.

Qualities of White teachers with high expectations. The majority of participants provided remarks that their Black teachers had higher expectations for them as high school students than their White teachers. Some participants felt that some White teachers also had high expectation for them. Two key responses were associated with White teachers who were thought to have high expectations. The students indicated that some White teachers *Built Relationships* with students, while others showed *Favoritism*. Three of the 13 participants indicated that White teachers who built relationships with students set high expectations, whereas 8 of the 13 participants thought that White

teachers who set high expectations for their students did so based on favoritism. Both of these subthemes are discussed in the following sections.

Building relationships. White teachers who appeared interested in getting to know the students and their background were viewed as teachers who cared. For that reason these teachers were viewed as having high expectations for their students. For instance, during the interview session, Participant 4 shared that she had a few White teachers during her educational career who were influential and set high expectations for her because they took time to learn about her as a Black student. She stated that they built a relationship with all of their students, not just the "favorites." Participant 4 spoke specifically about her history and geography teacher. She stated:

> [The teacher] took time to understand our culture. She listened and she was understanding. Instead of saying that's crazy because of some of the abnormal things that happened in our culture that did not happen to normal people with normal lives…She actually listened to us about what was going on at home so she could get a better understanding of how to deal with us. Whereas some White teachers can't handle it, so they begin to drop their standards. Because of this, the students don't work hard; the kids take advantage of the teacher and take over the classroom. The teacher then has no control. [This teacher] had control of her classroom.

Participant 13 shared similar feelings when it came to the White teachers that he had encountered during high school who had high expectations for him. He noted that he had two White teachers of this kind. One was an English teacher and the other was his Business teacher. He indicated that neither teacher saw race nor the stereotypes associated with his race, instead they saw his potential. Participant 13 shared the following when describing his English teacher. He stated:

> She really took pride in her class. She was proud of all her students no matter if they were White, Black, or Arabic. She really loved all of her students. I felt like she took an interest in me and the other Black students.

She encouraged us. She felt as if we could really do better than what
society portrayed us as.

Favoritism. In addition to having high expectations for the White students, 61%
of participants felt that the White Teachers who had high expectations for Black students
had high expectations for only the "smart" Black students. These examples are what
many of the participants labeled as "favoritism." According to the participants, the White
students who were favored were favored because they were the same race as the teacher,
which was not unexpected to the Black students. Other students perceived that their
White teachers expected the White students to do better just because they were White.
For example, Participant 12 shared her interaction with and views of "favoritism." As one
of the favored Black students, Participant 12's story is interesting. As discussed in the
Participant Profile section, Participant 12 was in direct competition with the only White
student in her graduating class. They were in competition for everything, grades,
scholarships, colleges, awards and etc, all throughout high school. The competition was
so strong that they fell within points of who would earn the title of valedictorian.
Participant 12 described this experience as being favored as one of the "smart" Black
students, but still not always viewed as being on the same level academically as the
White student. She shared the following to paint this picture.

> I felt like I was the Black student they put on a pedestal throughout high
> school. The Black student that all other Black students should be like. I
> was the little Black student mascot for the school… Other Black students
> may have been good students academically, but because they may have
> been viewed as being a behavior problem, but weren't as strong in the
> subject area as me, they didn't get treated the same… It made me feel
> awkward sometimes because students would treat me differently.

When she shared her views about her White student colleagues and favoritism, she felt
that some of her White teachers may have viewed her as being a student who had to

struggle a bit more than her White counterpart. She described it when she stated the

following:

> They (White teachers) expected her (her White colleague) versus me to
> understand it, get it and know it, whereas they expected me to struggle and
> have to really work hard to get where she(her White colleague) is at.

In another case of the "favored smart Black student," many participants indicated

that these students were favored and high expectations were set for them because they did

not fit the stereotypical views often portrayed of African Americans. For this reason, they

believed the White teachers favored these students, therefore having high expectations

only for them versus all the Black students in the class. For example, Participant 4 said

she was labeled as one of the "smart" Black students so she saw the difference in how she

was treated versus other Black students who were not viewed as some of the "smart"

Black students. When sharing her experience as a favorite, Participant 4 shared the

following:

> I was considered as one of the smart kids and then there were the other
> kids. Some of the White teachers would treat the smart kids different from
> the other kids with academic and/or behavior problems. I was considered
> better than the other kids based on my grades and test scores. They were
> really proud of me and always encouraged me. They saw me as different.
> Honestly, they saw and treated me as superior and I am sure some of the
> other students were able to pick up on it as much as I could.

Conversely, Participant 5 experienced the complete opposite when it came to

"favoritism." She was one of the students who did not get preferential treatment, yet

could see the better treatment that the "smart" Black students received. She shared that

her Spanish teacher showed more favoritism toward the Black students who transferred

from predominately White schools because they were viewed as being better than the

other Black students because they came from city schools and were not as smart.

Being on either side of this experience, "smart" Black student or not, the majority

of participants felt that favoritism shown by White teachers toward Black students was

unfair and made them feel uncomfortable.

Theme Two: Stereotype Threat

The students' narratives revealed the concept of stereotype threat because they

reflected their perceptions that they were going to be evaluated by their teachers based on

many stereotypes associated with African Americans. Table 4 provides the items

included in the third theme.

Table 4

Theme 2: Stereotype Threats

Responses
• Stereotypes encouraged Black students to work harder to prove that they did not fit the stereotype
• Black students tried harder to ensure academic success
• Stereotype threats decreased their confidence and increased stress levels
• Black students felt pressure to always stay on top of their school work

A few participants did not view their experiences with being stereotyped as

stereotype threat, based on the responses shared by participants. In some cases, the

stereotyping they experienced may have influenced their academic experiences in ways

they did not recognize. Without knowing, they experienced stereotype threat. However,

many shared that their experiences with being stereotyped encouraged and/or motivated

them to work harder to "prove" that the stereotypes placed upon them were untrue. For

example, Participant 9 shared that she felt African American students often were

stereotyped as "not as smart, ignorant, ghetto, not able to learn like White students, or

fought all the time." Although she was confident that none of those characteristics were true of her, she indicated that being aware of these stereotypes made her work harder to prove these stereotypes wrong. Participant 2 shared a similar view when asked if he ever felt the pressure to fight a negative stereotype, he said:

> The stereotype that Black people don't study, their pants always sag, they always sit in the back of the classroom. It didn't affect my academic success or academic achievement because it showed by me sitting in the front of the class, my grades did go up and I was sharper when it came to tests and those types of things.

Although both of these students experienced success academically by graduating from high school and attending college, many of their conscious and unconscious actions were done to disprove the stereotype associated with African Americans.

When asked the same question, other participants shared that because they knew that they did not fit the stereotype, there was nothing to prove. For example, Participant 1 stated:

> I wasn't a troublemaker. I wasn't that "bad kid". I didn't have to fight so hard. I did what I had to do. I went to class, I played sports, I went to practice after school and I went home…I took a test to get in my high school…I was placed in an accelerated program. I was already not involved in all the stereotypes. The people stereotyping were from the outside and didn't know the facts or had any information about different students.

In addition, Participant 7 shared that he has done and does enough things to beat the stereotype of Black males, therefore there is no need to fight the stereotypes by doing anything that is not truly who he is. He shared the following:

> I do enough things to fight the stereotype so I don't feel the need to change for anybody or whatever anybody says. If I want to sag and the stereotype is that Black men sag their pants, I am still going to sag because that is what I like to do. I'm not in jail. I'm not dead and I am not selling drugs so whatever else I am doing is not a stereotype.

Other participants acknowledged that the stereotyping they experienced while in high school negatively influenced their performance. Those students shared that their experience with stereotype threat decreased their confidence and increased their stress levels because they always were worried about being seen as a failure and living up to the stereotype associated with Blacks and education. For example, Participant 10 shared:

> I constantly feel like I have to fight that stereotype. I constantly felt like that when I was in high school...it was always on the news that African Americans underachieved, specifically males…I always felt like I had to fight that stereotype. I always felt like that around other races. I felt like I had to represent my race and to do what I needed to do to fight the stereotype.

When sharing experiences with stereotype threat, Participant 13 shared:

> I never wanted to be the Black student that wasn't succeeding and was being that stereotypical Detroiter. I would always strive to do the best I can, keep my grades up and form a relationship with the teachers…I always felt pressure because I had so many White teachers and I never wanted them to say [I] am not doing good in class. I never wanted that idea to be in their mind. I also never wanted it to be in the [Principal's] eyes. I never wanted to be put into a category with students who weren't doing good, Black Detroit students.

Participant 12 shared that her experiences with stereotyping affected her academic performance while in high school. Participant 12 stated that she felt pressured to always stay on top of her schoolwork and to be a role model or "model Black student." Participant 12 also stated that she felt like she could never be lazy for fear of the stereotype.

These narratives revealed the concept of stereotype threat because they reflected how the participants perceived that they were going to be evaluated by their teachers based on many stereotypes associated with African Americans.

Theme Three: Racial Congruence

Racial congruence also was a common theme based on the shared experiences of the participants. Table 5 presents the responses salient to the fourth theme.

Table 5

Theme 3: Racial Congruence

Responses
• White teachers who build a relationship with Black students need to understand their culture
• Black teachers were viewed as role models or mentors
• Black teachers took a more hands-on approach when working with Black students
• White teachers appeared to be disconnected from Black students who did not take an interest in learning
• Students felt more connected to Black teachers because they were treated like family
• White teachers took more of an interest in the White students in the class

The majority of the participants mentioned how being of the same or different race impacted their educational experience. When discussing how the race of the teacher impacted their educational experiences, the majority of participants discussed how relationships played a role in the success of their high school education. Teachers that participants felt worked at forming a relationship with their students were viewed highly amongst the participants. All of the teachers that participants viewed as building a relationship with their students, participants saw those teachers as having high expectations for them as students and/or they were viewed as an influential teacher. Some participants shared that they had a few White teachers who appeared to build a relationship with them as Black students. In contrast, most participants shared that their Black teachers were more likely to work in building relationships with them during high school. Participants shared that their Black teachers were more hands-on with how they

approached their students and they took an interest in the personal lives of their students. Many participants shared that because their Black teachers had similar backgrounds, they may have been able to form bonds easily with their Black teachers. Those connections resulted in their teachers having high expectations for them as their students and caused the teachers to push them harder. Because of these key characteristics in building student-teacher relationships, most participants viewed their Black teachers as having higher expectations of them. When sharing his views, Participant 13 stated:

> Black teachers had higher expectations for me because most of them came from the same background so they really understood the background and how it feels to be stereotyped in high school by White teachers and by principals. They [Black teachers] really understood that Black students like me need those teachers that are gonna push them and bring out their full potential.

> Other participants shared that they viewed their Black teachers as role models or

mentors. When discussing how he viewed his Black teachers, Participant 7 shared that he viewed his Black teachers as more influential because he viewed their level of success as what the future might hold for him. For example, Participant 7 stated:

> I look at Black teachers more on how far I can go because I don't care what anyone says, it is always going to be harder for an African American to succeed in life. I always look at them [Black teachers] and say how far I can go in life… I look at them [Black teachers] as a successful person so I feel like I can be successful and go even farther.

Participant 8 also discussed how her Black teachers influenced her more during her educational career. She too felt that her Black teachers had higher expectation and because the similarity of race between she and her Black teachers, they pushed her more to do well and for that reason she tried harder with her Black teachers. For example, Participant 8 shared the following when discussing how her Black teachers influenced her. She stated:

> I think they [Black teachers] want to show our generation you can do it.
> They don't want us to fail in life so they give us a lot of encouragement.
> They want our generation to do good.

Because of how Participant 8 perceived her Black teachers, she shared that it made her want to work harder to accomplish her goals so that she would not let her teachers down. She shared the following:

> I wanted to achieve more. I wanted to show that I can do it and that I would not give up. They [Black teachers] are looking forward to us coming back to them saying I am this and I am that now. They want us to show them they what they did helped. It makes them feel good to look back at their students and see that they achieved their goals.

Theme Four: Stereotypes

Although student reports varied, the majority of participants shared that they experienced being stereotyped during their educational career. These shared experiences created theme four, Stereotypes. The theme of Stereotypes is the final theme found in the results of this study. Stereotypes was the one theme that was not found in the literature review. It did not reflect the theories or research questions used to guide this study. Because of that, this theory adds to the literature.

Table 6 presents the subthemes that emerged from the responses of the participants regarding stereotypes. Most of the students shared that either their peers or teachers stereotyped them. A few participants also sensed that they were stereotyped by school administration. When participants shared experiences of being stereotyped, they felt they were perceived as fitting the stereotypes that society often uses when portraying Blacks, or they were stereotyped because they did not fit the stereotypes that society uses to portray of Blacks.

Table 6

Theme 4: Stereotypes

Sub-Theme	Responses
Behavior/Mindset	• White teachers viewed them based on stereotypical views of Black • Black students, especially males, were viewed as troublemakers
Academic Ability	• White teachers delivered instruction based on stereotypical views of Black students • Smart Black students received better treatment from White teachers than Black students who were average or poor students • African American students, specifically males, underachieve and drop out of school in greater numbers

When students talked about being stereotyped by their peers, it was usually based on the favoritism expressed by their White teachers. Because White teachers often favored the Black students who were academically acceptable, those favored Black students were stereotyped by their peers. Whereas, stereotypes they experienced while interacting with their teachers were based on the stereotypical portrayal of African Americans.

Of all the responses shared by participants, the experiences of being stereotyped included the following two sub-themes: (a) behavior/mindset, and (b) academic ability (intelligence). Each sub-theme is defined and discussed below in narrative form.

Behavior/mindset. Based on responses shared by participants, the behavior/mindset sub-theme was defined as being labeled as aggressive, violent, loud, angry, irresponsible, unmotivated, and/or lazy. When participants discussed being stereotyped based on their behavior/mindset by their teachers, participants defined behavior/mindset by sharing stories where they felt their White teachers viewed Black students based on many of the stereotypical views of Blacks portrayed in society. For example, Participant 1 shared that he remembered feeling as if he was stereotyped

because his high school was located in the inner city and that it was assumed that all kids, Black in particular, in the inner city were troublemakers. Participant 9 also stated that she felt that many of her teachers expected her to act a certain way or do certain things because she was African American. She shared that this made her feel like an outsider.

      Academic ability. Participants described their encounters with being stereotyped based on academic ability by sharing what they experienced. These experiences reflected how many of the participants believed they were viewed by their teachers based on the stereotypical views that society portrays of Blacks when it comes to education and academic ability. The stereotypical portrayal is one where Blacks are dumb, do not study, are not honor students, can not make it to or in college, and/or are not concerned about education and etc. Many participants shared that they felt as if White teachers viewed them as not as smart as the White students based on some teacher actions and comments. For example, Participant 5 shared that one of her (White) teachers told her" All you Black people are the same. You're all dumb." Other participants shared that their White teachers delivered instruction that was not very rigorous because of their low expectations and perceptions of Black students. Because of this, many participants shared that they tried to work hard at proving those teachers wrong. They did not want to fit the stereotype that their teachers and the rest of society had for them as Blacks regarding their academic ability. This behavior could best be defined as stereotype threat, which is discussed in a future section.

      Participant 9 shared a story where she experienced being stereotyped by her teachers as one of the few African Americans in her school, as well as by the parents of

her classmates. The event took place during an honors assembly where she was being honored for her academic success. Participant 9 stated:

> We use to have honors assemblies every quarter and people use to invite their parents. During one of the honors assemblies I was standing in front with the rest of the Arabic and White students and I could actually hear parents whispering about me getting honored. I could hear because they were so close to the front and I was walking past them as I went to get my certificate. Too, they have a word that they use that means African American in Chaldean. It made me feel very uncomfortable…Times like that I don't get discouraged…I get more motivated like watch this, watch what I can do next semester too.

Summary

In closing Chapter IV, student-teacher relationships appeared to be a common thread among the four themes that emerged from the interviews. Depending if the relationship was made or not made determined how the participants perceived their educational experience. For example, if a relationship was formed between the teacher and students, participants viewed that experience more positively. Conversely, when no student-teacher relationship formed, stereotype threat was activated, making it difficult for the participant to succeed.

The majority of participants viewed their Black teachers as having higher expectations for them in comparison to their White teachers. However, White teachers who were viewed as having formed relationships with participants also were viewed as teachers who had high expectations. Those White teachers who were viewed as not taking the time to understand the participant and his/her culture were teachers who activated stereotype threats. Participants shared that they thought they had to prove stereotypes associated with Blacks were untrue in the classrooms of those teachers.

Racial congruence played a key role in perceptions that Black students had of their teachers. They thought their Black teachers had higher expectations because many of their Black teachers took a personal interest, had a greater understanding of the culture, and/ or had similar backgrounds. Because of this perception shared by many of the participants, they tried harder to succeed for fear of letting down Black teachers who appeared to care about them and their futures. Due to racial congruence, a bond formed between Black teachers and Black students that allowed them to view the Black teacher as a mentor or role model. In the Black teacher, the students saw possibilities for their futures that could be accomplished with hard work and dedication.

Chapter V provides a discussion of the findings pertaining to existing research. Implications for practice, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine the retrospective

perceptions of the academic experiences and outcomes of 13 African American full or

part-time college students enrolled in either community colleges or universities located in

an urban area. For the purpose of this study, educational experiences are defined as self-

reported academic achievement and perceived success level attained by participants

during high school. Academic outcomes are the self-reported academic achievement and

success level attained at their colleges and universities.

The primary research question that guided this study was:

What influences do teacher perceptions and expectations have on African American

student perceptions of their educational experiences, including academic achievement

and academic outcomes, when examining their experiences through the lens of (a)

teacher expectations, (b) racial congruence, and (c) stereotype threat?

The following sub-questions also served as research questions:

1. Do African American students have different perceptions of Caucasian teachers' and

   African American teachers' expectations of them? Who contributed more positively?

   How did they contribute more positively? (Teacher expectations and racial

   congruence)

2. How do African American students feel based on their African American teachers'

   perceptions and Caucasian teachers' perceptions of them as students? (Racial

   congruence, stereotype threat, and teacher expectations)

3. Do African American students feel pressured to fight a negative stereotype? If so, does it affect their performance? (Stereotype threat)

This study examined the influences of race congruence between students and teachers. This topic has not been studied to determine if being taught by a person who is of the same or different race influences educational experiences and outcomes. Research is needed on the retrospective appraisal of African American college students regarding the role that teacher expectations, teacher-student racial congruity, and stereotype threat played in their high school education.

Examining this concept gives educators the opportunity to understand how African American students view their educational experiences and the role it plays in their academic outcomes. Results from the present study also (a) provides data to better understand the achievement gap and how to bring closure to the gap, (b) help educators and policymakers reset their perspectives and priorities as it relates to African American students, (c) encourage and suggest the implementation of diversity training programs and curriculum as it relates to African American students, and (d) reflect teacher expectations and perceptions of African American students.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative, phenomenological research design in this study. "The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (a grasp of the very nature of the thing; [vanManen as cited in Creswell, 2007])" (p. 58). By exploring "lived experiences," phenomenology is considered to be both a philosophy and a research method. In this type of research, a small group of participants can be studied through personal interviews to

obtain information that can be analyzed to determine if patterns and relationships exist within the group (Moustakas as cited by Creswell, 2003). A convenience sample of 13 African American students between the ages of 18-22 years who were in or had completed at least their freshman year in college participated in the study.

The researcher interviewed participants who agreed to participate in the study. A one-on-one interview process was used to conduct the interviews. A set of interview questions used during the interviews were based on the review of literature and the researcher's personal experiences with teacher race/ethnicity congruity and experiences with teachers during high school. Participants also were asked to complete a demographic survey that had been developed specifically for the study. The items on the survey asked participants to provide personal characteristics and specific information regarding educational experiences, such as the race/ethnicity of a teacher who most influenced the participant during elementary and/or high school.

Content analysis was used to summarize the interview responses to answer the research questions. This analysis provided information leading to themes and patterns among the interviews, as well as comparisons and contrasts that were inherent in the responses. Four themes and associated sub themes emerged from the data collected from the 13 participants.

Findings and Interpretations

The present study asked participants to take a retrospective look at their high school teachers' expectations and reflect on how those experiences impacted their academic experiences and outcomes as it related to racial congruence. Based on the findings, four major themes emerged. Each theme and its relationship to the primary

research question and the sub questions that guided this study are discussed in this section.

The primary research question that guided this study was: *What influences do teacher perceptions and expectations have on African American student perceptions of their educational experiences including stereotype threat, academic achievement, and academic outcomes? Does it vary by race of the teachers?*

The primary research question was answered using findings from participant interviews. The findings from the participant interviews produced four major themes: Perceptions of Teacher Expectations, Stereotypes, Stereotype Threat, and Racial Congruence. These themes relate to the primary research question because each theme serves as an influence on the academic achievement and academic outcomes of participants. An elaboration of each main theme and its relationship to the research is presented to address the primary research question and the sub-questions that also served as research questions. The relationship to the applicable the sub-question follow each theme heading.

Perceptions of Teacher Expectations

> *Research Question 1: Do African American students have different perceptions of White teachers' and African American teachers' expectations of them? Who contributed more positively? How did they contribute more positively?*

The analysis of the interviews indicated that participants differed in their perceptions of White teachers' and Black teachers' expectations of them. Teachers who contributed more positively and how they contributed was determined from the responses. The findings of the present study were similar to work done by Klopfenstein (2005) who stated that Black teachers "have higher expectations for and interact more

positively with Black students than other teachers, thereby increasing the motivation and self-esteem Black students need to take on the challenge of rigorous coursework" (p. 2). The majority of participants shared that they believed their Black teachers had higher expectations for them in comparison to their White teachers. Participants shared several reasons for their views.

Racial congruence is one reason why participants perceived that their Black teachers as had higher expectations of them as students in comparison to their White teachers. Participants felt this way because they viewed their Black teachers as able to understand them more because of the similarity in race and societal experiences. Because of these perceptions, participants viewed their Black teachers as pushing them more to do well. Love and Kruger (2005) stated that "African American students might learn best in an environment whose style is relational and personal, like an extended family" (p. 87). During their research, Love and Kruger found that successful teachers of African American children, "draw on African culture and history, promote the location of self in a historical and cultural context, help students create new knowledge based on life experiences, and treat knowledge as reciprocal" (p. 87).

Participants shared another reason why their Black teachers had higher expectations for them than their White teachers. They believed that the Black teachers always kept high standards, while their White teachers lowered their standards when students could not or would not achieve. Participants viewed this behavior, along with more of their White teachers making it easy to pass their classes by using low level work, as a way of gauging which teachers had higher expectations for them. Singham (2003) noted similar behavior when he stated "Black students receive a disproportionate amount

of poor teaching" (Singham, 2003, p. 589). He found that Black eighth grade students were "twice as likely to have teachers who place little emphasis on developing lab skills, four times as likely to be assessed using hands-on activities once or less per grading period, twice as likely to have a science teacher who does not emphasize development of data-analysis skills" (p. 589), as well as other weaknesses.

Participants perceived that their Black teachers always encouraged them by stressing the importance of always doing their best. Many participants considered this characteristic as positive and associated it with the teacher having high expectations Oates (2003) stated that research has indicated that teachers with positive dispositions toward students can help improve academic performance (Oates, 2003); therefore, this information must be considered when investigating the academic achievement of African American students. He also stated that research indicated, "unfavorable teacher perceptions, even if justified by prior performance and other relevant information, may more strongly undermine the performance of African American students" (Oates, 2003, p. 508).

Comparable to research that indicated that race does not play a role in teacher expectations and perceptions; some participants reported that they also had White teachers who had high expectations for them as students. Those White teachers were reported to exhibit two key qualities. They either built a relationship with their students and/or they showed favoritism toward the Black students who were perceived to be the "smart" Black students. According to participants, the "smart" Black students were those who were either honors students or those who did not have behavior problems. Much of Rubie-Davies (2003) work discussed the correlation between high expectations and

favoritism impacted views that participants had for the White teachers who had high

expectations for them as students. Rubie-Davies (2003) noted that teachers were

distinguished as either high- or low-differentiating teachers. High-differentiating teachers

"espoused a fixed view of ability, placed students in fairly inflexible ability groups" and

differentiated their teaching to high- and low-expectation students (p. 292). By contrast,

low-differentiating teachers "held incremental notions of intelligence, mainly used

interest-based grouping, emphasized task-mastery goals and created positive relationships

with students" (p. 292). The latter kind of teacher appeared to hold high expectations for

all class members, not just for a particular ability grouping.

The characteristic of having the ability to build a relationship also was a key for

participants who perceived that their White teachers had high expectations for them.

Participants stated that these teachers took the time to understand them individually and

culturally. Previous research indicated that this characteristic was key to the academic

success of African American students. As stated by Foster (as cited in Tyson, 2003), "to

effectively educate Black students it involves the added roles of 'admonisher, urger and

meddler.'" Foster referred to this part of Black children's schooling, in which Black

educators explained to Black students the "political reasons[for] investing in learning" (p.

13) . Ladson-Billings (as cited in Tyson, 2003), refers to this same concept as the

"hidden-curriculum" that teaches Black students the importance of education for them in

this mainstream society. This hidden curriculum imparts more than substantive

knowledge, it teaches Black students how to position themselves successfully as

minorities in mainstream society without losing their identity.

Stereotypes

> *Research Question 2: How do African American students feel based on their African American teachers' perceptions and White teachers' perceptions of them as students?*

Participants shared that they felt stereotyped based on their teachers' perceptions of them. Participants indicated that two key areas where they felt stereotyped, (a) behavior/mindset and (b) academic ability. Participants defined the behavior/mindset stereotype by reporting experiences where they perceived that their White teachers viewed Black students based on many of the stereotypical views of Blacks portrayed in society. Whereas academic ability was defined using the experiences of how participants believed their teachers viewed them based on the stereotypical views that society portrays of Blacks when it comes to education and academic ability. Rozansky-Lloyd's (2005) examination found expressions of educational racism. He stated that teacher views were rendered negative by the deficit ideology that was built on the notion that "when students do not demonstrate the same types of achievement as the 'norm', they must have some deficiency which requires remediation" (Rozansky-Lloyd, p. 596). He stated that many teachers maintained a deficit perspective on African American students, though many teachers stated that they believed that the system perpetuated racism. In his study, Rozansky-Lloyd (2005) found that many informants held views of African American achievement potential that were "racist, routine and a matter of course" (Rozansky-Lloyd, p. 603). For example, some teachers "resented having students who lacked the prior knowledge they expected in their classrooms, whether due to district promotion policies or perceived student deficits" (Rozansky-Lloyd, p. 603). Results of the present study were similar to sentiments shared by participants when they stated that things such

as White teachers delivered low level instruction based on the stereotypical views of Black students added to stereotypical feelings.

Stereotype Threat

> *Research Question 3: Do African American students feel pressured to fight a negative stereotype? If so, does it affect their performance*?

Participant responses indicated that stereotype threat was activated when students reflected on how they perceived their African American and Caucasian teachers perceived them as students. A few participants did not view their experiences with being stereotyped as stereotype threat, however in some cases, the stereotyping they experienced may have influenced their academic experiences in ways they did not recognize, therefore without knowing they experienced stereotype threat.

Responses to stereotype threats are met with various levels of effectiveness. For example, one response to stereotype threat was that the person assumed an "I'll show them" attitude and tried harder. Similarly, many participants shared that their experiences with being stereotyped made them feel as if they had to work harder to "prove" that the stereotypes placed on them were untrue. In other instances participants indicated they always had to stay on top of their work, and that there was no room for error for fear of proving the stereotypes often associated with African American students were true. Osborne (2007) noted that this anxiety increases when students of color detect they are in situations where they are "viewed through the lens of the stereotype." Their feelings that they have to exert energy to fight against the stereotype, or worry that any poor performance by them confirms the stereotype has had a powerful explanatory impact. The construct operates according to the idea of anxiety, which is believed to "decrease performance on the tasks at hand, but also makes the situation aversive to the student,

leading him to seek escape from the situation" (Osborne, p. 135). Participants shared that their experiences with anxiety due to stereotype threat often decreased their confidence and increased their stress level.

Racial Congruence

> *Research Question 1: Do African American students have different perceptions of White teachers' and African American teachers' expectations of them? Who contributed more positively? How did they contribute more positively?*

The majority of participants mentioned how being of the same or different race impacted their educational experiences. When discussing how the teacher's race impacted their educational experiences, the majority of participants discussed how relationships played a role in the success of their high school education. Building relationships was an important factor in which teachers that participants viewed as contributing more positively to their academic experiences and outcomes. Participants stated that they built more relationships during their educational experiences with their Black teachers. Participants shared they felt more connected to their African American teachers because they were either role models or mentors. Some students indicted their African American teachers treated them like family. In some cases, they felt connected because the teachers also were African American. Similarly, Love & Kruger (2005) noted, "African American students might learn best in an environment whose [teachers] style is relational and personal, like an extended family" (Love & Kruger, 2005, p. 87). Many participants shared that this type of environment was encouraging and motivating. They wanted to do well for themselves, and they wanted to make their teachers happy.

Other participant responses showed evidence that students believed that White teachers appeared to be uninterested and disconnected from Black students. Many shared

stories of how they thought their White teachers did not try to understand the African American culture. Michie (2007) argued that White teachers could help students of color only if "they have explored their personal histories and value systems; developed an understanding, respect and value for other cultures; and expanded their reference group membership to include others" (p. 7). Monroe (2005) argued that improving the cultural sensitivity of White teachers could improve their expectation levels for African American students. Furthermore, studies in African American education "argue that low-income Black students are most successful when taught in culturally-relevant ways" (Monroe, p. 323). Similar to this argument, a few participants shared that they had White teachers who they viewed positively because they took time to build a relationship with them and understand their culture and home life.

Discussion

The findings of the present study indicated that the students who participated in the study were unaware of experiencing stereotype threat in their classes and by their teachers. Although they were aware of their teachers' stereotyping them, most used the experience to work harder, get better grades, and prove the teachers and classmates wrong. These students were able to move beyond being stereotyped, and generally ignored the stereotype threat inherent in their schools.

White teachers who built relationships with their Black students generally had higher expectations than White teachers with low expectations for Black students. The students acknowledged that the White teachers who took the time to take a personal interest in the student and their culture, were able to form bonds that motivated the

students to work harder and excel in their classes. These teachers were less likely to stereotype the students and treated them as individuals.

Implications for Practice

Results from this study can be used to help educators and policymakers reset their perspectives and priorities related to African American students. Many stories shared by participants provided detailed accounts of how they felt their teachers perceived them, and how that impacted their educational experiences. The findings from this study can provide a basis for developing professional development programs to improve teacher and cultural awareness. As racial diversity continues to grow in suburban schools, improving teacher and cultural awareness can be accomplished by implementing curriculum related to the African American student, providing diversity-training, and/or attending professional development seminars that emphasize to those who may be culturally insensitive or unaware that their world is not the "norm." Based on the research and findings of this study, professional development sessions also could specifically address stereotype threat and how it can impact African American student achievement. Not only can these sessions be made available to teachers, seminars also can be made available to students at the high school and higher education levels to make them aware of stereotype threat and how to cope when stereotype threat is activated.

Recommendations for Further Research

While this study adds to the body of literature on teacher expectations, racial congruence, and stereotype threat related to African American students, additional studies can be conducted to examine how these concepts might be impacting the achievement gap. Because the participants of this study were those early on in their college career,

future research could use a longitudinal research design to extend the study by following students throughout college to graduation to determine how racial congruence between instructors and students in college influenced their college outcomes. Another recommendation could be for future research to study students who decided to drop-out of high school and how racial congruence, teacher expectation and stereotype threat influenced their decision to drop out of high school. Future studies could also incorporate the socioeconomic status of students to determine how or if socioeconomic status activates stereotype threat. One more recommendation could be for future researchers to use a mixed-method research design to study a multicultural group of students (e.g., Black, White, Hispanic, Asian) and teacher racial congruence Research is needed to determine the effects of racial congruence during elementary and secondary school had on their post-high school outcomes (e.g., attending college, getting a job, etc.).

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Appendix A

Definition of Terms

Definition of Terms

Racial congruency is defined as the teacher and student being of the same race. This definition should consider this similar teacher- student racial pairing per class/subject area and grade level.

Stereotype threat is defined as students' concern that they will be evaluated based on a negative stereotype. Stereotype threat has been found to have a negative effect on the performance of members of a groups in a domain, such as a school environment. Culturally-shared stereotypes have been made regarding the poor performance of certain groups that are salient in a context involving the stereotype. These stereotypes can disrupt the academic performance of students who identify with that particular group. (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Teacher expectations is defined as the anticipation or presumption that teachers make about student behavior or student academic achievement

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Describe your educational experiences. Did these academic experiences encourage or discourage you during high school? (warm-up)

2. Tell a story of a teacher that you feel most affected your educational experiences and outcomes.

3. Do you feel this teacher helped/hindered your educational experiences?

4. What are you academic and/or career goals?

5. What high school experiences would you attribute to your current career/academic goals?

6. Can you ever remember a time when you felt you were being stereotyped? If not, can you imagine what it might feel like?

7. Have you ever felt any pressure to fight a negative stereotype of you? If so, what was the stereotype? Did it affect your performance?

8. Did any teachers set high expectations for you? If yes, did you try harder to succeed because of these expectations? If no, did you succeed in spite of these expectations? (Expectations)

9. Looking back on your high school experience, were there any teachers that you felt had low expectations or negative perceptions of all African American students? Explain. (Stereotype Threat)

10. Did you feel that your White Teachers and African American teachers had different expectations for the African American students in comparison to White students? If so, how? (Stereotype Threat) Did you have an influential teacher who was of the same/different race that affected your perceptions of that teacher? If so,

how? Please explain your answer. (Expectations and Race Congruency). Probes: At what grade level did you first meet this teacher? (an idea of when is started)

11. Do you think your White/Black teachers' perceptions affected your academic achievement? If so, how? (Expectations and R ace Congruency)

12. Do you think they had higher or lower expectations of you in comparison to your White/Black teachers? If so, how? (Expectations and R ace Congruency)

13. Do you remember approximately what percentage of your teacher were Black? Were white? And starting at what grade?

14. Do you think White or Black teachers are more or less supportive, or was race not an issue? How so?

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

<u>Western Michigan University</u>

Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sue Poppink

Student Investigator: Carla R. Postell

Title of Study: *Measuring UP: African American Students' Perceptions of Their Educational Experiences Including Stereotype Threat Academic Achievement, and Academic Outcomes*

You are being invited to participate in a research project titled *Measuring UP: African American Students' Perceptions of Their Educational Experiences Including Stereotype Threat Academic Achievement, and Academic Outcomes.* This project will serve as Carla Postell's dissertation project) for the requirements of the Doctorate of Education. The purpose of this research project is to ask students to discuss their past academic experiences and outcomes related to race, stereotyping, and teacher expectations and perceptions. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

The criteria for participation in the study include being an African American college student, between 18 and 22 years of age who has completed their freshman year. As discussed in our initial conversation, you have indicated that you met these requirements. Participation in this study will include an individual interview that will take approximately one hour. During this hour, you will be asked to read and sign an informed consent form and complete a demographic survey. During the interview, I will ask you structured interview questions. Your responses will be audio-taped and I will be taking notes as well.

The questions that will be asked during the interview will be related to your experiences in high school. For example you will be asked, "What teachers helped or hindered your high school experiences?" There are no right or wrong answers and all information will be confidential. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the information collected during this study.

There are no anticipated physical, social or economic risks to participants in this study. However, there is a slight risk of emotional harm to the participants when recalling experiences during high school. To minimize the risk of harm, the content of the discussion will be explained during the initial screening. You will be reminded that participation is completely voluntary. You can choose to stop participating in the study at anytime for any reason and you will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by deciding to stop your participation. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

While there are no known benefits for participation in this study, results of the study will be of benefit to colleges of education and teachers. Colleges of education can adjust their curriculum to ensure that teachers are aware of the importance of race congruence between teachers and students, teacher expectations, and stereotyping. Teachers can also make changes in their expectations to promote better learning and become aware of possible stereotyping implicit in their teaching.
There is no cost associated with participation in this study and participants will not be compensated for their participation.

If you have any questions prior to or during the interview, you can contact the primary investigator, Carla Postell at 313-516-1069 or cpostell00@gmail.com. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

_____

_____   _____
Participant's signature   Date

Appendix D

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Letter of Approval

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Date: December 14, 2010

To: Sue Poppink, Principal Investigator
         Carla Postell, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 10-11-11

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "Measuring Up: African American Students' Perceptions of their Educational Experiences Including Stereotype Threat, Academic Achievement, and Academic Outcomes" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: December 14, 2011