Journal of African American
Males in Education
Fall 2018 - Vol. 9 Issue 2

"What Works": Applying Critical Race Praxis to the Design of Educational and Mentoring Interventions for African American Males

* Michael W. Quigley
Robert Morris University

Anthony B. Mitchell
Penn State University, Greater Allegheny Campus

Educators face great challenges in developing effective schooling and mentoring programs to improve educational and life outcomes for African American males. Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education authorizes new questions about the impact of race and racism on poor educational outcomes and a new way of conceiving their social and schooling experiences. This new conception reflects a Critical Race Consciousness that leads to Critical Race Praxis when the designing of interventions couples this consciousness with strategic action to liberate and transform. As exemplars of "what works" when interventions are designed through Critical Race Praxis, this article describes several single-gender education and mentoring models that have successfully met the unique academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of African American males. The authors suggest that the conception, design, and implementation of these interventions should be widely replicated in schools and mentoring programs and embraced as valuable contributions to the knowledge domain of Critical Race Praxis in education.

Keywords: African American males; Mentoring; Critical Race Praxis; Critical Race Consciousness; Critical Race Care; Single-Gender Education; Positive Racial Identity

"It is easier to build strong children, than to repair broken men."
~Frederick Douglass

African American boys often begin to fall behind other students in U.S. public school systems during the third or fourth grade (Asher, 1991; Kunjufu, 1983, 1984). In recent decades, numerous studies conducted by national agencies, foundations, social scientists, and education scholars report that educational failure and racial trauma, experienced at all levels of the education system, have deleterious effects on personal well-being and life chances for African American males. These experiences can lead to a lower quality of life, shorter life expectancy,

*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Michael W. Quigley, Robert Morris University. Email: quigley@rmu.edu

reduced lifetime income, heightened risk of incarceration, and stress-related health and psychological disorders (Edelman, 2007; Lee, 2000; Maxwell, 2012; McGee & Stovall, 2015; Schott Foundation, 2008; 2010; 2012; 2015).

Many in the African American community and beyond have increasingly viewed the pervasive educational and social struggles of African American males as an urgent call to collective action (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). In responding to this "all hands on deck" moment, the commitment of parents, community stakeholders, policy makers, classroom instructors, and educational leaders throughout the Pre K-16 pipeline are all indispensable. In no uncertain terms, African American male lives and minds matter, and the Schott Foundation's (2012; 2015) call for a sense of urgency toward collective action is certainly warranted if decades of unremitting educational neglect, injustice, and disparate achievement outcomes are to be reversed. To this end, national and local initiatives, like the My Brother's Keeper Alliance[1], African American Men and Boys Initiative[2], the Black Male Funders Learning and Action Network[3], BMe Community[4], the Campaign for Black Male Achievement[5], and Black Minds Matter[6] have been established to dramatically improve educational and life outcomes for African American males. Despite this concerted effort toward collective action, current quality of life indicators makes it clear that there is still much work to be done.

In public schools, courageous, equity-driven leaders have improved educational outcomes for African American males by establishing and maintaining a nurturing climate and culture of high expectations and regard for all underserved student populations in their schools (Blankstein, Kelly, & Noguera, 2016). African American males and other historically marginalized students thrive when equity-driven leaders create and maintain these kinds of educational environments. Equity-driven leadership includes principals, instructional leaders, and teachers who understand child and adolescent development as well as the social and community contexts and "opportunity gaps" (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015) that exist in the spaces where historically marginalized students develop (Blankstein et al., 2016). These sorts of educational leaders are ethical, dedicated, caring, highly skilled, and embody Critical Racial and Cultural Consciousness (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). This degree of personal and professional critical consciousness is based on a willingness and ability for deep self-reflection about racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Moreover, educational environments that foster excellence in African American males include these same attributes in a

[1] In 2014, President Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper initiative to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential. Currently identified as the My Brother's Keeper Alliance, the initiative is now housed in the Obama Foundation.
[2] The African American Men and Boys Initiative was created in 2007 to identify and increase educational, economic, social, and leadership opportunities for African American men and boys in the Pittsburgh region.
[3] The Black Male Funders Learning & Action Network (LAN) is a network of funders that are currently directing resources to initiatives to improve life outcomes for black males.
[4] BMe (pronounced "be me") is a dynamic, growing, national network of inspired black men and thousands of other community-builders, of all races and genders, who connect to share, inspire, and empower communities.
[5] The Campaign for Black Male Achievement (CBMA) is a national membership network that seeks to ensure the growth, sustainability, and impact of leaders and organizations committed to improving life outcomes of black men and boys.
[6] Black Minds Matter is a free, online, public course that addresses the experiences and realities of black males in education and offers research-based strategies for improving their success.

racially diverse faculty with a strong and caring African American[7] male presence (Bass, 2016), especially in academically accelerated classrooms.

Alternative models of schooling have proven to be effective in meeting the unique needs of African American males. Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of schools, classroom, and educational/mentoring programs that place African American male students into single-gender environments (Gewertz, 2007). This educational intervention is based on the proposition that when adolescent African American males are placed in single-gender environments that are specifically designed to meet their academic and emotional needs, with caring educators and a strong adult African American male presence, they flourish. Benefits of these single-gender environments include increased academic engagement and higher academic achievement, increased post-secondary education matriculation and retention, positive racial identity development, increased awareness of and ability to overcome systemic and structural constraints to their academic and life success, and decreased social, emotional, and mental health problems from the racialized trauma of incessant marginalization and exclusion in schools. All of which leads to increased life chances and personal well-being.

The purpose of this article is to describe the benefits of single-gender educational interventions for African American males, as best practice models for the development of schools, classrooms, and out-of-school programs that promote positive racial identities, Critical Race Consciousness, and the emotional and psychological well-being necessary for improved educational and life outcomes. We see the conception, design, and implementation of the single-gender interventions described herein as a "carefully directed" shift away from traditional, public, co-education schooling models that are grounded in deficit-orientations and "white pedagogy" (Emdin, 2016), toward conceptual models (e.g., academies, clusters) and environments (e.g., school or community settings) that meet the unique academic and social-emotional needs of African American males. We assert that the action steps associated with this shift reflect Critical Race Consciousness and Critical Race Care, toward a liberating pedagogy for African American males that is grounded in Critical Race Praxis. We also claim that single-gender educational interventions that are specifically designed to meet the unique academic, contextual, and social-emotional needs of African American males serve to promote academic achievement, mitigate mental health issues from racial trauma (McGee & Stovall, 2015), and ameliorate many of the social and schooling challenges that they face. We believe this to be the result of the development of positive racial identities, the embracement of schooling as a tool for upward mobility, and the development of Critical Race Consciousness (Carter, 2008). Single-gender educational interventions for African American males that are grounded in Critical Race Praxis provide best practice models for improved educational and life outcomes. We argue that these kinds of interventions should be widely replicated.

[7] Although we call for more caring African American male educators, we do not assume that only African American educators can meet the needs of African American males. We acknowledge that there are also African American educators who are so deeply committed to Eurocentric approaches to pedagogy that they also hurt youth of color (Emdin, 2016). We do not assume that all African American male educators demonstrate critical race and critical cultural consciousness in their pedagogy in the same way that we do not assume all white educators engage in what Emdin (2016) refers to as 'white pedagogy'.

"Carefully Directed" Education: The Call for Single-Gender Interventions

In 1933, Dr. Carter G. Woodson declared:

> The oppressor, however, raises his voice to the contrary. He teaches the Negro that he has no worthwhile past, that his race has done nothing significant since the beginning of time, and that there is no evidence that he ever will achieve anything great. The education of the Negro then must be carefully directed lest the race may waste time trying to do the impossible" (Woodson, 1990, p. 192).

Dr. Woodson's clarion call for carefully directed solutions to the inferior schooling and educational neglect of African American children has inspired men and women of all stripes to develop organizations, movements, and theories of action to address the mis-education[8] of African Americans. The establishment of The Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) and the Effective Schools Movement provide examples of early school desegregation-era educational reform initiatives led by and for African Americans.

Recently, the Schott Foundation (2015) reported that the high school graduation rate for African American males improved to 59 percent, up from 50 percent in 2008. Yet, across the country, in K-12 education, African American males attain lower academic proficiency in math and literacy—beginning as early as kindergarten and first grade (Ready & Silander, 2009). These numbers are suggestive of how the social and cultural contexts of schooling continue to perpetuate structural inequities and predictable racial academic achievement disparities (Mitchell & Stewart, 2012, 2013). It is a matter of fact that African American males often attend schools in economically disadvantaged, high-poverty districts (Horan 2010); are less likely to be taught by highly competent teachers; are more likely to be placed in remedial and vocational classes; are less likely to be enrolled in gifted and college preparatory classes; and are more likely to experience suspensions, expulsions, and exclusions from academically rich communities of care (Duncan, 2002) due to heavy-handed zero-tolerance discipline policies (Aud, Fox, & Kewal Ramani, 2010; Fergus, Sciurba, Martin, & Noguera, 2009; Walker, 2004). These alarming indicators of educational and social distress present a very disturbing social milieu and represent the impetus for single-gender interventions, many of which have emerged in urban areas across the country[9].

The Debate: Co-Education versus Single-Gender Education

Advocates for single-gender education posit that it is a pragmatic strategy to address developmental differences between boys and girls (Geist & King, 2008; Gurian, Stevens, & Daniels, 2009; Sax, 2005; Signorella, Bigler, & Liben, 1993) while providing both with opportunities to receive equitable educational experiences. Additionally, proponents suggest that

[8] In reference to Dr. Carter G. Woodson's assertion in his 1933 book, "The Mis-Education of the Negro;" that African Americans have been culturally indoctrinated to devalue their heritage and collective interests within American schools.

[9] Worth noting, yet outside of the parameters of this discussion, is that the educational needs of African American males in public schooling were prioritized over those of African American females during this period of rising single-gender schools, classrooms, and out-of-school programming. Issues in African American female Pre-K-16 education are an area of significant research, today. However, the prioritization of African American male educational interventions, during the single-gender boom, arguably came at the expense of greater attention to the needs of African American females in public schools.

it provides African American and Latino boys, in urban settings, greater opportunities to improve academically (Dodd, 2015; National Association for Single Sex Public Education, 2011; Novotney, 2011). Opponents, on the other hand, claim that single-gender education perpetuates potentially problematic conventional gender-role identities that reinforce institutional sexism and segregation in schooling (Anderson, 2015). Yet others see little evidence of academic benefits (American Psychological Association, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2005). These criticisms have garnered support from a 2014 American Psychological Association meta-analysis of 184 studies involving nearly 2 million students in K-12 schools from over 20 countries that found little-to-no difference in student achievement, and only modest gains in mathematics (APA, 2014).

In terms of gender-specific pedagogical practices, Fergus et al. (2009) examined the rise of single-gender schools and classrooms in 2001 under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), with a focus on public schools offering single-gender education to African American and Latino males. Their research documented the rapid growth from four public schools in 1999 to 223 public schools in 2006, and noted that although policymakers and educators have embraced all-male schools and classrooms for African American and Latino students, none of the limited number of studies provided best-practice guidelines or assumptions about gender that would indicate 'what boys need' (Fergus et al. 2009; Noguera, 2008). According to Fergus et al. (2009), identifying gender-based assumptions about the type of education that African American and Latino boys require is needed to address the structural and cultural forces that have marginalized and influenced the educational outcomes of these populations. Fergus et al. (2009), Harper (2010), Howard (2014), and Toldson (2008) all provide strategies and solutions to ameliorate these forces.

The Benefit of Single-Gender Interventions for African American Males

According to Harper (2010), to counter disadvantages and deficits in education and society, intervention frameworks must be identified to address the familial factors, K-12 school forces and out-of-school college preparation needs of adolescent African American males. In Harper's research, identifying and addressing these dimensions in the home, school, and community become 'pipeline points' that should be included in intervention curriculum and programming. The intersecting socio-demographic categories of race, class, and gender are often cited as factors that significantly affect the lived experiences, cultural development, academic achievement, and quality of life of African American males (Solórzano, 1992). Age is another key factor, as the highest risk sub-population of African American males is between the ages of 15-30 (Franklin, 2004; Winbush, 2001). Late adolescence and early adulthood are an extremely vulnerable period when many challenges and conditions such as educational failure, unemployment, criminalization, incarceration, and homicide are the most intense for African American males (Alexander, 2010; Garibaldi, 2007; Morris, 2014). Inside schools, Emdin (2016) refers to the structure and pedagogies of school systems that privilege traditional Eurocentric curricula and maintenance of the status quo over the needs of black and brown students as "white folk's pedagogy." The curriculum and pedagogy delivered in the single-gender settings we discuss address and remedy a host of social and environmental factors and conditions outside of schools, as well as many of the deficit-based practices that exist in public schools and traditional curricula.

A review of the literature on single-gender educational interventions for African American males identifies variations in the conceptual frameworks, structures, goals, and objectives of different models. Kimmerling (1994), Midgett (1992), and Whitaker (1991) examined all-male academies and advocated for single-gender education as a school-choice alternative to improve academic achievement and life outcomes for African American males. Hopkins (1997), "Educating Black Males: Critical Lessons in Schooling, Community, and Power", examined all-male academies and documented the controversies surrounding the strategies and practices in the public-school context. Hopkins' research included 17 all-African-American-male academies in urban settings and suggested that educating African American males in single-gender, Afrocentric environments is an alternative strategy that increases self-esteem and motivation. Akbar (1991), Asante (1991, 1998), Baldwin (1992), and Nobles (1986) argue that Afrocentric education provides healthy racial socialization to reverse the negative psychological and behavioral effects of centuries of European racial and cultural domination on the racial identity, self-esteem, and self-determination of African American males. Today, Asante (2017) calls for an Afrocentric revolutionary pedagogy to: 1) raise the educational achievement of African American students, and 2) address the structural inequities of public education, including the incompetence of administrators, under-prepared teachers, and 'high-stakes' testing culture.

In 2010, a survey of African American K-12 and Higher Education experts, conducted by Mitchell and Stewart (2010), found strong support for all-male academies. Of the 33 respondents surveyed, there was significant agreement that all-male academies for African American males: (1) improve attitudes and behavior; (2) neutralize effects of community distress; (3) provide access to role models; (4) provide access to committed instructors; (5) improve performance on tests and grades; (6) provide access to culturally relevant curricula; (7) increase student involvement in shaping the instructional environment; (8) reduce negative behaviors and altered conceptions of masculinity; (9) enhance a sense of positive identity and positive peer influences; and (10) improve capabilities for positive relationships with females (Mitchell & Stewart, 2010). Furthermore, respondents indicated that single-gender education provides culturally responsive education strategies that ameliorate many of the risks and challenges associated with educating and socializing adolescent African American males in a racist society (Mitchell & Stewart, 2010).

Howard's (2014), "Black Male (D): Peril and Promise in the Education of African American Males", provides an excellent analysis of the complexity of issues that African American males encounter in education. Howard (2014) proposes the application of Critical Race Theory (CRT), with a specific focus on the counter-storytelling tenet, as a methodological tool to address the historical victimization and ongoing marginalization of African American males in U.S. schools. His treatise argues for the utility of CRT as a methodological, analytical, and theoretical lens to view and question inequitable schooling practices, and makes an appeal for radical reform in the education of African American males within an increasingly pluralistic landscape of diversity and immigration in the U.S. (Howard, 2014). According to Howard (2014), "Reforming the structure of schools to make them more empowering for African American males and more culturally empowering will greatly benefit students from other marginalized and diverse groups" (p. X). Given the massive under-preparation of teachers to address the intersections of race, culture, class, gender, sexuality, and religious diversity in the curriculum, Howard's (2014) call for reform provides timely advocacy for creating alternative education strategies for African American males.

Given the present moment in U.S. society, where specific organizations and movements have emerged to remind the world of the simple truth that "black lives matter," it is clear that the life road that black males have to travel is precarious. When coupled with the increasingly 'high stakes' for academic failure (Quigley, 2013; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2015) that often funnels them directly into the cradle to prison pipeline[10], it is also clear that a unique set of solutions are required. Single-gender schools and classrooms that provide teachers, mentors, and role models who foster positive racial identity development, racial socialization, and leadership education for black and brown males have shown to improve self-efficacy and positive school engagement (Fergus et al., 2009). We argue that the psychological, emotional, social, and cultural healing benefits that single-gender educational interventions provide are as valuable as the academic benefits for black males, and far outweigh any costs.

In our combined fifty-plus years of experience serving in different teaching, mentoring, leadership, and advisory capacities throughout the Pre-K-16 pipeline, we bear witness to the efficacy of single-gender interventions to heal, foster academic success, and increase life chances for African American males—especially those who are considered 'at risk.'[11] When these environments are replete with capable and caring African American adult male educators and mentors (Bass, 2016; Ellison, 2013) who demonstrate critical racial and cultural consciousness (Gay & Kirkland, 2003) and Critical Race Care (Agosto & Jones, as cited in Bass, 2016) in their mentoring and pedagogy, African American male students develop healthy racial identities and the Critical Race Consciousness necessary to persist and achieve in school (Carter, 2008).

Critical Race Theory in Education for Race Consciousness, Healing, and Achievement

The proliferation of single-gender interventions for African American males is a response to pervasive and intransigent disparities at the intersections of race, gender, and class in American education (Howard, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). We argue that single-gender educational interventions address deficit-based teaching practices and curricular choices in K-12 public co-education that devalue the cultural heritage, community assets, and sense of self-worth that African American males bring to the classroom (Emdin, 2016; McLeod & Tanner, 2007; Yosso, 2002).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a way to theorize and challenge the ways race and racism impact society. CRT is an interdisciplinary and problem-centered theoretical framework for the scholar/activist who is primarily concerned with initiating change that promotes social justice for marginalized racial groups (Crenshaw, 1995). One recognizes the social construction of race and the meaning and salience of race and racial identity that is reconstituted over time, in particular social structures such as schools, communities, and families when viewed through a CRT lens. It is considered insurgent scholarship precisely because of its activist agenda to transform and redeem, not merely to critique and deconstruct. Therefore, CRT is well suited to inform the development of Praxis (programs, policies, and practices) that serve to disrupt the socio-

[10] See the Children's Defense Fund Cradle to Prison Pipeline Campaign at www.childrensdefense.org.

[11] According to edglossary.org, this term is used to describe students or groups who have a high probability of failure or drop out based on multiple risk factors that jeopardize their ability for high academic achievement and schooling success. As the designation of *at-risk* is so broadly defined and imprecise, for the purposes of this paper, we allude to factors that encompass characteristics and conditions that are contextual and attendant to the student's life circumstance, not innate (i.e., physical or learning disability).

structural and academic barriers to African American male educational and life success. CRT in education provides a framework for analyzing deficit-based teaching practices and improving educational outcomes for African Americans males (Mitchell & Stewart, 2012, 2013; Quigley, 2013). Dominant deficit-based discourses suggest that the plight of African American males in schools is the result of a perpetually unprepared and unmotivated student population that has fallen behind and needs to catch up. CRT in education, on the other hand, frames the plight of African American males in schools as an expression of the racism that is endemic to North American society (Bell, 1992; Duncan, 2002).

Critical Race Theory in education authorizes important questions about the impact of race and racism on the pervasive and predictably disparate educational outcomes that beleaguer African American males (Howard, 2014). Through CRT, educators have a new set of questions to ask and a new way of conceiving African American male social and schooling experiences and outcomes. This new conception reflects a Critical Race Consciousness, which contends that racial-educational disparities should be situated in a discourse that addresses the larger context of social impediments to school success as well as the embedded practices and values in U.S. schooling (Duncan, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2007). A critical race analysis of so-called achievement gaps suggests that centuries of social neglect in the areas of health and wealth (Feagin, 2000; Kozol, 2005) have hindered the school success of entire groups of students (Ladson-Billings, 2007). From a critical race perspective, exclusion from the political process through which underserved African Americans would have a say in what education looks like in their communities, denial of quality educational opportunities and the underfunding of schools in these communities, and a 'crisis of faith' (Lynn et al., 2010) in their intellectual capacities—have all negatively impacted the academic achievement of African American males. Educators who are Critically Race Conscious would argue that these factors have created what is more accurately described as 'opportunity gaps' (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015) and 'education debts' (Ladson-Billings, 2007) that have accrued on the backs of African American male students, their families, and communities; instead of deficit-based orientations that speak to so-called 'achievement gaps' in much of the dominant discourse about poor educational outcomes.

Critical Race Theory in education offers several foundational tenets to inform theory, research, and pedagogy that provide a lens for analyzing the schooling struggles of black males while also providing remedies. Toward the development of effective interventions, we interpret the following tenets, developed by Solórzano and Yosso (2002) and Yosso (2005), as applicable, for interrogating the "white-folks" pedagogical practices and curricular choices (Emdin, 2016) that characterize the inferior schooling and educational neglect that lead to poor educational and life outcomes for black males:

1. The "intercentricity" of race and racism that is deeply rooted in U.S. history and central, permanent, and fundamental within schools and society—yet these complex, dynamic, and malleable social constructions evolve, depending on the historical moment. Race and racism also intersect with other forms of subordination to address multiple layers of oppression with respect to gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality.
2. Challenges to white privilege, claims of objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, and dominant deficit-based narratives and ideologies—that speak to the inability of black males to excel in academic settings. This tenet also challenges

notions of "neutral" research or "objective" researchers and exposes deficit-informed research that camouflage the self-interests, power, and privilege of dominant groups.
3. Commitment to social justice—that offers an emancipatory and transformative response to race, class, and gender oppression in education—empowers black male students and other subordinate groups and exposes "interest convergence" of the gains made for students of color and other subordinate groups that have come, only in as much as they've aligned with the interests of dominant groups.
4. Importance of experiential knowledge and counter-stories of people of color—in the form of family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, and testimonies—that cast doubt on hegemonic narratives from dominant groups about the educational experiences of black males. Legitimizing these counter-stories is critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in order to create a space for educational justice to take place.
5. Utilization of interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches that pull from multiple fields (e.g., sociology, history, women's studies, ethnic studies, economics, philosophy, legal studies, and indigenous epistemologies) to argue for a comprehensive, contextual, and historical analysis of race and racism in education.

Critical Race Praxis in Education

Praxis involves action and reflection rooted in critical consciousness (Freire, 2000). According to Freire (2000), Praxis is strategic and intentional practice that is directed at the structures to be transformed. As stated earlier, when Critical Race Consciousness is coupled with strategic and intentional action to liberate and transform, Critical Race Praxis is born. Stovall (2016) argues that CRT in education should be recognized as constituting a substantial contribution to Praxis because of the way it authorizes and supports the necessary action steps toward educational justice. Along these lines, Yamamoto (1997) offers four tenets of Critical Race Praxis. The corresponding descriptions for each of the following tenets (Yamamoto, 1997) explicate how we frame our analysis and call for wide-scale development of pedagogical practices and educational programming that meet the unique needs of African American males:

1. Conceptual – Examining the racialized schooling experiences and educational outcomes of black males in the current political economy, at the intersections of class and gender (e.g., heterosexism and patriarchy)
2. Performative – Answering the questions as to what practical steps are responsive toward addressing the unremitting educational injustice and racial trauma that characterize the schooling experiences of black males, as well as who can and should act on these pervasive problems.
3. Material – Inquiring into the socio-structural and pedagogical changes and resources necessary to remake public schools and educational programs to ameliorate the material conditions of racial oppression for black males. (Examples would include, but are not limited to, the development of pre-service and in-service teaching professional development models that foster Critical Race and Critical Cultural Consciousness and responsiveness in pedagogy, as well as the proliferation of single gender interventions).
4. Reflexive – Commitment to the continual refinement and rebuilding of theory and pedagogical best practices for black male academic success and social and emotional

healing and well-being, in light of the practical, real-time, lived experiences of anti-racist mentors and teachers who are engaged in their education.

Each of the aforementioned tenets of CRT in education and Critical Race Praxis is integral to the conception, design, and implementation of educational interventions for black males. However, we pay particular attention to the commitment to social justice and the importance of experiential knowledge and the counter-story tenets of CRT in education because of the commitment to transform oppressive schooling structures and the healing power that counter-stories hold for black male students. Again, we propose that the very development of these interventions should be considered valuable contributions to the evolving knowledge domain of Critical Race Praxis in education, as they are manifestations of a carefully directed theory of action and reflection, specifically undertaken to ameliorate and mitigate the pervasive and unremitting neglect of black males in U.S. public co-education schooling environments. Moreover, these interventions represent reflection and organized collective action for a liberating education (Freire, 2000) that promotes positive racial identity development, Critical Race Consciousness, academic achievement, and social/emotional well-being for black males.

Using Counter-Stories for Healing and Empowerment

As described earlier, CRT in education serves as a methodological, conceptual, and analytical tool to bring outsider knowledge in from the margins to disrupt the hegemonic narratives that create and sustain unjust educational practices, while also informing pedagogy, curricula, and policy for change. One of the CRT strategies designed to mitigate the negative impact of racial oppression and its expressions in the schooling of African American males is the privileging of the stories they have to tell about their lived experiences (Howard, 2014). CRT recognizes the importance of experiential knowledge. We argue that CRT counter-stories privilege the narratives of marginalized African American males as a method to expose and disrupt the conditions attendant to the subjugation and domination that they experience in schools and society. This experiential knowledge is also referred to as a counter-narrative[12] that contains histories and interpretations of their lived experiences and serve to challenge racism and other forms of oppression, while also promoting efforts to achieve racial justice (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Counter-storytelling is a form of representation that reveals the impact of racism through the surfacing and understanding of how racism is experienced by those marginalized groups that are most keenly aware and conscious of its pervasive and oppressive existence (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) define counter-storytelling as a method of telling stories that "aim to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority" (p. 144). It serves the purpose of myth debunking—"a means of exposing and analyzing normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27). These narratives challenge the privileged discourses of the majority as a means of giving voice to members of marginalized groups (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Counter-storytelling, in essence "help[s] us understand what life is like for others, and invite[s] the reader into a new and unfamiliar world" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 41). Beyond the centering of marginalized voice, counter-narratives also inaugurate an interpretive project of understanding on the part of the listener that fosters an embracing of the stories young African American males have to tell

[12] Counter-narrative and counter-story refer to the same CRT strategy and are used interchangeably in this article.

about their schooling experiences. The exchange of stories from teller to listener also helps overcome ethnocentrism and the "dysconscious" conviction of viewing the world in just one way (DeCuir-Gunby, 2006). It provides those who have done wrong the opportunity to see the world through the eyes of African American males so that they may begin to redress the conditions of marginalization and exclusion that too often constitute their schooling experiences.

Oppression can be rationalized in stock stories (dominant meta-narratives); however, counter-stories of people of color can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious or internalized racism (Delgado, 1995). Internalized racism is manifest in the determining of whiteness as valuable or superior and the simultaneous acceptance of blackness as invaluable or inferior, creating a schism within the African American psyche (DeCuir-Gunby, 2006; K. Praytor, personal communication, April 1, 2005; Taylor, 2008). Counter-stories serve to heal and transform and are "a first step on the road to justice" (DeCuir-Gunby, 2006, p. 20). Counter-storytelling is a way to name one's own reality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), which provides members of out-groups a vehicle for psychic self-preservation (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Members of marginalized groups often suffer from self-condemnation because they internalize the stereotypical images that certain elements of society have constructed around these marginalized groups in order to maintain their own power (Delgado, 1995). According to Delgado, storytelling is a kind of medicine to heal the wounds caused by racial oppression. Telling the story of one's own condition leads to realizing how one came to be oppressed and subjugated and allows one to stop the self-infliction of mental violence (Delgado, 1995). For African American males, a level of peace comes from simply being heard, understood, and validated (Quigley, 2013). Vital to our argument, is the idea that allowing African American males to express their grievances, on their terms, about the wrongs they have suffered, counters the powerlessness and alienation they feel resulting from the exclusion and marginalization they encounter in schools and society (Duncan, 2002). Often a disrespected, devalued, and angry African American male, simply seeks to be heard and validated for his humanity (Quigley, 2013). Based on our experiences as men who are fathers, teachers, mentors, coaches, and former students ourselves, we believe this statement reveals the thoughts and feelings of generations of marginalized African American males. Allowing their voices to be heard provides African American males a certain level of healing, because the stories that people tell have a way of taking care of them (Solorzano & Yosso, 2000).

Critical Race Consciousness and Critical (Race) Care as Frameworks for Healing and Empowerment

Carter (2008) investigated the racial and achievement self-conceptions of urban African American adolescents and how these self-conceptions informed their attitudes and beliefs about race and racism, achievement, their own school behavior, and the utility of schooling for upward mobility. Carter (2008) asserts:

> An increased understanding of Black students' attitudes about race, awareness of racism in society, and understanding of the utility of schooling for social and economic mobility can help educators identify and embody pedagogies and practices that foster not only academic achievement but also healthy, positive identity construction in Black youth (p. 12).

Carter (2008) defines Critical Race Consciousness as "a critical understanding of the asymmetrical power relationships that exist between Blacks and Whites in America" (p. 14). Foundational to Carter's (2008) notion of Critical Race Consciousness are the fundamental CRT in education tenets that counter hegemonic deficit-based narratives of black intellectual inferiority through counter-stories that challenge the myth of meritocracy in education. When students understand racism as a norm in U.S. society that must be deconstructed in their everyday lives, they become acutely aware of the false meritocracies that exist and how racism, as a structural barrier, can impede their success in schools and society (Carter, 2008).

According to Osborne (1999), ambivalent or confused racial identity can be a significant barrier to academic success among adolescent black males. Carter (2008) found that connectedness to the black community, positive racial identity, and a critical awareness of racial discrimination and racism as a barrier to their success, are integral to the development of black students' Critical Race Consciousness, which, in turn, provides the impetus for developing adaptive strategies for academic persistence and achievement. We agree with Carter (2008) that fusing a positive racial identity through connection to and embracement of the black community at large, the development of Critical Race Consciousness, and an understanding of the utility of schooling for upward mobility, tend to improve academic achievement and persistence for high-achieving, average-achieving, and even low-achieving black males.

McGee and Stovall (2015) discuss the concept of "weathering" as it pertains to the mental health and wellness of black college students who experience racial trauma, but make reference to this same trauma for black students at all stages of the educational system. Weathering (Geronimus, as cited in McGee & Stovall, 2015) is a phenomenon characterized by the long-term physical, mental, emotional, and psychological effects of racism and of living in a society characterized by white dominance and privilege. Likewise, Smith (as cited in McGee & Stovall, 2015) refers to the concept of "racial battle fatigue" to describe the stress of being black in predominantly white educational environments. McGee and Stovall (2015) posit that "Racialized survival strategies are an intricate set of actions developed to circumvent deeply embedded, persistent historical social problems" (p. 495), and black students often have to develop a racial toolkit filled with strategies to help protect themselves from the damages that racial battle fatigue and weathering inflict.

Agosto and Jones (as cited in Bass, 2016) discuss the role of care in mentoring. Combining Critical Race Theory and Care Theory, Agosto and Jones (as cited in Bass, 2016) present, a counter narrative of black males in special education as giving and accepting care, toward a preliminary framework for what they describe as Critical (Race) Mentorship. They discuss mentoring as a form of leadership that can be regarded as a demonstration of an ethic of care. One example of how this ethic of care would function for black males would be in acknowledging and confronting how the under-funding of the schools they attend limits their opportunities to learn and excel academically. A mentor who acknowledges and confronts the myriad obstacles that undermine their social and academic achievement would be demonstrating Critical (Race) Care (Agosto & Jones, as cited in Bass, 2016). According to Agosto and Jones (as cited in Bass, 2016), Critical Race Care helps educators envision public schooling "beyond the current orthodoxy of high-stakes testing policies, competitions, school-choice schemes" (p. 78), toward a framework for mentoring that "addresses the need for recognitive justice without ignoring other facets or paradigms of social justice such as distributive, procedural, and restorative justice" (p. 87). Nel Noddings (1984, 1992) reminds us that caring should move the "carer" into action on behalf of the "cared for." As a moral imperative for those who care for

black males, Agosto and Jones (as cited in Bass, 2016) assert that this action-oriented mentoring model challenges injustice, white supremacy, liberal forms of equality, "ahistorical" or narrow analyses of oppression (i.e., a thin, biased, partial, or inaccurate analysis of history), and race neutrality, on their behalf.

We believe the use of CRT counter-story telling and the development of Critical Race Consciousness provide the healing opportunities, understandings, and strategies for African American males to persist and achieve in schools and mitigate against racial battle fatigue and weathering due to the racial trauma they experience within and outside of schools. Toward healing and empowerment, we offer the following interventions as models that provide the Critical Race Care, positive racial identity development, Critical Race Consciousness, and the psychic self-preservation (healing) necessary for African males to persist and achieve in schools.

"What Works": Healing and Liberation through Single-Gender Interventions

In 2004, a group of parents, community leaders, corporate partners, and the 100 Black Men of New York, Inc. founded Eagle Academy of New York. As a single-gender school for African American males in grades 6-12, Eagle Prep's success in increasing the graduation rate for its students occurred at a time when the national graduation rates for African American males were well below the national average. Since then, Eagle Prep has grown to six schools and established a national reputation for increasing the academic achievement and college matriculation of African American males.

In addition to Eagle Prep's college preparatory schools for males, other single-gender models also represent notable success. Here, we briefly describe another all-male academy and an all-male cluster or classroom within a co-educational environment. As a third model, we offer a detailed description of an all-male, community-based, youth development program. Given our direct work with the final model, our description provides greater depth of detail. We propose that each model addresses the concern raised by Fergus et al. (2009) regarding "what boys need" with respect to the social, emotional, and academic challenges faced by urban, adolescent African American males, and all three illustrate the theoretical merit and utility of Critical Race Praxis in education.

Urban Prep Academies: An All-Male Charter School Demonstrating Academic Excellence in Graduation and Positive Racial Identity Development

In 2010, Chicago's Urban Prep Academies for Young Men, an all-African American male public charter high school network, reportedly graduated 107 seniors and achieved 100 percent college acceptance rate (Cohen, 2010). Urban Prep is a non-profit organization operating a network of charter public high schools in Chicago for economically disadvantaged African American males. In 2014, while the state's average graduation rate was approximately 70%, Urban Prep claimed five straight years of 100 percent graduation and college matriculation from its Englewood and West campuses (Bowean, 2014; Crockett, 2014).

Urban Prep Academies[13] have designed a culturally relevant curriculum that centralizes and embraces the unique and complex experiences of urban African American males, rather than marginalizing these experiences. Within a strong college preparatory culture, teachers at Urban Prep are required to demonstrate Critical Race and Critical Cultural Consciousness (Gay &

[13] Visit www.urbanprep.org for more information on the Urban Prep ARCS that drive their curriculum.

Kirkland, 2003) in culturally relevant lesson planning and pedagogy. The Urban Prep pedagogical and curricular philosophy is based on four ARCS of Academics, Service, Professional/College preparation, and Activity that cater to the complex and unique needs of the urban adolescent African American males the schools serve (Warren, 2017). The focus of the curriculum and pedagogy is on the whole student within and outside of the classroom. Chicago is one of the most racially segregated and racially disparate cities in the U.S. (Stovall, 2016). Given the socioeconomic, cultural, and racially segregated context of the urban areas that these young men come from, teachers must understand these complex contexts if they are to deliver a culturally relevant curriculum that centralizes, instead of marginalizes, their experiences (Warren, 2017). The rapid rise and success of Urban Prep Academies as a single-gender, public charter network illustrates the academic persistence, achievement, and increase in college matriculation that can occur when economically disadvantaged African American males are placed in public schooling environments with African American male and other caring mentors and role models who understand them and centralize their experiences.

Benjamin E. Mays Institute (BEMI): All-Male Afro-Centric Classrooms in Dual-Sex Environment Demonstrating High Academic Achievement and Positive Racial Identity Development

In Hartford, Connecticut, the Benjamin E. Mays Institute (BEMI), named after the brilliant civil rights icon, scholar, and Morehouse president, Benjamin E. Mays, was created as an all-male, cluster-mentoring classroom in a duel-sex education environment for middle school African American males. BEMI existed in the Hartford school system from 1995-2005, and during the school years of 1999-2001, outperformed the Hartford school district on the standardized Connecticut Mastery Test.

BEMI's success in raising the academic achievement of African American males in secondary schooling demonstrates how Critical Race Care in mentoring, culturally responsive educational strategies, and positive racial identity development through Afrocentric education and mentoring, can be utilized as "emancipatory pedagogy" to increase the academic achievement and racial pride of adolescent African American males (Ali, 2015; Potts, 2003). In an empirical study of the efficacy of the mentoring program, Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, and Boyd (2009) sampled sixty-one BEMI students and documented significantly greater academic achievement among BEMI students compared to non-mentored peers in standardized tests in mathematics and reading. Using the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS), they also found higher positive racial identity among the sampled BEMI students (Gordon et al, 2009). Gorden et al. (2009) found the following:

> The programs' focus on and use of culturally centered modes of instruction and experiences impacted the development of the students' racial identity and reinforced their communities' commitment to them. This commitment appears to extend beyond them, as students, into their community. This reciprocal relationship draws attention to their role and their experiences within the community, and how this might positively impact African American attitudes toward education and academic success. (p. 10)

Gordon et al. (2009) attributed several factors to BEMI's academic success: 1) single-gender classrooms taught by male instructors, 2) Afrocentric curricula, mentoring, and role modeling

delivered by staff, teachers, and professionals, 3) peer, family, and community involvement in students' holistic education, and 4) a capstone Rites of Passage experience. BEMI's academic results suggest that single-gender; African-centered education that utilizes cluster classrooms in a duel sex-environment can significantly improve academic achievement and create healthy racial identity outcomes in urban, adolescent African American males.

The Black Male Leadership Development Institute (BMLDI): All-Male Classrooms in an Out-of-School Environment Demonstrating Positive Racial Identity Development

The Black Male Leadership Development Institute (BMLDI), founded in 2007, is a partnership between the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh (ULGP) and Robert Morris University (RMU). The BMLDI is a yearlong youth leadership development program that utilizes single-gender education strategies to provide high-school-age black males with opportunities to develop leadership skills, strategies for academic excellence and pre-college readiness, critical awareness, and positive racial identity; toward an enhanced sense of self-worth, academic self-efficacy, and life-purpose. In this out-of-school mentoring model, offerings include an annual 7-day residential summer camp held at RMU, a series of culturally relevant and leadership-oriented events throughout the school year, and monthly leadership development workshops and activities. The BMLDI provides young black males the opportunity to take the competencies that they already have and expand them into a repertoire of leadership skills that can have a practical impact in their families, schools, and local communities. By creating a supportive and culturally responsive learning community offering a challenging, culturally relevant curriculum with a rich set of activities that enhance self-awareness and critical awareness of the world around them, the young men have opportunities to develop leadership skills toward service for the black community in the Greater Pittsburgh area.

Staffed by a faculty consisting of mostly black men from the region—whose diverse backgrounds range from the pulpit, boardroom, and courtroom, to the classroom—the seminars, workshops, and keynotes are designed to inspire and motivate the young men, while providing a venue for these caring adult mentors to share their stories and dialog with the young men on issues that are important to them. Small-group reflections and discussions help facilitate participants' processing and internalization of these learning experiences. During the residential component, participants are grouped into smaller clusters called families. Undergraduate and graduate black male mentors who reside and bond with the young men during the weeklong experience lead these family clusters of 8-10 young men. The kinship and trust building necessary for the kind of connection required for collective growth is fostered within these clusters. Throughout each day, the young men are brought together as a large group for various developmental activities and then organized back into their family clusters to reflect, discuss, and build on what was learned during these activities. The residential component is followed by Saturday Institutes that are an ongoing, year-round series of leadership development activities and workshops on topics including: African and African American history, culture, identity, community service, self and community advocacy, college and career preparation, networking, presentation skills, character education, self-regulatory and non-cognitive skills, critical awareness, creative expression, problem assessment and problem solving, communication and interpersonal skills, math and literacy skills, and individual life-purpose. These workshops are delivered with the local and immediate social contexts, as well as the broader national and

international contexts in mind, in order to help the young men develop a local, national, and global perspective.

In the program, the young men's social-emotional wellbeing, level of school engagement, racial identity, academic identity, critical awareness, and athletic[14] interests are all assessed in order to develop a broad profile of their attitudes, interests, and needs. In 2016 and 2017, approximately 130 BMLDI students were assessed on multiple factors that influence social-emotional and schooling engagement (Urban Hassles Index; Miller & Townsend, 2005; Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), 1965; The Multidimensional Model of Black Identity (MMBI); Sellers, 1998, 2013). Among the sampled population, two major findings were revealed: 1) negative effects of urban stressors on students' self-esteem, and 2) complex associations and intersections among stressors, self-esteem, racial identity, and academic engagement (Stewart, 2017). With respect to urban stressors, students' who experienced more stress in their lives had lower self-esteem, yet higher nationalistic (pro-black) orientations, while students who experienced less urban stress had higher self-esteem and greater interest in academics and college matriculation. This finding was consistent across the entire spectrum of ages and grade levels, confirming Fergus, et al. (2009), Harper's (2010), and Noguera's (2008) assertions that urban, adolescent African American males need racial socialization and educational interventions that: 1) nurture self-esteem, 2) foster healthy racial identity, and 3) strengthen academic engagement.

As a youth leadership development program, the BMLDI combines single-gender environments, Critical Race Care, critical racial and cultural awareness development, and culturally responsive educational strategies, including Afrocentric educational pedagogy, to increase college-readiness and address the social-emotional and academic factors affecting self-esteem and healthy racial and academic identities for black males. As a community-based, "out-of-school" program, the BMLDI curriculum does not teach academic subjects. Nevertheless, anecdotal feedback and the following narrative from a participant survey provide evidence that BMLDI students develop awareness of the personal attributes, skills, and school engagement practices, as well as critical awareness of the racist structural barriers to overcome for academic achievement, post-secondary education matriculation, and success as an adult (Mitchell & Stewart, 2017). Overall, the BMLDI presents an out-of-school intervention that provides critical developmental support for adolescent black males. The following reflection from Brandon G. Davis, a graduate and peer leader within the program, illustrates the positive outcomes produced:

> My experience with BMLDI (Black Male Leadership Development Institute) was and continues to be an extremely beneficial one. My first year, I had been introduced to the productive tool of progression and leadership. It gave me what I believe a lot of my peers and those younger than I are missing: positive relationships and the gear [willingness and motivation] to act on aspiration . . . the mighty tool of perseverance. . . . It also inducted me into a great brotherhood. I have personal and professional relationships with those I've spent time with during my days as a BMLDI student and staff. BMLDI gave me significant knowledge for transitioning into college and independent life.

[14] Many Urban African American males identify with athletics as a desired profession over intellectual or academic life pursuits. Future orientations toward a life course that privileges physical prowess and athletic achievement over intellectual pursuits are assessed to determine the academic, racial, and masculine identities of participants.

Discussion

That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.
~Ecclesiastes 1:9 (New King James Version of the Christian Bible)

In this passage from the Bible, the author complains of the monotony of life. For the purpose of our discussion, we focus on the idea at the end of this verse—that "there is nothing new under the sun"—to highlight the salience of Dr. Carter G. Woodson's admonition, more than 80 years ago, that we carefully direct the education of African Americans "lest we waste time trying to do the impossible" (Woodson, 1990, p 192). We refer to the beginning of the verse, "That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done . . ." as a warning that if we do what we've always done in the education of African American males, we will get the educational and life outcomes that we've always gotten. If we are to avoid the pitfalls of the "miseducation" that Dr. Woodson (1990) referred to almost a century ago, and the poor educational and life outcomes stemming from incessant inferior schooling and pervasive educational neglect, we must do things differently.

In much of the previously noted research and literature, the intersection at which race, class, culture, gender, and age converge is frequently identified as crucial to the educational and life outcomes of adolescent African American males. Fergus et al. (2009) indicate that absent fathers or single mothers, broken homes, poverty, dysfunctional communities, peers, and popular culture are all factors that influence the identities of adolescent African American males in a country where the structural impediment of institutional racism is pervasive. Given the intransigent nature of racism and the sluggish pace of public-school change and reform to address predictably disparate educational and quality of life outcomes for African American males, Critical Race Theory and Critical Race Praxis in education provide excellent analytical and methodological tools to accurately assess and challenge the problems. They also authorize and support the necessary interventions for racial and educational justice. We believe that the application of Critical Race Praxis in education is indispensable for the development of schools and programs that "work" for African American males. The presence of Critically Race Conscious and Critically Race Caring teachers and mentors in the conception, design, and implementation of these schools and programs is vital.

Through Critical Race Praxis in education, programs and educational spaces can be developed that promote self-determination, improve academic acumen, and transform life outcomes for African American males. Eagle Academies of New York and New Jersey, the Urban Prep Academies of Chicago, Benjamin E. Mays Institute at Lewis Fox Middle School in Hartford, and the Black Male Leadership Development Institute in Pittsburgh, all represent excellent models for increasing the life chances of urban, middle, and high-school age African American males. Through comprehensive leadership and college-preparatory educational experiences that are driven by teachers and mentors who exhibit Critical Race Care and foster the development of positive academic and racial identities and Critical Race Consciousness within the young men they care for, these models have demonstrated and sustained success. All of the interventions mentioned demonstrate the positive impact of Critical Race Praxis in the designing of educational and social programs for African American males. As the former director and lead faculty member for the BMLDI, we have firsthand knowledge of the efficacy of this program. Since its inception in 2007 as the brainchild of the late Dr. Rex L. Crawley of

Robert Morris University and several African American male mentors from the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, the success of the BMLDI has also shown that strong and strategic partnerships between higher education and community focused organizations that combine theory and practice, can positively impact and transform the intellectual, emotional, and cultural development of adolescent African American males, while also preparing them for college and life-long leadership. The academic achievement, graduation, and post-secondary education matriculation successes of each model suggests that single-gender interventions, replete with teachers and mentors who exhibit Critical Race Care and Critical Race Consciousness, can drastically improve educational and life outcomes for adolescent African American males.

In sum, the purpose of this article was to describe the benefits of single-gender educational interventions for African American males as best practice models for the development of schools, classrooms, and out-of-school programs that promote positive racial identities, Critical Race Consciousness, and the emotional and psychological well-being necessary for improved educational and life outcomes. We see the conception, design, and implementation of the aforementioned single-gender interventions as a "carefully directed" shift away from traditional, public, co-education schooling models that are grounded in deficit-orientations and "white pedagogy" (Emdin, 2016), toward conceptual models (e.g., academies, clusters) and environments (e.g., school or community settings) that meet the unique academic and social-emotional needs of African American males. We assert that the action steps associated with this shift reflect Critical Race Consciousness and Critical Race Care for school age African American males toward Critical Race Praxis in their education. Our claim is that these interventions promote academic achievement, mitigate mental health issues from racial trauma (McGee & Stovall, 2015), and serve to ameliorate many of the social and schooling challenges that African American males face. This happens through the healing of counter-storytelling, the development of positive racial identities, the embracement of schooling as a tool for upward mobility, and the development of Critical Race Consciousness (Carter, 2008). We also argue that these "carefully directed" interventions and the positive educational and life outcomes they have garnered for African American males are grounded in Critical Race Praxis in education and implemented by adults who embody Critical Race Consciousness and Critical Race Care. These interventions also demonstrate that the concerted and collective action steps of self-determining and caring African Americans can effectively restructure schooling to socialize, mentor, and educate young African American males for success in their adult lives.

We acknowledge that the larger issue of the academic benefits of single-gender education versus co-education for all students is still widely contested among education scholars (Novotney, 2011). Although several studies find that single-gender schools for girls raise academic achievement by countering gender stereotypes and raising self-esteem (Carpenter & Hayden, 1987; Spielhofer, O'Donnell, Benton, Schagen, & Schagen, 2002), we recognize the tension around the essentializing of experiences for boys and girls in single-gender spaces that potentially reinforces patriarchy and gender stereotypes in boys and adolescent males (Novotney, 2011). Furthermore, we recognize that heteronormativity is pervasive in U.S. society and schools. The additional challenges and pressures that self-identified gay or non-cisgender African American males face in these single-gender settings may significantly exacerbate feelings of marginalization and exclusion. These are problem spaces that certainly require further investigation. Although, in many respects, the jury is still out on single gender versus co-education, there is considerable evidence that suggests single-gender education can be quite useful in addressing the social-emotional and academic needs of African American males.

Conclusion: A Call for Critical Race Consciousness and Care and the Utility of Critical Race Praxis in the Development of Pedagogical Practices and Programming for African American Males

Mahatma Gandhi[15] taught us that, "A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members." It has also been said that "The strongest people in the world aren't those most protected; they are the ones that must struggle against adversity and obstacles—and surmount them—to survive" (Anonymous, n.d.). We believe in the strength and resilience of African American males who have survived, and in many cases thrived, despite unremitting educational neglect. Still, we recognize that educational justice for African Americans in the United States remains an elusive human rights issue, so the struggle for survival must continue! If we are to improve educational outcomes and increase life chances for African American males, we must spurn the negligent pedagogical practices and policies that have failed them for far too long and begin to identify and replicate "what works."

Given our decades of teaching and mentoring experience working with African American males, we recognize the transformative and healing potential that exists for them in educational environments that are replete with positive role models, teachers, and mentors who care about them, understand them, and are committed to meeting their unique needs. Through CRT, we establish a new set of questions to ask and new ways of conceiving African American males' social and schooling experiences in order to more accurately determine "what works" for their education.

To this end, we call for the recruitment, retention, and training of teachers who are not only content experts, but also committed to and adept at fostering positive racial identity and Critical Race Consciousness for African American males (Carter, 2008) because they themselves embody Critical Race Care and Critical Race and Cultural Consciousness (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). In recognition that African American male students are far too often the victims of pejorative stereotypes and false meritocratic systems; discriminatory zero-tolerance discipline and ability-tracking policies that funnel them into special education and alternative schooling placement, and away from advanced placement opportunities; and culturally incompetent and irrelevant content and pedagogical practices in U.S. public co-education schools, we call for the development and proliferation of schools, classrooms, and out-of-school programs that provide more nurturing, psychologically and emotionally safe, and academically rigorous and enriching environments. We also call for greater utilization of CRT toward educational Praxis that allows the necessary shift to occur in our approach toward the schooling of African American males (Howard, 2014) and the conception, design, and implementation of educational environments that meet their unique needs.

Finally, we believe that a better job must be done of reporting successes and dispelling negative misconceptions about African American males. The successes of single-gender schools like Urban Prep, Eagle Academy, clusters like those in Benjamin E. Mays Institute, and programs like the BMLDI should be nationally recognized as examples of "what works" for African American males and presented as highly promising models for national replication. We

[15] We acknowledge that some of Gandhi's views as a young man, prior to becoming Mahatma, were racist. Not unlike many historical icons including Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Nelson Mandela, Gandhi evolved ideologically and culturally in various stages in his thinking and leadership over time. Here we invoke the words and beliefs of the elder humanist Mahatma Gandhi who went to prison five times in South Africa in his struggle against racism and colonialism.

must make the future brighter for African American males, and it would be to our detriment as a nation to ignore these glowing models of success.

References

Agosto, V., & Jones, R. (2016). Masking mentorship: Critical (race) care among Black males in special education. In L. Bass (Ed.). *Black mask-ulinity: A framework for Black masculine Caring* (pp. 77-90). New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Akbar, N. (1991). Paradigms of African-American research. In R. Jones (Ed.), *Black Psychology* (pp. 709-725). Berkeley, CA: Cobb & Henry.

Alexander, M. (2010). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness.* New York: The New Press.

Ali, S. (2015). *Benjamin E. Mays Institute: Educating young Black males.* Richmond, VA: Belle Isle Books.

American Psychological Association. (2014). The effects of single-sex compared with coeducational schooling on students' performance and attitudes: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 140(*4), 1042-1072.

Anderson, M. D. (2015, December). The resurgence of single-sex education. The benefits and limitations of schools that segregate based on gender. *The Atlantic.* Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/12/the-resurgence-of-single-sex-education/421560/

Anonymous. (n.d.). *Strength* [Framed African American motivational poster]. Atlanta, GA: The Art and Gift Depot.

Asante, M. K. (2015). *Primer for teachers of Black children.* Brooklyn, NY: Universal Write Publications LLC.

Asante, M. K. (1991). The Afrocentric idea in education. *The Journal of Negro Education, 60*, 170-180.

Asante, M.K. (1998). *The Afrocentric idea.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Ascher, C. (1991). School programs for African American male students. Trends and Issues No. 15. New York, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Institute for Urban and Minority Education.

Aud, S., Fox, M.A., & KewalRamani, A. (2010). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups* (NCES 2010-2015). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Statistics.

Baldwin, J. (1992). *The African personality in America: An African-centered framework.* Tallahassee, Fl: Nubian Nation Publications.

Bass, L. (2016). *Black Mask-ulinity: A Framework for Black Masculine Caring.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism.* New York: Basic.

Blankstein, A.M., Kelly, L., & Noguera, P. (2016). *Excellence through equity: Five principles of courageous leadership to guide achievement for every student.* Alexandria: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Bowean, L (2014, August). Where are the first graduates of Urban Prep? *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-urban-prep-grads-update-met-0722-20140825-story.html

Carpenter, P., & Hayden, M. (1987). Girls' academic achievement: Single-sex versus coeducational schools in Australia. *Sociology of Education, 60*, 156-167.

Carter, D. J. (2008). Cultivating a Critical Race Consciousness for African American School Success. *Educational Foundations, 22*(1-2, Spring), 11-28.

Chapman, T., & Dixson, A. (2010). Critical Race Theory in education: Theory, research and praxis. *AERA 2010 Professional Development and Training Course.* Denver: American Educational Research Association [AERA].

Cohen, S. (2010, 28 June). *100 percent of Urban Prep's first class is college-bound.* http://archive.boston.com/news/education/higher/articles/2010/06/28/100_percent_of_schools_first_class_college_bound/

Crenshaw, K. (1995). *Critical Race Theory: The key writings that formed the movement.* New York: New Press.

Crockett, Jr., S. (2014, April). *Chicago's Urban Prep does it again: 100 percent college. The Root.* Retrieved from http://www.theroot.com/chicago-s-urban-prep-does-it-again-100 percent college acceptance

DeCuir, J., & Dixson, A. (2004, June/July). So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there: Using Critical Race Theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher, 33*(5), 26-31.

DeCuir-Gunby, J. (2006). Proving your skin is white, you can have everything. In A. Dixson, & C. Rousseau, *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Delgado, R. (1995). *Critical Race Theory: The cutting edge.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Delgado, R., & Stefanic, J. (2001). *Critical Race Theory: An introduction.* New York: New York University Press.

Dixson, A., & Rousseau, C. (2006). *Critical Race Theory in education: All God's children got a song.* New York: Routledge.

Dodd, A. (2015). *Single-gender education: A strategy to help boys in urban charter schools achieve.* Retrieved from https://gacharters.org/charters-in-the-news/single-gender-education-a...

Duncan, G. (2002). Beyond love: A Critical Race ethnography of the schooling of adolescent Black males. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *35*(2), 131-143.

Ellison, G. C. (2013). *Cut dead but still alive: Caring for African American young men.* Nashvilee: Abingdon Press.

Emdin, C. (2016). *For white folks who teach in the hood ... and the rest of y'all too.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Feagin, J. R. (2000). *Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations.* New York: Routledge.

Fergus, E., Sciurba, K., Martin, M., & Noguera, P. (2009, October 31). *Single-sex schools for Black and Latino boys.* Retrieved from http://inmotionmagazine.com/er/fsmn_09.html

Franklin, A. J. (2004). *From brotherhood to manhood: How Black men rescue their relationships and dreams from the invisibility syndrome.* New York: John Wiley & Son.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed, 30th anniversary edition.* New York: Bloomsbury.

Garibaldi, A. M. (2007). The educational status of African American males in the 21st Century. *The Journal of Negro Education, 76,* 324-333.

Gay, G., & Kirkland, K. (2003). Developing Cultural Critical Consciousness and Self-Reflection in Pre-Service Teacher Education. *Theory Into Practice, College of Education, The Ohio State University, 42*(3, Summer), 181-187.

Geist, E. A., & King, M. (2008). Different, not better: Gender differences in mathematics learning and achievement. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 35*, 43-52.

Gewertz, C. (2007, June 20). Black Boys' Educational Plight Spurs Single-Gendered Schools: New Federal Rules Seen as Chance for Innovation. *Education Week*, pp. 1, 24-25.

Gordon, D. M., Iwamoto, D. K., Ward, N., Potts, R., & Boyd, E. (2009, Summer). Mentoring urban Black middle school students: Implications for academic achievement. *The Journal of Negro Education, 78*(3), 277-289.

Gurian, M., Stevens, K., & Daniels, K. (2009). *Successful single-sex classrooms: A practical guide to teaching boys and girls separately*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Harper, S. R. (2010). An anti-deficit achievement framework for research on students of color in STEM. In S. R. Harper & C. B. Newman (Eds.). *Students of color in STEM: Engineering a new research agenda. New Directions for Institutional Research* (pp. 63-74). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hopkins, R. (1997*). Educating Black males; Critical lessons in community, schooling, and power.* New York: SUNY Press.

Horan, K. (2010). New study shows racially segregated schools not equal. *District Administration, 46*(7). Retrieved September 18, 2017, from https://www.districtadministration.com/article/new-study-shows-racially-segregated-schools-not-equal

Howard, T. C. (2014. *Black male(d)): Peril and promise in the education of African American males.* Multicultural Education Series. Teachers College Press.

Johnson, E., & Howard, T. C. (2008). Issues of difference contributing to US education inequality. In D. B. Holsinger, & W. J. Jacob, *Inequality in Education: Comparative and International Perspectives* (pp. 444-460). Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre.

Kimerling, J. E. (1994). Black male academies: Re-examining the strategies of integration. *Buffalo Law Review. 42*(3), 829.

Kozol, J. (1992). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools.* New York: Crown Publisher's, Inc.

Kozol, J. (2005). *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America.*

New York: Crown Publishers, Inc.

Kunjufu, J. (1983). *Countering the conspiracy to destroy Black boys*. Chicago: African American Images.

Kunjufu. J. (1984). *Developing positive self-images and discipline in black children*. Chicago: African American Images.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a Critical Race Theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97,* 47-68.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is Critical Race Theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*, 7-24.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research 2nd Ed.* (pp. 257-278). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

Ladson-Billings G. (2004). New Directions in multicultural education: Complexities, boundaries, and critical race theory. In Banks, J.A. (Ed.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education,* (vol.2), (pp. 50-68). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). Introduction. In G. Ladson-Billings, & W. Tate, *Education research in the public interest: Social justice, action, and policy* (pp. 1-13). New York: Teachers College Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2007). Pushing past the achievement gap: An essay on the language of deficit. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *76*(3) 316-323, 525.

Lee, C. (2000). The state of knowledge about the education of African Americans. *Commission on Black Education.* Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Lynn, M., Bacon, J.N., Totten, T. L., Bridges III, T.L., & Jennings, M. (2010). Examining teacher's beliefs about African American male students in a low-performing high school in an African American school district. *Teacher College Record, 112*(1), 289-330.

Maxwell, L.A. (2012). Black-male grad rate still lags despite slight uptick. *Education Week, 32* (5), 12.

McLeod, K., & Tanner, T. (2007). From Cultural Responsiveness to Cultural Activeness: Promoting public school success with minority populations. *The International Journal of*

the Humanities, 5(3), 205-211.

Midgett, T. E. (1992). African American male academies from a school-choice perspective. *Midwestern Educational Researcher, 5*(2), 27-28.

Midgett, T. E. (1993). African American male academies: A positive view. *Counseling and Development, 21*(2), 69-78.

Mitchell, A., & Stewart, J. (2010, September 30). The Westinghouse experiment: African-American educators think all male schools might improve prospects for Black males. *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* p. B 7.

Mitchell, A. & Stewart, J. (Autumn 2012). The effects of culturally responsive mentoring on the high school to college matriculation of urban African American males. *Spectrum, 1*(1), 79-94.

Mitchell, A. & Stewart, J (2013). The efficacy of all-male academies: Insights from Critical Race Theory (CRT). *Sex Roles Journal, 69*(7), 382-392.

Miller, D. & Townsend, A. (2005). Urban hassles as chronic stressors and adolescent mental health: The urban hassles index. *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention, 5* (1), 85-94.

Morris, M. W. (2014). *Black stats: African Americans by the numbers in the Twenty-first Century*. New York: The New Press.

National Association for Single Sex Public Education (2011). *Single-sex schools/schools with Single-sex classrooms/what's the difference?* Retrieved from http://www.singlesexschools.org/schools-schools.htm

National Urban League (2007). *The state of Black America, 2007: Portrait of the Black male.* Silver Spring, MD: Beckham Publications Group.

Nobles, W. (1986). *African psychology.* Oakland, CA: Black Family Institute Publication.

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminist approach to ethics and moral education.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education: Vol.8. Advances in contemporary educational thought.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Noguera, P. A. (2008). *The trouble with Black boys: And other reflections on race, equity, and the future of public education.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Novotney, A. (2011, February). *Coed versus single-sex ed: Does separating boys and girls improve their education? Experts on both sides of the issue weigh in*. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/02/coed.aspx

Osborne, J.W. (1999). Unraveling academic achievement among African American boys from identification with academic perspective. *The Journal of Negro Education, 68*, 555-565.

Quigley, M. W. (2013). *"Let them speak their peace": A retrospective critical race exploration of adolescent Black male social and schooling experiences, identity development, and educational/life outcomes in Pittsburgh* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Pittsburgh School of Education, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

Potts, R. G. (2003, March). Emancipatory education versus school-based prevention in African American communities. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 173–183.

Ready, D. D., & Silander, M. R. (2009). *School racial composition and young children's cognitive development*. Paper presented at the Looking to the Future: Legal and Policy Options for Integrated Education in the South and Nation Conference, April 2009. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Sax, L. (2005). *Why gender matters.* New York: Doubleday.

Schott Foundation for Public Education (2008). *Given half a chance: The Schott 50-state report on public education and Black males.* Cambridge, MA: Author.

Schott Foundation for Public Education (2010). *Yes we can: The Schott 50-state report on public education and Black males.* Cambridge, MA: Author.

Schott Foundation for Public Education (2012). *The urgency of now. The Schott 50-state report on public education and Black males.* Cambridge, MA: Author.

Schott Foundation for Public Education. (2015). *Black Lives Matter: The Schott 50-State Revised Report on Public Education and Black Males.* Cambridge, MA: Author.

Sellers, R. (2013). *The Multidimentional Model of Black Identity (MMBI).* Measurement

Instrument Database for the Social Science. Retrieved from http://www.midss.org/sites/default/files/mmbi.pdf

Sellers, R. M., Smith, M. A., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S. A. J., & Chavous, T M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 2,* 18-39.

Signorella, M. L., Bigler, R. S., & Liben, L. S. (1993). Developmental differences in children's gender schemata about others: A meta- analytic review. *Developmental Review, 13,* 147-183. doi:10.1006/drev.1993.1007.

Singleton, G., & Linton, C. (2006). *Courageous conversations about race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools.* Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

Soloranzo, D. G. (1992). An exploratory analysis of the effects of race, class, and gender on student and parent mobility aspirations. *The Journal of Negro Educaiton, 61,* 30-44.

Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory and LaCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling Chicana and Chicano graduate school experiences. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 471-495.

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*, 23-44. doi: 10.1177/107780040200800103.

Spielhofer, T., O'Donnell, L., Benton, T., Schagen, S., & Schagen, I. (2002). *The impact of school size and single-sex education on performance*. (Local Government Association Report 33). Berkshire, U.K.: National Foundation for Educational Research.

Stewart, J. (2017). *Analysis of survey responses*. BMLDI 2017 Summer camp 2017. Unpublished report.

Stovall, D. (2006). When the rubber hits the road: CRT goes to high school. In A. Dixson, & C. Rousseau*, Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Stovall, D. (2016). *Born Out of Struggle: Critical Race Theory, School Creation, and the Politics of Interruption.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

University of Pittsburgh Department of Africana Studies. (2008). *Level I history of racial oppression: Implications for negative personal, familial, and communal outcomes of african americans today.* Pittsburgh, PA U.S.A.: Jerome Taylor.

Toldson, I. A. (2008). *Breaking barriers: Plotting the path to academic success for school-age African American males.* Washington, DC: Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.

Toldson I. A. (2012), *Debunking education myths about Blacks*. The Root. New York, NY. Retrieved from https://www.theroot.com/debunking-education-myths-about-blacks-1790892454

U.S. Department of Education (2005). *Single-sex versus coeducational schooling: A systematic review*. Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Doc#2005-01.

Warren, C. (2017). *Urban Preparation: Young Black Men Moving from Chicago's South Side to Success in Higher Education.* Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

Walker, T. (2004). Something is wrong here. *Teaching Tolerance, 26,* 40-43.

Whitaker, C. (1991, March). Do Black males need special schools? *Ebony Magazine,* pp. 17-22.

Williams, V.L. (2004). Reform or retrenchment?: Single-sex education and the construction of race and gender. *Wisconsin Law Review, 15,* 16-79.

Winbush, R. A. (2001). *The warrior method: A program for rearing healthy Black boys.* New York: Harper Collins.

Wise, T. (2008). *Speaking treason fluently: Anti-racist reflections from an angry White male.* Berkeley: Soft Skull Press.

Woodson, C. G. (1990). *The mis-education of the Negro.* Trenton, NJ: African World Press, Inc. (Originally published 1933)

Yamamoto. E. K. (1997). Critical Race Praxis. *Michigan Law Review, 95*(7), 821-900.

Yosso, T.J. (2002). Toward a critical race curriculum. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 35*, (2), 93-107.

Yosso, T. (2005). Whose Culture has Capital? A Critical Race discussion of Community Cultural Wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), 69-91.

