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A Descriptive Study of the Achievement Gap in a Florida County

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A Descriptive Study of the Achievement Gap in a Florida County

by

Harriet Davis-Waller

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
College of Education
University of South Florida

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Dedication

I am reminded of a story that I heard constantly while growing up in Philadelphia called “The eagle who lived as a chicken” that was both inspiring and profound. In a nutshell, the story is about an eagle that was adopted and raised as a chicken. The eagle never knew his strength or power and couldn’t fly. One day the young eagle saw an older eagle flying and was mesmerized, because it looked like him. The old eagle scooped down and asks “why are you living like a chicken, why you are a king and powerful, you can fly.” The chickens who he played with and raised him, told him not to trust the old eagle. But deep in the young eagles heart he knew that the old eagle was his kin. He took one more gaze at the barnyard where he spent all his life playing with his friends, then turned around and followed the older eagle.

Finally, after much discussion and visits from the older eagle, he convinced the young eagle to fly. After several failures, the young eagle spread his wings and soared upwards. The older eagle said to him “don’t look down, look up at the sky, and aim for the sun” he did and he never looked back.

This book is dedicated to the wisdom of my mother who always encouraged me to be honest, strong, fearless, and to acknowledge my errors and keep moving ahead. Thank you for your unwavering confidence, encouragement, for always telling me the truth, good or bad and most of all for your love.

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A Descriptive Study of Perspectives of the Achievement Gap in a Florida County

Harriet Davis-Waller

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the perspectives of five participants representing the school district and community regarding the achievement gap between Black and White students. This study attempted to answer two major questions:

1. What are the components of their perspectives and how they are formed?
2. What beliefs support or hinder that perspective?

In this study social conflict theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study, harnessing the concept of resiliency as a new paradigm shift looking at Black students and community not as “deficient” or “deficits” but implementing their unique cultural assets and strengths to help close the achievement gap.

Trends show that academic disparities between Black students and White students are complicated by many factors, including family poverty, limited neighborhood resources, displacement of communities due to gentrification and/or government interventions, lack of power, placement into lower-track classes and often community hostility towards the current public education system in general. These disparities contribute to the academic achievement gap. Historically, these disparities have challenged, Black students ability to survive, cope and sustain resiliency. This study looked at resiliency can be used and embraced so that Black students can become their

own advocates for change including inside the educational arena and in their external environments to help close the achievement gap.

This study relied on qualitative research methods, which is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry. The participants were selected according to the roles they play within the community and school district. Interviews were conducted two times with each of the participants regarding their perspectives. Other data was compiled from field notes and the researcher reflective journal. The data was coded and analyzed concerning the participants perception of the achievement gap.

The major findings of this study reveal that organizational vision, a true collaborative partnership between the district and community and the political will to change is key to closing the achievement gap. Each of the participants have a dual vision for the future, one, that recognizes the centrality of closing the achievement gap. They also reveal that present and past political policies are contributing factors as well.

Chapter One

In August 2000, a lawsuit was filed against the Beach County, Florida School Board because of the failure of the system to educate Black students. The suit became known as Crowley v. Pinellas County School Board and was later amended to a class action suit to include all 20,000 current and future Black students. The suit alleged that the Beach County School Board failed to provide an adequate education to Black students in violation of Florida law and the State constitution.

At the same time, Judge Steven Merryday, a Federal Judge with the 5th Circuit Court declared Beach schools free of discrimination and ended a 36 year Federal court order that required busing for desegregation and race ratios in Beach schools. The ruling removed the County from the court order and also resulted in a negotiated settlement approved by the Judge and the NAACP legal defense fund. As part of the settlement the district pledged to address Black student achievement, Black student discipline, and the assignment of Black students to special education classes and programs.

Nationally, it's hard to dispute that an achievement gap exists, however, the interpretation and perspectives from a broad array of individuals and scholars have made it impossible for a clear solution to emerge. In Beach County, it is not clear if there is a consensus or direction on the achievement gap on how best to tackle the problem. Historically, the District and Black community have been at odds, resulting in hostility, mistrust, and exclusion. This relationship was based on past perceived historical wrongs,

rooted in social, economic and political disempowerments that have worsened over the past thirty five years after desegregation.

The achievement gap caused tension and alarm from different sectors of the Beach County community, including the business sector. In June 2008, the Beach Education Foundation led by some of the county's most influential economic business leaders, frustrated by what they have termed poor graduation rates, lack of student preparation for the workforce, and dwindling economic woes, wrote and distributed the "white paper," aptly titled "A case for change in Beach schools." The group advocates for an overhaul of how schools are run and managed. School reform is not a new concept, broad changes dealing with race and education grew out of the Civil Rights movement during the 1950's. However, it was the Chicago reform movement of the 1980s' and 90's that emphasized accountability and programs to deal with school wide improvements. Similarly, the Beach Education Foundation, in theory wants to put the power back in the hands of the principals to control their schools from top to bottom. Accordingly, this would alleviate the power of the district to impose its will across the district. The group believes that students are best served when power is site based. The principal along with the School Advisory Committee (SAC) would be empowered to make decisions from budget expenditures, programs, curriculum to strategic direction. The Education Foundation envisions schools changing their focus from consumers of resources to managers of resources. Thus, according to this belief, it would turn the tide on the low graduation rate and achievement gap. This "white paper" caused divisions between the School Board and the Education Foundation who once enjoyed a cozy relationship. The School Board is concerned about the pending Crowley lawsuit that has yet to go to trial

and the Foundation is looking at its bottom line. It is extremely bleak. Any admittance of guilt concerning Black students by the School Board could have infinite consequences for Black students in Beach County and the other parts of the United States awaiting the outcome of the Crowley case.

On another front the Schott Foundation released a report that examined national trends affecting Black males which paints a dismal picture. In comparing Beach County with national data, it was no better in graduating Black males. A brief data table compares Florida and overall national data.

Graduation rate 2005/6 Male students				Graduation Rate 2004/5 Male students			
Black males	Black	White	Gap	Black	White	Black Chg.	White Chg.
USA- 4.3mil.	47%	75%	28%	47%	74%	0%	1%
Florida- 326,757	38%	60%	22%	35%	56%	3%	4%

Figure 1.1. Tables of Graduation Rates. (The Schott 50 State Report, (2008).

Florida is divided into 67 distinct counties, each governed by its own school board and Beach County is the seventh largest in Florida as of this writing. Beach County serves approximately 113,000 students. Fifty-five out of 85 elementary schools in the county are Title 1 schools. The county, which incorporates the city of Franklin, has a Black enrollment of 19%. Most of the Black student population has been concentrated in the southern most region of the city called “South Franklin or Midtown.” The dividing line separating most of the Black residents is Berlin Road, which is likened to the geographical Mason-Dixon Line, separating the north from the south. The dividing line in Beach County speaks volumes about the range of perspectives from residents on both sides in terms of resources, teacher experience and policies. Beach County is home to

921,482 residents, of which 82,556 are Black and 77% of the Black residents live below the poverty line as defined as the minimum level of income deemed necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living. The state average of those living below the poverty threshold is 11.2%, however, for Blacks who make comprise 9% of the county population, 26.8% are living in poverty in Beach County.

The first Blacks settled in what has become known as St. Petersburg in 1868, as enslaved servants; they were Anna Germain and John Donaldson. These enslaved servants married and raised eleven children. They were later joined by a number of newly freed Blacks who came to build the infrastructure, such as the railroads, the piers, and roads; later these descendants moved to other cities in Pinellas County (Phillips, 1994). As the cities grew, Franklin and other surrounding cities began to build a thriving tourist economy; however, the demand for cheap labor was great, and newly freed Blacks began permanently to settle the areas. They filled the demand for this newly emerging industry in the form of tourist servants, such as bellhops, maids, waiters, and later as nursing home workers. According to Evelyn Phillips (1994), as Blacks built the infrastructures, they were restricted through policies of segregation. These policies restricted the community politically, socially and economically, Black residents were restricted through law as to where they could live and work. However, despite these restrictions, Blacks built thriving communities such as the Gas Plant area, Methodist Town, Little Egypt, Pepper Town, French Town and the deuces, (22nd Avenue). A sense of community was born. Evelyn Phillips writes in her dissertation (1994), by the early 60's Blacks were demanding more inclusion in the education system and economic life within the city. A protest led primarily by the group Junta of Militant Organization (JOMO) helped desegregate public

facilities, and later other organizations and individuals began to demand integration of public schools.

The desegregation of schools altered the community. Once thriving Black areas were uprooted by the early 1980's, in the name of economic redevelopment by the county. Over 2,000 Black families were moved out and displaced, this process continues in 2008. In a blink, thriving communities were gone; Black owned gas stations were gone; barber shops and beauty parlors gone; the infamous Manhattan club gone; and community traditions were destroyed in the process. These changes helped usher in a new era for public schools in Beach County. Prior to desegregation, the only Black elementary, middle, and high school underwent unprecedented changes. While many celebrated Brown v. Board of Education (1954) decision to integrate schools, some have raised the question "at what expense"? Have Black students made significant gains as a result of integration? Why hasn't integration closed the achievement gap? What factors have hindered academic achievement? What role, if any has standardized testing played in the achievement gap? Finally, have past and present policies impacted Black achievement?

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

It is important to examine data to get a deeper understanding of the measurement that is often used to gauge progress. In most States, the use of standardized test viewed as the measuring tool for student performance. In Florida, that yardstick is the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) that is administered starting in 3rd grade, again in 8th and 10th grade. For the purpose of this paper, only the grade test scores for the years 2001, 2004 and 2008 will be examined, because those grades are crucial determinants

and benchmarks for future success. This data will be discussed further in chapter five.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is that there is no definitive definition or understanding of the achievement gap nationwide or District wide. Literature and scholarly research offer conflicting views over how best to close the achievement gap. Some argue that President Bush's legislative initiative, "No Child Left Behind" (2002) was the government's recognition that the educational system of accountability and performance must be reformed. The act ushered in stringent policies of accountability, labeling schools across the country determining whether they were meeting Adequate Yearly Progress, (AYP). Report cards were issued that assessed whether subgroups were performing at proficient levels and whether they were in compliance. Those schools that failed to make gains within their different sub-groups over a three year span were deemed failures and subject to state takeover. Some argue that the real intent of the NCLB act is the dismantling of public education and the removal of poor and minority students. In the book, Meier, et al., (2004) authored by a wide range of contributors, one of the founding members clearly articulates what she believes is the problem with the NCLB act: "the biggest problem with the NCLB act is that it mistakes measuring schools for fixing them....rather than lifting the performance of low achieving students, NCLB increases the number of dropouts and push outs" *(Sizer, 2004). Another author of the book states "the NCLB fails to address the true causes of school and student failures and to advance an agenda for real improvement." It is reasonable to suggest that the NCLB act has had an impact on the prevailing achievement gap between Black and White students; however, from the perspective of the authors it would be unreasonable to say that new stringent

accountability has helped close that gap.

While there is no mistaking the value of standardized testing and accountability, attention has been focused on exactly what the real intent is and how and if it has helped or hindered the achievement gap. Some researchers argue that high stakes testing diverts attention away from the real issues in society and in schools such as adequate funding, students needing qualified teachers and access to rigorous curriculum(s). In the book, authored by Sacks, (2001), he goes into depth with a comprehensive overview of the origins of standardized testing. In the early century testing was a way to measure intelligence and provide data for theories about the intellectual superiority of Northern European whites. Today, the author argues that testing is still used in the same way “Polite society nowadays has its own ‘defectives’, who don’t measure up on standardized tests of so-called intelligence,” (p. 50). “Once upon a time, they were Italian and Jewish immigrants, Now, they are the poor, African-American, Indians and people with learning ‘disabilities’ those for whom English is a second language, and others.” Simply said, according to this belief they lack requisite abilities, cognitive development, aptitude or just poor. Being poor and or Black is what some researchers and literature has focused on as to why the achievement gap exists.

Secondly, just who is responsible for the academic success of poor and Black students? Is the real job of education to provide opportunities and not education? One school of thought that was represented by James Coleman (1966) was that schooling had relatively little effect on the ultimate equality of students’ life outcomes, that parent’s involvement in their children’s lives affected achievement and eventual success. Later, this analysis was supported by Evans (2005) in his book, *Reframing the Achievement*

Gap, who argues that the achievement gap is not a problem for schools, teachers and administration to simply solve; he states the problem is due to outside influences that schools have no control over. From his perspective the achievement gap is a shared responsibility, especially, among students of poverty. Parents also must be taught about parenting, allowing less television, providing early intervention such as pre-schooling and limiting summer time off. Schools, on the other hand, if the achievement gap is to be closed, must re-set their priorities because the focus is too narrow. According to this train of thought, the correct perspective would begin not by asking how schools should address the achievement gap but by asking what conditions need to be in place so schools can do so.

Lastly, one approach that has been gaining momentum is the notion that somehow Black children are defective has been challenged by such notable writers and researchers such as Kozol (2005). In his book, *The Shame of the Nation* and Ladson-Billings (2007), both argues passionately against the deficit model of thinking. The latter states, “children at risk....we cannot saddle these babies at kindergarten with this label and expect them to proudly wear it for the next 13 years, and think, well gee, I don’t know why they aren’t doing good...what you call something matters” (2007). Finally, one of her main points is that the racial achievement gap unfairly constructs students as “defective and lacking” and “admonishes them that they need to catch up.” She suggested the term “education debt,” moving to a discourse that “holds us all accountable.” It is a perspective that challenges the policy-makers and educators to reconceptualize the approach to closing the achievement gap and to focus on re-paying the debt that has amassed at the expense of an entire group of people and future generations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe and explain perspectives on the achievement gap in Beach County, Florida by selected district leadership personnel, educators, and community leaders.

Exploratory Questions

The exploratory studies which guide this study are:

1. What are the components of their perspectives and how they are formed?
2. What beliefs support or hinder that perspective?

In order to answer these research questions, interviews will be conducted with all participants and will be concentrated within the Beach County, Florida school district. I will also use relevant documents from the Crowley case on both sides of the lawsuit, and data from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test. I will also maintain a researcher reflective journal that will complete the data collection methods.

Theory Which Guides the Study

This study is guided by two theories that are related to each other and grew out of the reform movement, conflict theory and constructivism. The social conflict theory is rooted historically in the works of Karl Marx (Tischler, 2002) and Paulo Freire (1968). The social conflict framework as first introduced by Karl Marx is a theory that views society as a complex system characterized by inequality and conflict/contradictions that demand change. Social conflict theory can be described as a struggle between social classes in society, between the poor and oppressed demanding inclusion and/or power from the ruling class that controls the means and forces of production *(Sociology at Hewitt, 2007). The social conflict theory gathered momentum quickly in the 1950's and

1960's, in response to struggles for national liberation and social turmoil in the United States, Africa and Central America. These struggles led to many social reform initiatives and discussions within developing countries, especially from those groups/ethnicities previously excluded. Researchers began to discuss the role of education from the perspective of the oppressed and marginalized, especially the work done by noted writer Kozol (1967). They hotly debated whether educational institutions were separate and neutral entities free from class positions or biases. Critical theorists, like their forbearers, argued that education was an extension of society and played a powerful role in the transmission of values, beliefs, ideology and socialization. The question became, whose beliefs, values, must be taught in an increasingly global society. The social conflict theory framework sees the purpose of education as maintaining social inequality and preserving the power of those who control society. The premise is that education in any society has the purpose of reproducing the economic and social relationships.

Out of this debate two compelling views of child development and the purpose of education emerged to frame the teaching pedagogy. In the first view, the purpose of education is to educate the individual child in a manner which supports the child's interests and needs. This first view belongs to the theory of cognitive development that identifies the individual as the subject of study. In the second view, the purpose of education is social transformation and the reconstruction of society aligned with democratic ideas. This view sees the individual as part of a cultural milieu and identifies the subject of study as the dialectical relationship between the two. These two themes are central to the current discussion of constructivism. Piagetian constructivism is aligned with an emphasis on education for individual cognitive development while forms of

Vygotskian constructivism are aligned with an emphasis on education for social transformation (Wagner, 2007). Theories of child development and appropriate schooling are influenced by cultural assumptions and reflect dominant views about the nature of development and how schooling should be constructed. While the commonly accepted theories represent the prevailing view in this country there are many people and groups whose ideas and beliefs are excluded by this discourse. This latter view of schooling being tools of transformation called attention to schools preserving and stratifying existing social conditions. This notion called for stressing the role of schools, allied with other progressive forces, in planning for an intelligent reconstruction of United States society where there would be a more just and equitable distribution of the nation's wealth, and the 'common good' would take precedent over individual gain *(Liston and Zeichner, 1997). Increasing contradictions between the ideals of democracy and the reality of capitalism clearly highlight growing economic, social and political inequality for a growing marginalized and oppressed population.

John Dewey (1960), the most prominent American educator and a proponent of child-centered pedagogy, advocated that the learning environment be shaped to fit the development of the individual child and that the subject matter be interesting and connected to the student lives. He argued earlier that:

Learning is active. It involves reaching out of the mind. It involves organic assimilation starting from within. Literally, we must take our stand with the child and our departure from him. It is he and not subject matter which determines both quality and quantity of learning (Dewey, 1916, p. 9).

He saw a wider social purpose for education: to prepare students to be critical

thinkers in order to participate in democracy. Dewey and other progressives argued that schooling should not amount to social control and simple vocation training. Instead schooling should lead to lifelong learning and achievement. Finally, the great work of Freire (1968) goes hand in hand with constructivism and social conflict, his work is used in various forms today; he argues:

- 1.) Education should raise the awareness of the oppressed so that they become subjects rather than objects of the world. For him this meant teaching students to think democratically, to question continually and to make meaning (critically view) of their environment;
- 2.) Knowledge is a social construct. Freire believed that beliefs are shaped into knowledge by discussion and critical reflection;
- 3.) Theory of human nature, the oppressed majority must be taught to imagine a better way so that they can shape their future and thereby become more human in the process of participating as true equals;
- 4.) Finally, that education for the oppressed is a dehumanizing process. Freire talks about the fallacy of teacher's actually teaching but really instructing students.

He described the current education system as a bank, a large repository where students come to withdraw the knowledge they need for their station in life. For him, education must be about teachers becoming learners and students, especially oppressed students, becoming teachers and the acquisition of knowledge. Otherwise, as he argues, knowledge is simply mechanical, machinelike and rote memorization, guaranteeing dependence. This is similar to what Kozol (2005) wrote in *The Shame of the Nation*

(2005). Kozol discovered in his visits to poor schools throughout Boston and New York, Black students were simply asked to be passive participants in their learning. This was reflected in empty slogans, meaningless lessons, and lack of resources. Kozol, like Freire, argues the conventional assumption that there is an equal opportunity in a democratic society is a fallacy. He further argues that in order for education to be a democratic process the oppressed must be truly given the tools to reconstruct society, and their values and beliefs must be leading factors. Blackwell (1991) takes a similar position by stating “it is only through transformation via fundamental changes in how power is distributed that the Black population can improve its status and make overall life changes in American society.” He further contends that social inequality, which is the uneven distribution of privileges, material rewards, opportunities, power, prestige, and influence among individuals and groups, is the product of and also perpetuates racial hatred and discrimination which contributes negatively to the upward social mobility of Black youth (Tischler, 2002). The lack of opportunities or perception of a growing social stratification and class conflict, as stated above, increases the alienation of Black youth toward the dominate culture. Social stratification, income disparities, and poverty place many Blacks in the bottom tier of the economic scale, and it is a breeding ground for social upheavals and risks that compromise the academic achievement and resilience of Black youth.

Clearly, the need for understanding conflict and constructivist theory is needed in education to help educators, policy-makers and the community addresses the achievement gap.

The ability to think outside the box is critical in moving Black students in Beach County. Educational leaders who grasp this can than see themselves as innovative and

visionary's because they have the tools to address this gap.

Biases of the Researcher

The issue of bias in qualitative research is an important one, and demands special attention and discussion in any qualitative research study. Bias is a set of perceived events or other phenomena that are used in such a way that certain facts are habitually overlooked, distorted, or falsified (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). A researcher's personal beliefs and values are reflected only in the choice of methodology and interpretation of finds, but also in the choice of the research topic. In other words what we believe in determines what we want to study. The traditional positivist research paradigm has taught us to believe that what we are studying often has no personal significance, or that the only reason driving our research is intellectual curiosity. But more often than not, researchers have personal beliefs and views about a topic – either in support of one side of an argument, or on the social, cultural, political sub-themes that seem to guide the development of the argument or research study. However, it is important that the researcher acknowledge these biases and take steps to avoid or minimize them.

The qualitative paradigm assumes [that] the self of the researcher has an effect upon the subject and context of study. In other words, it starts from accepting the assumption that there is no objective point of view, in contrast to quantitative methods that attempt to control for the influence of the researcher. This said the criteria for trustworthiness applicable to qualitative researchers become essential for ensuring that the research actually reveals more about the subject than about the researcher.

As an educator, many of the researcher experiences have shaped the researcher biases about the achievement gap between Black and White students. Acknowledging

these biases will help the researcher to avoid them in collecting and analyzing data. One such bias is the researcher's belief that race and past cultural/political attitudes and political relationships have played a significant role in how Black students are taught and how they are perceived. This bias was shaped from the researcher experiences in instruction and, currently, in supervision. From the perspective of the bias, it would seem that Black students suffer from stereotyping, attitudes, lack of understanding and blame related to their backgrounds and are not given the same expectations to succeed like White students. The researcher recognizes that pre-existing bias must be monitored to prevent possible tainting of the collected data.

Another bias or belief the researcher holds is the premise that educators are reluctant to advocate for more rigorous courses or to push Black students toward more challenging courses. Often, students that are pushed into rigorous courses are alienated from their peers, classmates and instructor. Alienation from their instructor is a major factor in how the students perceive their ability to succeed and how they learn. Educator instructors that teach rigorous courses have often only taught a majority of White students because, often, Black students do not enroll in advanced placement classes. Usually, the first refrain the students encounter is whether they (Black students) are prepared for the class in terms of abilities or past academic success.

Another such bias or belief the researcher holds is the premise that learning styles of Black students are often misunderstood. Differential instruction is the new buzz word throughout Beach County; it has not yet translated to academic success for Black students. Similarly to what Kozol (2005) wrote, poor and minority students are often filled with empty slogans and meaningless instruction that does not take into account the

cultural background or experiences of the student. According to Brimm, (2003), the misperception of cultural learning style has minimized the creativity of Black students resulting in a decrease in performance and an increase in discipline (p.11). According to the researcher, addressing cultural diversity in school instructors must include resiliency and other research-based data, not personal biases.

The researcher acknowledges personal biases and will monitor personal biases in the data analysis. The steps I will take to minimize researcher's bias are field notes, and multiple sources of data that will be used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research.

Limitation of the Study

One importance of doing a qualitative research study is that it provides the researcher the ability to develop a descriptive, rich understanding and insight into individuals' attitudes, beliefs, concerns, motivations, aspirations, cultures, behaviors and preferences. However, on the other side it can provide for limitations in the study. One of the most important limitations is that the findings cannot be directly generalized to the larger population being studied. The reasons for this limitation are: 1) for this study the participants were selected for various reasons to represent a broad but limited view of their perspectives on the achievement gap. The number of participants in a typical qualitative research study is too small to be representative of the population; 2) for this study five participants were selected with the understanding that more could be added later for various reasons. The five participants were selected because of their unique positions and relationships with the broader community and within the public school district and their activism regarding students; 3) usually, six months to a year is typical

for doing a research study. This study is limited to 3-6 months of data collection, which is a limitation. Some participants tend to express views that are consistent with social standards and try not to present themselves negatively. This may lead the participants to self-censor themselves, and this may be a limitation for this study. Finally, in a qualitative research study the researcher becomes the instrument. Simply stated, the quality of the data collection and the results are highly dependent on the skills of the interviewer. Because these methods are dependent on interpersonal exchanges with the participants, any number of variables, including the dress, demeanor and language used by the researcher may influence the quantity and quality of information given. The skill and experience of the researcher can be a limitation.

Definition of Terms

This section provides definitions of terms used in the study. Several terms have been used in ways that might confuse the reader. This section seeks to limit that confusion and to inform the reader as to the context in which these terms are used in this research.

Achievement Gap-It is the difference in academic performance between various student ethnic groups. It is mostly defined in terms of academic differences between Black and White students. Others define it as the difference between current student performance and the level of achievement needed to succeed in school and in the world.

Banking concept-This term refers to Paulo Freire's (1968) theory of how oppressed children are taught from the perspective of middle class values. The goal is to define their station or place in society. Lessons are alienated from the student's world view; it is disconnected from their experiences and conditions.

Constructivist Theory-This term describes how learning should happen, it suggests that learners construct knowledge. Each learner is viewed as a unique individual with unique needs and backgrounds. The learner is seen as complex and multidimensional. Social constructivism encourages the learner to arrive at his or her own version of the truth, influenced by his or her background, culture or embedded worldview.

Drop Out Rate- Drop out information is collected from the school districts after the end of each school year. School districts report the number of drop outs through the public education system; drop out information is collected for grades 7-12. A student is identified as a drop out if the individual is absent without an approved excuse or documented transfer or does not return to school by the fall of the following school year, or if he or she completes the school year but fails to re-enroll the following school year. Not included are those who drop out before seventh grade; out of school temporary with approval or excused students in alternative programs; students enrolled in college early; and students enrolled as migrant workers.

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test-This test is used in primary and secondary public schools in Florida. First administered in 1998, it is also tied to school grades and a strict system of accountability.

Graduation Rate- It is defined as a federally required benchmark which calculates the percentage of on-time graduates with a regular high school diploma. GED and special education diplomas are not allowed to count as a regular high school diploma under regulations from the United States Department of Education.

No Child Left Behind- It is the current federal legislation which uses the theories of standard based education reform, based on the belief that setting high expectations and

establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education. The act requires states to develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades, which is often tied to the student's ability to move from one grade to the next and the ability to graduate high school with a standard diploma.

Poverty Line-It is defined as the minimum level of income deemed necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living in a given country. It is determined by the total cost of all essential resources that an average human adult consumes in a year.

Reframing- This refers to Bolman & Deal's (1997) perspective on ways to analyze and examine various frames or windows of organizational environment. Each frame holds the potential of presenting various stages of development or perspectives to help the leader define the organizational health.

Resiliency-It is defined as an enduring characteristic of a person, a situational or temporal interaction between a person and the context as it can be applied to social, academic, or other settings. It is a multifaceted phenomenon that produces the ability to thrive despite adversity.

Social Capital-This term refers to the sum of the institutions which underpins a society-it is the glue that holds them together. Education, children's welfare, safe and productive neighborhoods, economic prosperity, health and happiness, and democracy are influenced by social capital.

Title 1-The purpose is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach a minimum proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards. Meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children, closing the achievement gap between high-and low performing

children and holding schools and local educational agencies accountability, through curriculum, training and instructional materials. Title 1 schools are defined as schools where 35 percent of the students are from low income households.

Organization of the Study

This next chapter is the Review of related literature. This will be followed by the methodology chapter, the presentation of the data chapter, the conclusions and interpretative chapter.

Chapter Two

Introduction and Organization

A literature review, according to Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman (2007) is an ongoing conversation among those who do the work of scholarship. According to this metaphor those that join in extend the conversation by adding their voices to the body of research. The purpose of the literature review as pointed out by Piantanida & Garman (1999) should provide even the most uninformed reader with a conceptual context for understanding the “What” and “So what” of the inquiry (p.103). With this in mind this literature review will attempt to extend the conversation of the achievement gap by introducing another concept into the dialogue, resiliency. This literature review is organized to introduce achievement and resiliency and how resiliency can impact the achievement gap between Black and White students. It then proceeds to introduce and define resiliency from a non-pathological, social deficit model to a protective, cultural asset enhancing model of the Black family, church and community.

The purpose of this literature review is to examine existing literature related to the achievement gap and to discuss resiliency as a paradigm shift for educators. Studies have showed that enhancing Black students’ resiliency can increase their academic success. In the early 1970’s, studies of resiliency emerged from research on children considered at risk for behavioral problems, academic failure, social problems and psychopathology (Masten & Reed, 2002). They discovered these children considered at risk because of

environmental factors, traumatic events, and psychology problems, were some of the children who did quite well in life. These children were at first called super children or invulnerable, stress-resilient and resilient.

What made them so different, and what factors contributed to their success despite the odds against them? Researchers began to examine risk factors and protective factors to help examine how they moved and navigated their environment to a “normative” state (Masten & Reed, 2002). Further examples of the idea of the super child were found in the article research done by the Washington Post, titled “Trouble: a Bubble to Some Kids,” and the book review on resiliency in inner-city children, titled “Super Kids of the Ghetto” (Masten, 2001). What they found was that resiliency translated to academic success for these children. Resiliency became the new buzz word used by prominent researchers to describe this phenomenon. More research was done later by

Reis, Colbert, and Thomas (2005) in which they conducted a 3 year study to examine academic resilience among thirty-five economically disadvantaged children. A qualitative, cross-case study was undertaken to collect and analyze data starting with their pre-schooling. The result of the study indicated that despite numerous risk factors, eighteen students in the study developed resiliency. They discussed several factors that contributed to resiliency in the students: belief in self, appreciation of their culture, community support and the presence of other support mechanisms that they utilized. At the beginning of the study all were at risk of dropping out or failing in school. The questions the researchers wanted to answer were (1) what factors do high achieving students identify as contributing to their resilience? And (2) what factors may contribute to the inability to display resiliency in underachieving students who are at risk. The goal

is to examine the concept of resiliency to gain a better understanding of how it relates to Black students and academic achievement.

Schema for Review of the Literature for: Perspectives on the Achievement Gap using Resiliency as a Construct

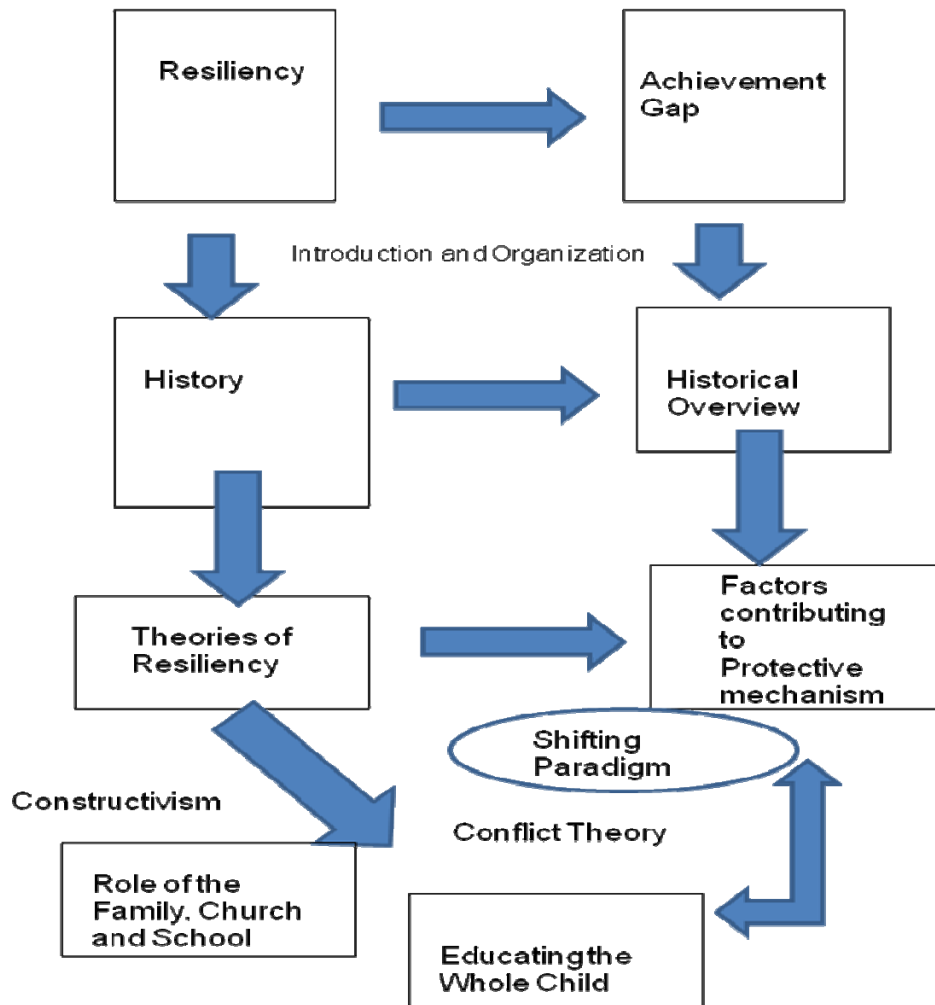


Figure 2.1. Relationship between Resiliency and Academic Achievement

Why Resiliency?

Reports of the disturbing condition of Black youth continue to capture the attention of policymakers. It is also appropriate to recognize the desperate social and economic conditions that affect Black students. It is also critical to study and understand

how some youth succeed despite the overwhelming odds against them. Understanding the concept of resilience provides information that can help administrators; teachers and policymakers design more effective school environments and intervention models.

Trends show that academic disparities between Black students and other racial/ethnic groups are complicated by many factors, including family poverty, limited neighborhood resources, displacement of communities due to gentrification and/or government interventions, violence, poor self-image, placement into lower-track classes and often community hostility towards the current public education system. These disparities contribute to the academic achievement gap. Historically, these disparities have challenged Black students' ability to survive, cope and sustain resiliency.

Researchers are looking at how social-cultural assets can be used and embraced so Black children can become their own advocates for change including inside the education arena and in their external environment.

My goal with this discussion is twofold: develop a theory of resiliency from a non-pathologizing/social conflict perspective and demonstrate the implications of this perspective for educational leaders in developing a culture of transformation for helping close the achievement gap and giving the tools of inquiry and resistance to Black youths (Ungar, 2005). Delpit (1995) eloquently elaborates about the good intentions of some educators who have adopted the socio-pathologically model of thinking:

The worldviews of many in our society exist in protected cocoons. These individuals have never had to an adjustment from home life to public life, as their public lives and the institutions they have encountered merely reflect a "reality" these individuals have been schooled in since birth. When these privileged

individuals-and they are privileged, whether they realize it or not-see others who operate from a different worldview, they can often comprehend them only as deviants, pathologically inferior, certainly in need of “fixing.” Even when individuals believe themselves to have good intentions, their own biases blind them from seeing the real people before them (p. 74).

As the author stated, this viewpoint only see the problems and not the richness of diversity that these students possess, they are viewed as objects, non-conformist, misfits without any redeeming qualities.

My work with low-performing students helps me develop a different perspective on the role of resiliency and how changes within a school can help transform and impact their self-worth, values, and, by extension, the achievement gap. Resiliency as a construct is about challenging the prevailing beliefs about Black students and the inequalities that exist within the educational settings as a reflection of society. Beliefs that Black students aren't interested in education, that they can't learn, that their social environments and place in society are pre-determined, that only a few can make it, these beliefs, attitudes, policies must be challenged.

Another View: Pioneers of Resiliency

The concept of resiliency for human psychological development is a relatively new and exciting advancement in helping us understand how some individuals strive despite adversity. Around the late sixties and early seventies a group of pioneer, developmental scientist studied the risk factors contributing to at-risk children and their psychopathic behaviors. Nevertheless, these children succeeded in life (Masten, 1999). These pioneers argued successfully that understanding such phenomena, the study of

resiliency, could hold the key to informing programs, policies, and interventions directed at promoting competence and alleviating problems in the lives of children (Masten, 1999). These researchers helped inspire three decades of research on resiliency in developmental psychology that has provided models, methods, theories and data with emphasis on research and intervention. There have been several important studies done over the past seventy years that have given validity to the study of resiliency. Those studies have paved the way for developing comprehensive approaches for those individuals considered at-risk, a large percentage of those individuals are Black students (Darling-Hammond, 2003). What we do know now is that students are more successful when they experience a broad, challenging, and engaging curriculum, when they feel connected to their school and broader community, and when schools are safe and trusting places where adults make connecting relationships with them.

Resiliency: A Paradigm Shift

The phenomena of resiliency in the face of adversity has been studied for a very long time, as evident in myths, fairytales and fables that tell the story of how people triumph over adversity to inspire others. Resiliency has served as a powerful tool in the development of the human spirit to succeed against all odds.

The foundation for the concept of resiliency had begun to take shape as far back as the 19th and early 20th centuries. Clearly, researchers had begun to grapple with what factors allowed people to overcome hostile environments and still become productive citizens while others succumbed to those same factors (Walker & Avant, 2005). Part of how this dilemma was solved was to pose valid questions to find reliable measures and track the observations over a period of time. One way this was done was through

longitudinal studies that examined human behavior, such as developmental and environmental factors. How do children born at risk for serious problems develop despite adverse biological conditions? In former times, psychologists often focused on those who could not overcome adversity. Prior to the era of the 60's, the focus was on the treatment of symptoms that individuals faced as a result of adverse conditions. It wasn't until the early 1980's that researchers began to turn away from the "negative" problems individuals faced. That approach was best summed up by Murphy (2006) who stated, "it is something of a paradox that a nation which has exulted in its rapid expansion and its scientific-technological achievements should have developed in its studies of childhood so vast a 'problem' literature." This criticism helped shape a paradigm shift from one of a problem approach to a more nurturing embrace recognizing individual strengths. This approach embraces those positive characteristics of resiliency.

A prerequisite for the success of any theory, including resiliency, is the need for an accurate definition and operation of the term. The meaning of resiliency and its operational definition has been the subject of considerable debate and controversy over the years (Masten, 1999). Nonetheless, there is little dispute that there are individuals most people would consider "resilient" by almost any definition. Resiliency can be thought of as an enduring characteristic of a person, a situational or temporal interaction between a person and the context as it can be applied to social, academic, or other settings (Cicchetti & Garmezy, 1997). Resiliency is a multifaceted phenomenon that produces the ability to thrive despite adversity. The term is derived from Latin roots meaning, "to jump or bounce back" (ChangeWise, 2007). It can also be defined as the capacity to rebound from adversity, misfortune, trauma, or other transitional crisis of life,

such as death, divorce and physical or emotional illness. Many researchers are now re-defining resiliency as a process with a dynamic character (Rutter, 2000). For example, resiliency operates both passively, through a person's ability to withstand and overcome traumatic situations, and actively, by shaping the environment to minimize a person's interaction with trauma and possibly leave the negative environment for a more positive, rewarding one. In the early publications on resiliency and in the press about children doing well despite adversity, successful high-risk children were referred to as "invulnerable" "stress-resistant," or "resilient." Eventually, resilient became the most prominent term for describing such individuals.

In one of the ongoing debates, attempting to define resiliency, the literature has tended to focus on whether the criteria should include good, "internal" adaptation, (positive psychological well-being versus emotional distress and problems) as well as good "external" adaptation. However, according to both camps external adaptation standards best define resiliency. Some researchers, however, include indicators of emotional health and well-being as additional defining criteria, whereas others study the internal dimensions of behavior as predictors of resiliency. In defining resiliency, the debate of its meaning reflects the duality of nature and living systems. (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). For example, almost a century ago, Freud described the role of the ego in dualistic terms, with the goal of maintaining internal well-being (self-preservation) while also tending to the expectations of life in society (Freud, 1960). Human beings are living organisms that must maintain coherence and organization as a unit and also function as part of larger systems, such as families and communities. Therefore, it would be fair to say that resiliency is a multifaceted theory with many different tentacles.

Nurturing/Thematic Approach

As stated earlier, the first view of resiliency inquiry focused on the paradigm shift from looking at the risk factors that led to psychosocial problems in individuals to the identification of strengths in individuals (Benson, 1999). By some researchers this view is called the “first wave” theory. Researchers emphasize the importance of identifying individuals as well as environmental factors that are associated with resilient children and adults. The outcome of this view looked at the assets individuals developed as they grew through adversity (such as self-esteem and self-efficacy). These resilient characteristics have been referred to as protective factors or developmental assets. According to researchers, developmental assets are extremely important in helping youth transition smoothly from adolescence to adulthood (Benson, 1999). If along the pathway to adulthood a breakdown occurs, the individual will be at risk for further problems unless it gets “fixed.” Part of understanding the developmental asset framework understands that adolescents need a clear sense of the rules or limits in the various settings in which they live and interact; as they grow and develop the rules and limits change. The developmental asset framework identifies six boundaries and expectations, assets that help youth develop into positive social adults. The first boundary is identified as the family boundary. Family boundary states that clear rules and consequences are necessary; the family monitors the young person’s whereabouts. The second boundary is the school boundary; it provides clear rules and consequences (Benson, 1999). The third is the neighborhood boundary: neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people’s behavior. Fourth is the adult role model: parents and other adults’ model positive and responsible behavior. The fifth boundary is characterized as positive peer influence, when

friends model responsible behavior. The sixth boundary is, high expectations, from both parents and teachers encouraging young people to do well (Benson, 1999). The two factors that researchers in this framework emphasized were neighborhood boundaries and adult role models, particularly in urban areas and among Black youth. In the past, the neighborhood was directly and indirectly responsible for helping youth maintain high levels of academic achievement, higher levels of high school graduation, decreased juvenile delinquency and decreased violent crimes. For Black youth, the community has played an important role in maintaining stability for families in poverty and providing protection from external factors such as unfair living conditions in urban areas. However, with gentrification in many urban settings, social disintegration of communities (Brewster, 1994) has helped to hamper or destroy those life lines that existed before. Examining adult role models, however, was important in helping Black youth because, many of the adult role models acted as part of an extended network of family and friends. They were similar to mentors and coaches who helped navigate Black youth through difficult life stages, directly and indirectly. For example, they helped reduce smoking among Black youth and decreased problem behavior. However, the mentors' roles today are problematic because of displacement of communities, increased joblessness, increased incarceration and an increasingly bleak forecast for the future. Nonetheless, this framework helped set the stage for understanding how youth navigate into adulthood with positive influences. The next section helps us understand some of the factors that helped youth develop despite internal and external problems and how they became resilient.

The foundation for this extraordinary understanding was the pioneering work done by Werner (1982) and her colleagues who did a longitudinal study by examining

children for 40 years. Her work became known as the Kauai study. She began her study in 1955, looking at a multiracial population of children designated to be at high risk for life success due to four major categories of environmental factors. According to the study, 200 of the total 700 children were at risk because of prenatal stress, poverty, daily instability, and serious parental mental stress and health problems. They looked at the developmental consequences of life as a result of the negative risk factors the children were exposed to during their lives. They followed them until age forty and one of the major outcomes was that many of them exhibited resiliency and protective factors. Protective factors are “influences that modify, ameliorate or alter a person’s response to some environmental hazard that predisposes to a maladaptive outcome” (Rutter & Carlson, 1997). These researchers suggested that protective factors emerge from three areas: family, individual, and external supports, which is similar to the developmental asset framework. There are other protective factors that other researchers use such as: 1) church and organizations and 2) the ability to relate to support people, i.e. teachers, neighbors, and other adults. According to the Kauai longitudinal study (Werner, 1994), one-third of these children overcame their developmental and environmental odds and developed coping skills. Light was shed on many factors that helped them become successful at different stages of their development, thus, a metatheory of resiliency was born. Werner’s phenomenology (a qualitative study, 1955) included personal characteristics such as being female, socially responsible, adaptable, tolerant, achievement oriented, a good communicator, and having good self-esteem. Werner, also found that a care giving environment both inside and outside the families helped young people thrive in the face of adversity. Werner and her colleagues also found that those

children in the study had coping skills. She called this the second wave view. The second wave focused on the process of coping with stressors, challenges and adversity that resulted in fortification and enrichment of protective factors. The outcome of the second wave described the reintegrative process of acquiring the qualities of resiliency. Resilient reintegration refers to the coping processes that result in growth, knowledge, self-understanding, and increased strength of resilient qualities. The second wave wanted to answer the question of how resilient tendencies are acquired. This wave further explained that people, through planned disruptions, or by reacting to life events, have the opportunity to choose consciously or unconsciously, the outcomes of disruptions.

The study discovered through observation and the children's anecdotal notes that internal factors play an important role in resiliency; this became known as the third wave of resiliency. This third wave view became the framework of looking at innate motivational factors. This framework looked at the motivational factors that individuals or groups acquire to become successful. The outcome of the third wave of resiliency, enabled practitioners to develop strategies to help individuals who exhibited at-risk behavior. Their goal was to help them discover/re-discover and apply self-actualization skills to move to a state of resiliency and to apply those learned strategies in future situations when needed. According to the theory of the third wave, resilient reintegration requires increased energy to perpetuate because it is innate or internal. The questions that led to the third wave of resiliency inquiry were: What and where is the energy source or motivation to reintegrate resiliently? One of the key sources of this energy is from a spiritual source or innate resilience. Researchers viewed this theory as controversial because it was based on a view that required individuals to believe in a higher power

which is non-scientific. The third wave theory of resiliency focuses on the belief that there is a force within everyone that drives him to seek self-actualization, altruism, wisdom and harmony via a spiritual source of strength. This theory will be further explored in the section that discusses the role of the church on the Black family and community and if and how resiliency has sustained or hindered the Black family. Various disciplines have used the third wave of resiliency to explore the human nature and resiliency; for example, the view from physics suggests that at the subatomic level of life, matter and energy come from the sun, the oscillations from the earth, plant life, light, music, animals and other forms of living and non-living things. This is often referred to as the quanta of energy. According to physics (Richardson, 2002) quanta fill the immensity of the atmosphere as well as each habitant of the world. For example, at a personal level, an individual may be experiencing some emotional or physical distress in his life; however, when that individual is exposed to an external source of energy or perceived energy there is a change. This energy could come from engaging in prayer, a surprise visit from an unexpected loved one, viewing a beautiful natural setting, etc. which causes the emotional or physical distress disappears. From physics, we learn that this quanta is the energy required for resiliency reintegration.

Similar to the nurturing thematic approach, (third wave) that focused on a source that came from an external power, Werner and Smith (1998) also described the ecological resilience as an innate “self-righting mechanism” (p. 202). Individuals operating within this type of resilience are able to change- regardless of their risk factors. Most believe their strength comes from their God or a creative force. Ken Wilber (1996) succinctly stated, “The vast majority of the great philosophers of the west have

maintained that there does indeed exist some sort of Absolute, from the good to God to Geist.” It is believed that having such a faith in a higher existence fortifies the immune system of the body in addition to increasing self-efficacy and other resiliency qualities. In summary, the third wave of resilience hypothesizes that ecological sources provide or trigger resiliency in people. The force or energy that drives a person from survival to self-actualization has been called quanta, chi, spirit, God or resilience.

Constructionist View of Resilience

Another aspect of the nurturing thematic approach is the constructionist view of resiliency. Most research on resiliency has been labeled as an ecological approach with a strong foundation in Systems Theory which emphasizes predictable relationships between risk and protective factors (Ungar, 2008). A constructionist view of resiliency has a strong philosophical foundation in postmodern understanding. Postmodern constructs argue that the ecological view is inadequate to account for the diversity of people’s experiences, such as culture, structural relationships within society, social relationships and institutions. This view argues that the postmodern view reflects a better understanding of how resiliency is expressed by individuals, families and communities. According to Ungar (p. 344), a definition of a constructionist view states that the theory is non-systemic, a nonhierarchical relationship between risk and protective factors in which relationships between factors are chaotic, complex, relative and contextual.

A postmodern perspective argues that those with the most power to control social discourse influence our definition of health and illness. For example, within an ecological view, resilience has been defined as health despite adversity (Masten, 2001). In contrast, a constructionist approach to resiliency defines resiliency as the outcome from

negotiations between individuals and their environments for the resources to define themselves as healthy amidst conditions collectively viewed as adverse. Within the constructionist approach on resiliency is the Social Justice model which views resiliency as a multifaceted understanding of how individuals and communities can negotiate their environments. The postmodern perspective also grew out of the social conflict theory because it also recognizes the need for those individuals who are oppressed and or marginalized to seize control over their own environment and learning. The students are given the tools to help them construct their learning as opposed to being “instructed.” The teacher acts as the facilitator by giving the students the framework within to explore and develop. This framework gives credence to the oppressed/marginalized by allowing their values to be placed in the center of curriculum development as opposed to the teacher values.

This model takes a holistic approach of looking to at-risk youth, especially minorities, and for this context, Black youth. The model de-emphasizes the individual but understands that people live within society and, as such, they look at the influences of their environment. This approach also recognizes the influences of community, peers, media, school and policy. Rather than looking to correct deficiencies in the adolescents themselves, this approach turns the attention to creating healthy and supportive environments (National Research Council, 1998). As stated earlier, the traditional approach on risk-taking behavior has engendered a primary emphasis on measuring and preventing “problem” behavior rather than on strengthening and developing assets. It has contributed to a focus on attempting to change individual behavior without looking at other factors such as economics, social and environmental concerns.

The “Social Justice-Based” model was developed as an outgrowth of a study on overwhelmed clients that were being treated (Hopps, Pinderhughes, & Shankar, 1997). These models centered on helping individuals develop positive assets to assist them in attaining self-efficacy, personal mastery and competent adaptive behavior. Moreover, this model recognized the disparities of society in terms of health care, housing, the criminal justice system, juvenile incarceration and other social policies. Justice-based policies call for the elimination of inequality and the expansion of equality and also community building and advocating justice-based social policy. This model supports resiliency and encourages justice-based social interventions that will help alleviate some of the concerns of poverty and at-risk indicators, social and class conflicts that will lead to empowerment of the individual that will result in support of the community. Another model that supports resiliency and community assets is called the “Social Capital Model,” this is a relatively new and exciting approach to understanding how community assets can be used to support resiliency (Bandura, 1997). This next section will dissect the postmodern view in more detail as it reflects a better understanding of how the church, the family, and the Black student develop resilience.

The Role of Spirituality as it Relates to Resiliency

What role does spirituality play in resiliency? According to Werner (1999), during her longitudinal study she observed that children from a variety of backgrounds and communities establish stability and meaning in their lives especially in times of hardship, through their religious beliefs. Another researcher describes spirituality as an important tool. Black children relied heavily on as a survival mechanism (Coles, 1990). One of the mechanisms through which the Black church may promote resiliency is the nurture of

spirituality. Among the African descent, according to Hill-Lubin, (1991), spirituality and acceptance of a higher power pervades life's affairs – it has been identified as a common cultural value. Hale-Benson (1998) characterized the spirituality of Blacks as a key factor in coping with stressful events. Therefore, the church is often discussed as a potential community-level asset and a source of protective factors. Throughout its history the church has served as a powerful front in the socialization of competence or resiliency for Blacks. Some empirical evidence suggests a relationship between socialization experiences emanating from the Black church and a number of positive developmental outcomes (Brown & Gary, 1999). The Black church is often perceived as a lifeline and a healthy way of coping with the trials of everyday life. The church uses metaphors and biblical scriptures to illustrate how to overcome adversity by relating the stories in the bible to everyday struggles. In this context the spiritual concepts are extended from the personal to a broader, community context.

Akinyela (1996) argues that the church has played an important role in forging a cultural identity within the Black community, and this role has contributed to a unique generational form of resistance and resiliency. According to Akinyela the power of the church for Blacks grew organically from the experience of an enslaved people. The religious lessons and traditions developed in hidden brush meetings provided the form and very often the content of “Black resistant/resilience.” This sense of connectedness provided a strong foundation in forging Black consciousness and hope in a hostile country. The church is looked upon as an asset that is unique in the history of the Black experience and as one protective factor that researchers often look at when discussing at-risk youth. The next section will move away from the individual characteristics of

resiliency and look at resiliency from the framework of the family unit and how the family has played an important role for the Black youth.

The Family

From the perspective of the nurturing thematic approach to resiliency the family plays a central role. The family, particularly for Black youth, is crucial for understanding the concept of protective factors needed to overcome adversity. Key characteristics of resilient families include warmth, affection, cohesion, commitment, and emotional support. Resiliency as defined by the family structure is the ability of the family to respond positively to an adverse situation to and emerge from the situation feeling strengthened, more resourceful, and more confident than its prior state. Many family researchers have recognized that family resilience is a multidimensional construct which is a key component of family resilience (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). The first dimension is the length of the adverse situation faced by the family. The situation could be short-termed, referred to as a “challenge,” or long-term, referred to as a “crisis” (Buckley et al., 1997). Challenges often require adaptation, whereas, crises are chronic situations that require adjustment. They are major changes that significantly affect the family’s operation.

A second dimension of resilience is the life stage during which the family encounters a challenge or crisis (Cicchetti & Garmezy, 1998). The life stage influences the type of challenge or crisis a family may encounter at a given time and the strength of the family to successfully cope and emerge from it. The third dimension of resilience is related to the internal or external sources of support that a family uses during a challenge or crisis. For example, the Black families often turn to their extended family, social

agencies or the church for that external support. Internally, if the primary parents cannot navigate their environment successfully, other kin (grandparents, cousins, siblings) may step in. Resilient families generally have reasonable and clear-cut expectations for their children. They participate in family celebrations, share spiritual connections, and have specific traditions and predictable routines. (McCubbin et al., 1997). A key, initial step toward fostering family resilience is identifying the existing and potential skills, attitudes, and other resources that may enhance the family's overall growth and response to adverse circumstances. According to Simons (2005), such an approach runs counter to the traditional deficit-based models of assessment that dominate training and practice because often their focus is on identifying and analyzing family pathology and dysfunction. The following table helps clarify the difference between traditional resilience practice and resilience-oriented understanding of the family as a unit.

<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Traditional</u>	<u>Resilience-Oriented</u>
Focus and purpose	Diagnose and correct family dysfunction	utilize family resources
Role of diagnosis	Prerequisite for effective treatment	Unnecessary for effective
Role of assessment	Gather information from the past to identify	Identify potential family
strengths	Pathology	and resources
View of problem	Problems indicate underlying family	Problems indicate
unsuccessful		solution attempts
(family is struck)	Pathology (i.e. family is sick)	
View of family	Family is deficient and requires extrafamilial	Family is resourceful and
	Expertise and intervention	capable
		of marshalling their own
Role of practitioner	Expert	Collaborator

Figure 2.2. Understanding the Family. (Simons, Murphy, & Smith, 2005).

Figure 2.2. Understanding the Family. (Simons, Murphy, & Smith, 2005) (continued).

Language	Deficit-oriented	Strength-oriented
Source of treatment from	Intervention originate from the practitioner	Interventions originate the family's strength and resilience
Nature of treatment	Problem-focused, pathology-driven remediation	Solution-focused,
Use of external support	Minimal use of external supports and resources	Liberal use of external Supports and resources
Desired outcomes	Decreased family dysfunction	Increase family resilience

The above table illustrates how the traditional model of resiliency has shifted from the deficit model of the family to the more positive model of building assets of the family. The family under the traditional model is problem-laden and the family plays a passive role in its own recovery. On the other hand, a resiliency model places the family in the center of its recovery by helping members recognize their own strengths and resources. The role of the family in resiliency research has also opened the door to another asset of resiliency that is extremely important in understanding at-risk Black children; it is the role of culture. In the context of resiliency, culture has been treated as either a confounding variable or the focus of a detailed study in order to understand how cultural minorities vary in their functioning from more mainstream groups (Boyden & Mann, 2005).

Social Cultural Assets

The need to understand the role of culture in children's development began in the middle of the twentieth century with the work of such anthropologists and cross-cultural psychologists as John and Beatrice Whiting (1997). This was followed by more recent work, such as Michael Cole's (1996) among others. Unfortunately, though well regarded and recognized as significant, this framework for a very long time was relegated to the

margins of mainstream developmental work. However, more recently, within the last twenty years, there has been a shift in looking at socio-cultural influences on children. The results of these scholarly works have demanded that researchers look at a fourth wave of resiliency research, one that is sensitive to culturally embedded definitions of positive development found in both western and non-western countries (Boyden & Mann, 2005). A culturally embedded understanding of resilience has appeared in a number of recently published qualitative studies dealing with resilience (Ugar, 2003). This shift has been, in part, driven by compelling scholarly and clinical contributions that have indicated that universal assumptions about development do not equally explain all processes and pathways of development for all populations. For example, the variation in causal roots of outcomes between and within populations of different ethnic backgrounds suggests, for instance, that which might cause a Spanish-speaking child to display certain behaviors in a particular context can be significantly different from what might cause a Black child to display the same behaviors in similar situations.

Historically, developmental research and its applications in the United States have considered the child-rearing values, attitudes, practices, and norms of the dominant White middle-class culture to be optimal for child development (Garcia, Coll, & Meyers, 1998). These parenting and developmental characteristics have served as the yardstick against which all populations are compared and contrasted (Patterson & Garwick, 1999). Parents from different ethnic backgrounds have been urged to adopt these characteristics of parenting and have been sharply criticized when their child's development has not mirrored that of White, middle-class children.

Using White, middle class behaviors as the normative standards has been a

disservice to both scientific inquiry and to the interests of other ethnic groups on many counts. Bronfenbrenner (1998) argues that when minority groups are compared to majority groups, they are most typically judged as inferior. Thus, the classification of cultural differences as deviance has dominated most of the child development literature despite the fact that what is considered normative parenting and development for White, middle-class populations has changed over time. Finally, Levine (1997) has provided a useful framework for understanding the development of care giving environments in different cultures. He proposes that child-rearing techniques depend to a certain extent on the nature of the instrumental competencies individuals are expected to master in a given culture. Accordingly, adults try either too consciously or unconsciously to hammer the cognitive, linguistic, motivational, and social competencies that are deemed relevant to their cultural milieu. Levine also suggested that parental care reflects the opportunities as well as the hazards of their historically constructed environments and represents a compromise that has been reached in the pursuit of multiple goals. Thus, today, pioneering researchers have begun to look at culture not as abnormal, but as an asset. Researchers attribute this understanding through studies done within U.S. society from the lens of the oppressed population. For example, what is the social cost of coming to know that people of your own background are considered dumb, or ugly, no good, or lazy? What is the cost of thinking that your teachers do not care if you learn and do not expect you to succeed because of your cultural background? What are the costs associated with these experiences to an individual's health, well-being, and developmental outcome? How should these differences be understood and applied?

In looking at at-risk Black children and other minorities, a new construct for

resilience has surfaced called “cultural resilience.” This view is part of the framework of the social cultural assets of at-risk Black youth. This theory proposes looking at the beliefs, values, and community to overcome the negative influences of oppression, abuse, poverty, violence and racial discrimination (Masten, 2001). The idea behind this new construct is that Blacks and other minorities possess unique cultural attributes that have been forged through adversity in the form of racial oppression. A great contributor to the idea of cultural resiliency has been Freire (1993) whose work has been used extensively in critical pedagogy. Freire says resilience to oppression is fostered through what he calls the cultural circle of influence; words and symbols from a common language and culture help empower their communities. These words, metaphors, or proverbs evoke thoughts and feelings or reveal an historical point of view that has meaning to the group members that is different from the mainstream group. Growth through the cultural circle assists the group members to overcome their status as objects from outside political, economic, or educational manipulation. Accordingly, by stimulating the thinking of people submerged in a culture of silence, the process helps them emerge as conscious makers of their own cultures, thereby, empowering them to overcome oppression.

From this perspective, “culture” is seen as an extension of a person’s environment and should be viewed as transforming, enduring and protective of a people collectively viewed as oppressed. Understanding the unique cultural contributions of marginalized peoples should help practitioners understand and provide the support needed to overcome the destructiveness of intergenerational and internalized/externalized oppression.

Cultural resilience is hope, courage, faith and persistence (HeavyRunner, 1997). Cultural resilience comes from the experiences of people who have had to overcome

extraordinary conditions to live. To successfully foster and understand the unique cultural assets of others, practitioners and policy makers must be willing to abandon their own cultural biases and expectations. It is essential to focus on those attributes that have consistently sustained those that are viewed collectively as oppressed. The first charge is to examine systemic beliefs, determine collectively what programs of empowerment are needed and to abandon a one- size- fits all philosophy for Black and other at-risk students.

A consortium cohort of authors has challenged the notion of homogeneity in healthy behaviors, arguing that from behind the critical lens of culture, gender and race sometimes negative and troubling behaviors are, in fact, signs of health in specific contexts (Sullivan, 1995). Far from justifying these behaviors, the researchers challenge is to understand and encourage the participation of those that are defined as marginalized to help construct a framework that is reflective of their beliefs and values. How can resiliency help mediate the achievement gap?

The introduction of Blacks to the United States was in the form of slavery. That impact remains the single most defining historical challenge that Blacks have had to deal with as a people while attempting to forge an identify for themselves and their children in a hostile society. The notion that Blacks are genetically less intelligent than whites was discredited long ago; however, that unspoken view is a remnant of slavery and oppression. The racism that pervades society in the United States, although often perceived as a Black and White issue, is manifested in many different ways. In recent years, some research has found that prejudicial and stereotypical attitudes towards minority groups, and particularly toward Blacks, have been diminishing (Dovidio &

Gaetner, 1999). However, another body of work suggests that a more covert and subtle form of racism persists. Therefore, the stereotypes held about Blacks in the United States may have changed in nature rather than diminished.

As stated earlier, most of the empirical research on the Black community, family and youth can be classified into one of two broad approaches. This predominate view is often referred to as the pathology/disorganization model, which categorizes and evaluates the problems and weaknesses of the Black family using the norms of the majority White community as the yardstick. The results of this approach describe the Black family (Nelson, 1984) as having deficits such as absent fathers, crime ridden communities, high juvenile delinquency, low income status and severe poverty. In this article, Melvin Nelson (1997) dispels that approach by stating, the pathological/disorganization view assumes the behavior of the White majority is superior and normative; and secondly, the class, culture and values of the white majority and Blacks are equivalent; and Blacks represent a homogeneous group. Accordingly, as summed up by the author, these assumptions fail to investigate Black families within their own cultural or historical context. The family within the Black community has historically played an important role of protection/protector for its members in a perceived hostile environment. Even in the face of relentless attacks the family still remains a fortress in promoting resiliency.

During the early part of the 60's, research began to shift and look at the concept of strength/resilience. For some, this departure, from the negative to the positive approach was a more accurate source because it took into account those characteristics within the Black cultural context that enabled the Black family to surmount adverse conditions and situations, namely through different avenues of support that help promote

resiliency, such as the extended family. The extended family is defined (Hill, 1998) as the relative of an individual by both blood and marriage, including, uncles, aunts and others within the community. Wilson (2000), who did extensive research on kinship care looking at disadvantaged Black youths, finds that these relationships provide social support which helps support healthy family functioning and child resiliency by alleviating stress. Sources of social support for Blacks often include extended family members, extra-familial ties, community relationships, kinship networks, and the church. What these researchers found is that kinship ties are often more prevalent among low-income single-parent families; however, upwardly mobile Blacks also use extended support networks and interact more frequently with this network of support when under high stress. Another researcher (Freiberg, 1994), looking at the Black family/community has called this support system a “social subsystem.” According to Billingsley (1968), the Black family is a social subsystem mutually interacting with subsystems in the Black community and in the wider White society. This framework, according to Billingsley, allows for the Black family and community to retain its uniqueness and cultural framework while still moving back and forth when necessary to interact with other cultures. This subsystem helps promote family/community and individual resiliency because it draws upon other kinships to mediate adversity caused by drug abuse, high employment, poor housing, incarceration and violence.

What role does the community play in resiliency among youth and adults? Blyth and Roelkepartian (1999) state that Black communities provide several key strengths. First, a strong community has opportunities for participation in community life. For example, social organizations, such as extra-curricular activities, church activities, youth

sports, and youth groups help to bond youth to their communities. In these settings, they can learn important skills such as teamwork, group pride, or leadership. This is also important for the adults as well; it is an interlocking relationship. Resiliency is more likely when there is access to a role model, a friend, a caring adult or confidant.

Bridging the Gap through Resiliency

For many years psychologists, sociologists and educators focused their attention on prevention to support marginal students. Preventive factors reverse adverse factors that place them at-risk for educational outcomes. In recent years, a paradigm shift has occurred as researcher attention began to focus on identification factors that develop resiliency to help Black students achieve academic success. Berliner and Bernard (2001), among others, strongly recommend that educational leaders support this alternative policy approach which utilizes development of “protective factors” as a framework to empower students to academic achievement. The idea is that the focuses on protective factors help students survive a precarious environment, as opposed to fixing the student, thus viewing the student and community as “charity cases.” Resiliency research identifies the specific factors and beliefs of successful teachers who use the framework of resiliency to help close the achievement gap. Waxman, Padon, and Gray (2004) provide a comprehensive approach to educational resiliency factors and their role in supporting academic achievement. They recognized resiliency as an intervention framework that can successfully “promote skills and characteristics associated with student success in school” (Waxman et al., p.4). They reject the model of risk orientation as the primary focus of educators attempting to remediate school failure. Resilience is offered by one of the authors as “a strength based approach to a global view of the whole child, not a given

point in time per se, but long term, as it evolves over one's life" (Brown, 2004, p. 22). *Research in Educational Diversity and Excellence* (2004) is divided into three sections and provides a broad overview of empirical research in educational resiliency, factors that promote student resiliency and enhancement of resiliency through school and community partnership efforts. The author stressed four protective factors that cultivate academic resiliency: caring, high expectations, purposeful support, opportunities for meaningful participation, and effective instruction. A common finding of resiliency research identifies the role of teachers" (Werner & Smith, 1999), and states "among the most frequently encountered positive role models in the lives of children...outside of the family was the favorite teacher. Resiliency research also takes into consideration the complex interrelationships that characterize the development and functioning of the resilient individual and the protective mechanism (family, school and community) that foster such factors of resiliency. Much of that research has centered on the search for resilience-promoting strategies or protective mechanisms that magnify the circumstances within which the burden of adversity is reduced and opportunities are advanced for learning. Two major findings from this framework are: forging a greater school connection with families and the community to support resiliency development and student learning; and b) reducing educational segregation within schools and implementing responsive and powerful instructional practices to ensure learning success of every student. What is important to understand is that resiliency research makes the connection between academic achievement and resiliency, realizing that a partnership can be built between schools, community and students. Another important aspect of resiliency research has been the focus on the whole child concept. The National

Education Association (2007) also emphasized through its program the need to focus on the whole child under the theme of culture, abilities, resilience and effort (C.A.R.E) (p.3). What is different with this thematic approach is that there is recognition of cultural differences and strengths; this strategy calls for differential approach to teaching and how learning occurs; there is an understanding the important protective factors that bridge the gap on academic achievement; and educators making meaningful effort to engage the student and families in the educational process of their child. This approach is looking at the whole child. Traditional school reform often focuses on the four main cornerstones for improvement: 1) curriculum, instruction, and assessment; 2) staff development; 3) family, school, and community engagement; and 4) school organization. Current research from the National Education Association (2001) emphasizes using the four cornerstones but incorporates research based practices to help close the achievement gap. This approach also has resiliency as a foundation for school reform. In 2004, NEA's leadership placed closing the student achievement gaps at the center of its professional development and policy agenda. An outgrowth was to refocus on providing training and resources to school districts interested in creating partnerships between schools and communities. Emphasis is placed on research based strategies such as C.A.R.E. that challenge educators to meet accountability demands while providing help for the students that need it the most. Finally, C.A.R.E. embraces an agenda that focuses on strategies that have been shown to close the achievement gap, such as using resiliency as a foundation and educating the whole child, as opposed to just focusing on the four cornerstones of reform.

Research has shown that children do not develop and learn in isolation, but rather

grow physically, socially, emotionally, ethically, expressively, and intellectually within networks of families, schools, neighborhoods and their communities. A whole child concept states that the child develops through experience (Barton, 2003). Schools that educate the whole child must be learning organizations and not gatekeepers, holding cells or extensions of the juvenile court system. They fulfill their mission of providing a quality and meaningful education regardless of background and socio-economic status. For schools and communities to support and promote resiliency, the child's basic needs of security must be met. According to a report done by the California Department of Education (2005), when students basic psychological needs (safety, belonging, autonomy, and competence) are satisfied, they are more likely to: become engaged in school; act in accord with school goals and values; develop social skills and understanding; contribute to the school and community and achieve academically. When schools fail to meet these needs we see of academic failure, less motivation, higher dropout rates and more alienation from society.

Educational leaders and policy makers must ask the question of why the academic failure is so much higher for Black students. As Noguera and Wing (2006) states, schools must also focus on the role of ideology in producing, sustaining, and legitimizing academic failure (p. 123). These authors raise the question of whether race or class has anything to do with academic failure, and is race the unofficial proxy for academic ability. In other words, those who prefer to place greater emphasis on class in their analysis of the achievement gap often do so because they find more comfort in the idea that the cause of such pronounced differences in academic outcomes is not some form of inherent racial difference or racism. Innate racial differences rooted in biology, while

proven wrong, have historically served as the favorite explanation for disparities in intellectual performance, while racism has tended to receive considerably less attention (Ladson-Billings, 1994). One of the main points that the Crowley v. Pinellas School Board (2000) argues is that race is the major contributing factor for the academic achievement failure of Black students in Pinellas County. Race and the perception of racism is a thorny issue, which is why many attribute the causes of academic failure to the effects of poverty and the unfortunate influences of family background, that is presuming that parents have less education and know-how when it comes to raising their children. According to Noguera and Wings (2006) by attributing the cause of student underachievement to a lack of student effort or deficient family background, the problem can be sadly dismissed as disturbing, while calling for parenting classes and more tutoring for minority students (p.6). Do the real questions ever get addressed? Certainly the intentions are good, but as the old adage states “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” Accordingly, the existence of stable and fairly predictable disparities in academic performance that correspond to race and class differences among students is not a new phenomenon. Such differences on standardized tests and other measures of “intelligence” and academic ability have been present since the beginning of testing (Lemann, 1999). Tatum (2007) expounds on this subject, stating, “from the beginning, American construction of race and class have determined who had access to education, and to a large degree those constructions still shape how we think about who can benefit from it” (p.40). Systemic structures still exist, but there are signs of the old order of business as usual are beginning to shift and the prevailing winds of social change demand concrete and honest dialogue about testing, academic sorting, segregated classes, high

suspension rates and academic failure among Black students. One change that is talked about throughout the country is forging greater school connections with families and the community to support resiliency development and student learning. The other is reducing educational segregation within schools and implementing responsive and powerful instructional practices to ensure rigor in the learning success of Black students.

According to Benard (2007), high expectation is a major cornerstone in helping to narrow the achievement gap among Black students; it reflects a teacher's deep belief in the student's innate resiliency and in his capacity to learn. A common finding in resiliency research is the power of a teacher, often without realizing it, to provide the tipping point in turning from risk to resiliency. Werner and Smith (1989) found:

“Among the most frequency encountered positive role models in the lives of the children...outside of the family circle, was a favorite teacher, for the resilient youngster, a special teacher was not just an instructor for academic skills but also a confidant and positive model for personal identification” (p.162).

Students' desire authentic relationships, in which they feel cared about, can trust and get the support they need, without pre- judgment. This, in turn promotes resiliency.

According to Benard (1996) closing the achievement gap depends on teachers providing and contributing to these protective factors, no matter what subject, grade or students they teach. What teachers do matters and can make a difference in the life of students, especially Black students. Benard (1996) talks about how conveying compassion and actively listening sends a powerful message to students that you care. He states for the student it conveys the message “you are important in this world; you matter.” It is simple but powerful. The recipe for success to promote resiliency for the educational leader

include the following: high expectations, caring relationships, providing opportunities to participate in meaningful dialogue, a deep belief on the part of teachers and staff that every child has innate resiliency to develop healthy development and successful learning. Educators must get away from the notion that some children don't want to learn which contributes to a deficient model of thinking belief, to believing that all children want to learn, despite negative behavior. The following table helps illustrate the point.

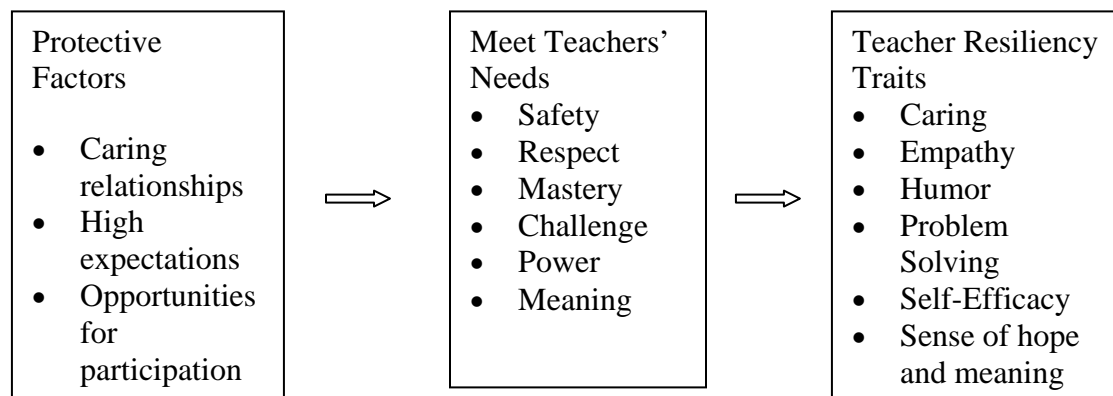


Figure 2.3. Teacher Resiliencies in Promoting Academic Achievement

What this implies is that teachers' beliefs play a major role in promoting student achievement and resiliency. Researchers have shown successful leaders and schools can successfully instill positive outcomes for students if educational leaders believe that students can learn and they implement steps to ensure student-centered strategies. Being student-centered means connecting learning to students' lives, using the student's own culture, strengths, interest, goals as the starting point for learning similar to what Freire (1960) advocated in his own celebrated research regarding marginalized and oppressed children. Similarly, Benard (2007) believes that starting with their strengths, instead of their problems and deficiencies, can enlist students' intrinsic motivation, keeping them in a hopeful frame of mind to learn and work on any concerns. This provides the student

with assistance from a caring adult to understand their own personal power to reframe his life narrative from damaged victim or school failure to resilient survivor and successful student and learner. From the book *Closing the Achievement Gap: A Vision for Changing Beliefs and Practices* (2003), the author offers powerful strategies to educators who want to reframe their thinking concerning students of poverty and narrowing the achievement gap using resiliency as the framework for change:

- Sustains a high-expectation climate
- No –excuses/never-give up philosophy
- Aims to meet developmental needs for mastery and challenge
- Believes in the innate capacity of all to learn
- Sees culture as an asset
- Connects learning to students’ interest, strengths, experiences, goals
- Employ authentic assessment
- Uses rituals and traditions
- Uses a variety of instructional strategies to tap multiple intelligences
- Uses strengths and interests to address concerns/problems
- Mirrors strengths and interests
- Helps to reframe self-image from at-risk to at-promise
- Sees students as constructors of their own knowledge and meaning

(Williams, chapter 6).

High expectation for the student means empowerment, actively engaging in learning and a belief in his own ability to succeed despite odds or adversity. Toph, Frazier-Maiwald & Krovetz state: “supporting the whole child concept through resiliency

is based on deeply held beliefs that what we do every day in our schools makes differences in their lives” (p.223). Resiliency is not a fix all cure for systemic problems in society from lack of health care, poor housing, low paying jobs, early death, and policies of disempowerment; rather, it is just a small step in looking at the achievement gap.

Chapter Three

The following discussion describes the methodology that will be used in this study. This section discusses the qualitative research, the qualitative framework used, research design, purposeful sampling, data collection, data analysis, credibility, ethics, the role of the researcher, and the pilot study.

Qualitative Research

The first day I walked into my Qualitative methods class an epiphany happened. I had found my home; it made sense and helped me determine my direction. The course helped me understand the nuances of qualitative research which, in turn, sharpened my analytic skills and gave me the opportunity to immerse myself in the various projects. The metaphor I use to describe the qualitative research process is similar to how a cook peels an onion. As the top layer is pulled back, the first physical reaction is teary eyes; as the cook progresses, the initial shock is replaced by the sweet smell and the core of the smooth onion, signaling that the work has begun. Similarly, Janesick (2004) expresses the qualitative researcher from her perspective as a former choreographer and dancer. "I see the role of the researcher as one characterized by discipline, persistence, and desire to communicate the findings so as to reflect the social settings and its members.... This is like the dancer who reflects the dance and the yogini who reflects inner growth and outer physical strength and endurance" (p. 8). The dialogue discourse generated in qualitative research is complex, not a one- fits all approach, but theoretical. There are many layers to

uncover, to peel back to reveal the core and the essence of the contradiction, intriguing, not knowing where you might end up, during the course of dialogue. Every researcher begins with a worldview, some begin with a traditional approach in their quest to uncover answers, and the qualitative researcher understands that everything is not linear and fits neatly into a particular cluster, and recognizes there are many avenues to arrive at a particular truth. According to Garman and Piantanida (1999), some researchers are more strongly aligned with an empirical tradition, adhering to epistemological assumptions of a positivist or postpositivist worldview. Others, who share the assumptions of hermeneutics or phenomenology (Willis & Neville, 1996) write within an interpretive tradition. Those concerned with injustices associated with power relationships and positions of privilege tend to write within a more critical tradition and may draw upon the assumptions of postmodernism and deconstructivism (p. 43). My approach follows the postmodern field of critical theory and social justice to help develop my study and offer a glimpse into my worldview.

Phenomenological Framework

The purpose of my study is to understand the achievement gap from the perspective of members of the Beach County community and to determine if there is a common perception or if many perspectives exist that can be grouped into themes for further dialogue and analysis. The goal is to formulate a critique of their dialogue from the framework of critical theory. The qualitative method chosen is phenomenology. According to *Webster* dictionary (2006), it is defined as a study of phenomena, it is the philosophical investigation and description of conscious experience in all its varieties without reference to the question of whether what is experienced is objectively real. It is

safe to say the individual involved will be speaking from his own worldview, experiences and subjective interpretations to the data presented. Creswell (1998) states a phenomenological study describes the meaning of the experiences of individuals that encounter a phenomenon or concept under study. Digging deeper, phenomenology as a research method needs to be set in a wider context of research and what Kuhn (1970) calls a paradigm shift. Accordingly, looking at the achievement gap, there have been many shifts in the world since the early 1970's, when researchers began to look at this phenomenon. Political and social dominance of one ethnic group over others has begun to shift towards inclusion; economic supremacy has given way to global meltdowns for peoples around the globe; and political policies of global containment have shifted to more conciliatory policies. The spotlight on immigration policies and looking at the achievement levels of Black students could be interpreted as arising out of this paradigm shift.

Asking individuals their perspectives on the achievement gap appeared to be an appropriate method for using phenomenology as a qualitative method. However, there are constraints within using this method. This method can be described as interpretative and poetic if comparing it to the scientific method; however, if working from an emancipator view, the role of the researcher is limited. My job is to gather the information, group it into themes and analyze it. My analysis will be based upon the themes gathered from this process to understand how the achievement gap is perceived and how district policies are prescribed by those with power to make decisions.

Using the phenomenology approach, data is collected in two ways: focusing on the participants' experiences or the researcher's experience in the phenomenon as an

observant of participants (Patton, 2002).

The phenomenological approach to data analysis involves four steps: description, extraction, transformation, and analysis.

- The researcher first reads all descriptions in their entirety. These narratives describe the human experience and consciousness of the participants in the study.
- The researcher extracts significant statements or meaning units' from each description.
- These statements are formulated into meanings, and these meanings are clustered into themes.
- The researcher integrates these themes into narrative description.

(Creswell, 1998).

Kvale (1996) further describes this same process similarly:

A phenomenological perspective includes a focus on life world openness to the experiences of the subjects, a primacy of precise descriptions, attempts to bracket foreknowledge, and a search for invariant essential meanings in the description. A dialectical access focuses on the contradictions of a statement and their relations to the contradictions of the social and material world. There is an emphasis on the new, rather than on the status quo (p36-38).

Finally, the phenomenology approach allows for the immersion of the researcher into the lives of the participants to help synthesize their world view and to uncover and explain dialectical contradictions of their subjective perspectives that can collide with objective reality. The development of contradictions is the driving force of change. Kvale

(1996) argues that in dialectical thought there is an emphasis upon the new, what is under development. He further argues that it is important to uncover the new developmental tendencies in order to obtain true knowledge of the social world. My goal is to understand how influential perspectives hinder or improve social progress, to uncover what is prevailing truth on the achievement gap. What are the driving views that are emerging and how can educational leaders help the process of social change. Presentation of influential individual perspectives will provide the reader the opportunity to gain understanding of their worldview, opinions and observations. Direct quotes from the participants will be used in the study as an attempt to portray the participants as individual entities.

Research Design

The research design of this study seeks to describe and explain selected district leaders of the Pinellas School Board and community members and educational members' perspectives on the achievement gap between Black and White students. The study will be made up of five individuals and will attempt to answer two major exploratory questions:

1. What are the components of the perspectives and how they are they formed?
2. What beliefs support or hinder these perspectives?

The qualitative researcher begins the process with a philosophical assumption that guides the study. Although the research design is prepared at the beginning of the study, it can change as the subject is deeply explored. Creswell (1998) also agrees that "our questions change during the process of research to reflect an increased understanding of

the problem” (p.19). Proceeding from this understanding, the researcher is open-minded and willing to explore new territory in order to go deeper into the subject. The researcher understands the value of interviewing and actively listening. According to Janesick (2004) “interviewing is a meeting of two persons to exchange information...resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning...” (p.72). Meaning is determined from listening, probing and analyzing the information given, to give it depth, texture and color.

Qualitative research is designed to understand and explain something. In this study, the research searches to understand the perspectives of District leaders, a community leader and an education instructor in order to better understand the persistent achievement gap. Creswell (1998) states that the qualitative researcher studies things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p.15). With this in mind the researcher is cognizant of the shifts and of the unexpected when beginning the study.

Purposeful Sampling

Purposeful sampling is essential in qualitative research because it helps the reader understand the researcher’s criteria and rationale for the study. Creswell (1998) views purposeful sampling from the perspective of a phenomenological study as a much more narrow range. Participants must experience the phenomenon being studied (p.118). He further states that “Criterion” sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon. In studying the achievement gap, the commonalities for all the participants are many: all have been impacted by the achievement gap, all have a worldview that influences their outcome and all are residents of Beach County.

In order to answer the relevant research questions, two interviews each for a total of ten will be conducted with five persons who are currently in position of power or influence to make decisions, such as top District leadership, a site based instructor and a community member. While their experience will be varied they all have a stake in the future direction of Beach County students and specifically, Black students, to address achievement, high proportion discipline referrals and on time graduation rates. I have selected the following to participate in this study: An Associate Superintendent district member that oversees the Office of Equal Opportunity who was an former educator and Associate Superintendent in another county and also active in community organizations; Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum who implements and design the curriculum used throughout the district; the current Deputy of Economic Development for Franklin, Florida and former chief of police, this will serve in the capacity of the community member. His selection is based on his current position and his respected work with the Beach County school district, and his advocacy for Black students in Beach County; a parent who currently sits on one of the local high school SAC committees, as well as on the District Monitor Advisory Committee for Beach County (DMAC) . DMAC was designed to provide input to the District on the achievement gap, referral rate and to bring all the stakeholders together; a liaison acting as the bridge between the legal team of *Crowley v. Pinellas County School Board (2001)* and the Black community; and a site based instructor, who will provide insight from his perspective working within the Beach County Schools. While these individuals were selected, this study is not limited to their participation. Others can be asked to participate if the participants decide to drop out or the perspectives are all similar.

Direct quotes will be used from the individuals that will provide the reader the opportunity to gain an understanding of the perspectives, observations, and opinions in an attempt to portray the participant as an individual and cross-reference with current national policies. The cross-references will look for similarities, themes, and trends that will help shape this study.

This study seeks to describe and explain if there is a common understanding on why the achievement gap exists; if District policy reflects a unified view between the District and community; and if different worldviews, policies, goals, have an impact on the current state of affairs affecting Black students. According to Delpit (1995) “we all carry worlds in our heads, and those worlds are decidedly different. We educators set out to teach, but how can we reach the worlds of others when we don’t even realize that our own worlds exist only in our heads and in the cultural institutions we have built to support them”(xiv). That statement simply states, that assumptions, beliefs and stereotypes are often at work even when we as educators aren’t conscious of our biases. Finally, can a common view be achieved to forge new relationships between the community and District that has historically been tension laden and unproductive?

The five participants chosen represent a broad sector of the Beacg County School district from top tier leadership who implement policy and strategic direction to two community representatives who has been impacted by the achievement gap; a site based instructor will bring the perspective of his own experiences, values and frustration and class status into the mix. Various levels of educational leadership were identified as a basic to gain deeper insight into the process of collaboration and direction.

Table 3.1

Proposed Timeline

Completed Coursework	Spring 2008
Comprehensive Exam	Summer 2008
Doctorate Candidate	Fall 2008
Chapter One - Introduction	September 2008
Chapter Two – Literature Review	October 2008
Chapter Three – Methodology	October 2008
Proposal Defense	November 21-December 10, 2008
Data Collection – Protocol A	January 2009-Study
Data Collection continues – Protocol B	January – June 2009/ Study
Completion of Institutional Review Packet	January 2009
Data Analysis	December 2009 – March 2010
First Draft of Dissertation	March 2010
Re-writes of Dissertation	April 2010
Dissertation Defense	May 2010
Final Copy Completed	May 2010

An initial inquiry discussion was held with the potential participants prior to this writing. Upon approval of chapters one, two and three participants will be asked formally to participate and sign an informed consent form.

Data Collection

Interviews, researcher reflective journal, researcher field notes, documents, artifacts, and transcripts will be collected. At least two in-depth interviews will be

conducted with the participants over a period of three months, starting in January 2009 until March 2009.

In an attempt to gather the rich, descriptive information required for qualitative research, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions will be used. Benefits of this procedure require participants to be asked the same questions so that interviewer effects are minimized, allowing for cross analysis and, allowing future researchers to see the instrument used. Kvale (1996) uses the miner and traveler metaphor to provide clarity to the role of the interviewer and participant. In the miner metaphor, knowledge is understood as buried metal, and the interviewer is a miner who unearths the valuable metal (p.3). The importance of interviewing is to discover, study, and analyze the findings gathered from the participant. The interviewer unveils and seeks to unearth information to test the data, to understand the experience of the participant from the perspective of the interviewee. The interviewer helps to generate insights and concepts, search for exceptions and expand understanding of social concepts.

There are several types of interviews: topical oral history, life history, evaluation interview, focus group interview, cultural interviews and qualitative interviews. According to Rubin & Rubin (1995), qualitative study is a research tool; the interviewer guides the questions and focuses the study. The interviewer becomes a student and then tries to get people to describe their experiences in their own terms. The qualitative research's philosophy determines what is important, what is ethical, and the completeness and accuracy of the results (p.2). The first step in the data collection will be conducting interviews with the study participants. Through the interviewing process, the researcher encourages the participants, to "elaborate, provide incidents and clarifications, and

discuss events in length” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 8). Similar to the onion metaphor the goal is allowing the participants to reveal the essence of their richness and the core of their worldview. Janesick (2004) reveals that “interviewing is a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic” (p.72). It is the probing and questioning that will help give meaning to the data, which in term will provide the basis for further conversations and cross references to gain deeper insight of the participant perspective.

“Qualitative interviewing requires intense listening, a respect for and curiosity about what people say, and a systematic effort to really hear and understand what people tell you” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 17). Prior to the first interview, an interview protocol was developed with questions deemed important by the researcher. Kvale (1996) offers seven types of interview questions: “introducing questions, follow-up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct questions, indirect questions, structuring questioning and interpreting questions” (p. 135). Janesick states “a good rule of thumb for interviewing is to be prepared” (p. 73). The following guidelines were offered by Janesick (2004) as a format for preparing the researcher for interviewing:

1. Be prepared with a tape recorder, tape, and notebook to take field notes while interviewing.
2. Before the interview, check your recorder and tape to see that both are functional. Test your voice on the tape by saying the date, time, place, and name of the participant on the tape. This is helpful later, not only when you do the transcriptions of the tape but also for jogging your memory at a subsequent date.
3. Whenever possible, carry a spare tape recorder, extra tapes, and batteries.

Many cases have been described where the tape was malfunctioning, the recorder died, and/or the batteries wore out!

4. If you feel more comfortable giving a copy of the interview questions to your participant. Do so ahead of time. Call ahead to remind and verify the exact date, time, and place of the interview, and arrive early.
5. Always have a back -up plan in case the participant decides to leave the study. (p. 74).

The nature of qualitative research is flexible, as participants are being studied in their social settings, it is important to allow move for change, so it is important that the interviewer is well prepared to help put the participant at ease.

Another tool that the qualitative researcher utilizes is the observation cycle which is a supplement to the data collected in the interview. Piantanida & Garman (1999) states “the qualitative researcher live with the phenomenon and context of the study, immersing themselves in it and striving to know it as deeply and intimately as possible” (p.144). The researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon as deeply as possible to gain essential understanding of the study undertaken. The researcher plans to observe each participant at least twice. Settings for potential observation include offices, classroom, board meetings, or other occasions that may seem appropriate. Observations work hand in hand with interviewing because it can provide credibility to data collected. Similar to interviewing, observations are a planned method of obtaining additional data to help explain and provide background knowledge about a phenomenon or individual being interviewed.

Documents, researcher field notes, and a researcher reflective journal and a peer reviewer will also serve as other sources of data for this study. Field notes and reflective journal were introduced in the Spring 08 class when I did my pilot study for my

dissertation. Format for the field notes collected during interviews and observations were first suggested by Janesick (2008) as a way to write about my journey and what the researcher learned in the process of writing and reflecting upon that experience.

According to Janesick (2004), “for the qualitative researcher, the meditative focus of journal writing can only help to refine the researcher as research instrument” (p.95). The reflective journal serves as a means for the researcher to express emotions and reactions to the study. The reflective journal will be another means to identify themes and uncover hidden meanings and further probing. Janesick (2004) also states “...self-awareness helps to sharpen one’s reflection, writing, thinking and ability to communicate” (p.95). It is an invaluable tool for self-discovery in refining the researcher as the instrument of inquiry to perfect the art of observation, and interviewing. Another component of the research study will be observational notes taken during the interviewing process; it allows the researcher to jot down important information during the interviewing process that can be invaluable later during the analyzing stage. Observational notes are useful for generating in-depth descriptions of individuals, settings or events for obtaining information that is otherwise inaccessible. The context of background behavior is included in observational notes of both the participant and the researcher and of the environment. It also enables the researcher to describe, interpret and gain clarity in an effort for the researcher to see the world from the other person’s point of view.

A peer reviewer is another important element in a qualitative dissertation, according to Janesick (2004), “novelists and playwrights also use outside readers to bring a fresh viewpoint, to read for discrepancies and the like” (p. 117). A peer reviewer acts similar to an auditor and can become the extra eyes of the researcher and add to the

richness of the final product. This study will also rely on the peer reviewer for field notes, transcription and the overall dissertation.

Protocol A. Questions for study

Goal: To collect information on basic knowledge about the achievement gap

1. Tell me a little about your background and your interest in Education.
2. Can you describe for me what it was like attending school for you either in an integrated school or desegregated school?
3. What is your understanding of the achievement gap and what components do you believe contribute to the achievement gap?
4. What is your perspective on how Beach County schools can help narrow the achievement gap?
5. What are your own beliefs on the achievement gap between Black and White students?
6. Do you have any beliefs about how the achievement gap can be narrowed? Please explain.
7. How do you see Beach County School district dealing with the challenges of the achievement gap? How do you see yourself as influencing this challenge?
8. Do you believe that a child's, strengths, the ability to survive despite risks and adversity can be used to narrow the achievement gap, if so how?
9. Is there anything else you wish to share with me at this time?

Upon completion of protocol A, the researcher will analyze the data from all the participants to determine questions for protocol B.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is not off-the-shelf; rather, it is custom-built, revised, and “choreographed” (Huberman & Miles, 1994, p. 142). Qualitative researchers learn by doing and interpreting what they have written about. Thus, qualitative research data analysis is not bound by tradition more about emerging themes and concepts. Rubin & Rubin (1995) explain the, “the purpose of the data analysis is to organize the interviews to present a narrative that explains what happened or provide a description of the norms and values that underlie cultural behavioral” (p. 229). The following steps as provided by Rubin & Rubin (1995) help to explain the process:

1. Coding data, letting interpretations develop as data is analyzed response by response.
2. Divide data into smaller categories. Reassemble the information into themes or arguments.
3. Figure out the theoretical or policy implications of the data-what broader questions can be answered and what broader insights can be provided.
4. Choose what themes to emphasize in part based on the audience and what they find stimulating, useful, or challenging (p.229).

The final stage according to Creswell (1998) the researcher develop a textual description, “what happened”; develops a structural descriptions, “how” the phenomenon was experienced and finally develops an overall description of the experience the “essence” (p. 149). Rubin & Rubin (1995) says the final stage of analysis includes “an interpretation of the material...in terms of the literature and theories in the researcher’s field.” (p. 251). Accordingly, analysis for this study will begin immediately after the first

interview and continue through the end of the study.

Credibility

This study will use multiple sources of data collected from interviews, observations reflected in the researcher's field notes, a researcher reflective journal, and relevant documents. The sources of the data are central to confirming credibility. Triangulation is a process of verification, checking for truth that increases validity by incorporating three different viewpoints and methods. Sevigny (1978) calls a combination of all three stances triangulation, a sociological process of viewing a situation from all three perspectives. This would include audio taping, interviews, observations and diary writing. A central question for qualitative researcher is whether standards exist and according to Howe and Eisenhardt (1990) suggest that five standards can be applied to all research. First, assess a study in terms of whether the research questions drive the data collection and analysis rather than the reverse being the case; second, determine the extent to which the data collection and analysis techniques are competently applied in a technical sense; third, are the researchers assumption made explicit, such as the researchers own subjectivity; fourth, is the study robust, warranted and uses respected theoretical explanations; fifth, the study must have value both in informing and improving practice. (p. 195). The use of multiple data sources confirms the credibility of the study. As the study develops and data is collected, triangulation will be as a means for establishing credibility to the emerging themes or perspectives. Within the phenomenology framework researchers identify five questions that researchers might ask themselves in accessing credibility:

1. Did the interviewer influence the contents of the subjects' description in

such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the subjects' actual experience?

2. Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation in the interview?
3. In the analysis of the transcriptions, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived? Has the researcher identified these alternatives?
4. Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?
5. Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations (Moustakas, 1994, p. 57).

Credibility in this study will be used as a process of verifying information. Triangulation will serve as a means of validation of data with other collected sources.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research involves study involves a host of techniques for carry out the study, such as questionnaires, audio-taping, observations, gathering documents and videotaping. Piantanida & Garman (1999) state, "At the heart of the inquiry is the researcher's capacity for encountering, listening, understanding, and thus "experiencing" the phenomenon under investigation" (p.140). Janesick (2004) use the analogy of "stretching" in describing the role of the qualitative researcher "In order to stretch, the qualitative researcher must be able to articulate the role of the researcher as the underlying harmony or spirit of the study" (p.103). The researcher's role is to immerse

into the study, to experience the complexities of the participant and maintain integrity and balance throughout the study.

This researcher has had a passion for understanding the achievement gap and was not satisfied with the simplistic answers given. Today, it is essential to have an open and honest dialogue about the achievement gap, notwithstanding how uncomfortable the dialogue is. Scholarly researchers can predict based on reading scores, parental educational level, and test scores, who will end up in the penal system. The school to prison pipe line has had devastating consequences for families and communities and as well as limited life opportunity for success.

I became exposed to the concept of the achievement gap as a classroom teacher and experienced how policies, low expectations, curriculum, teacher quality, impacted negatively Black students. Beach County, Florida for many years even after the Brown v. Board of Education (1971) lawsuit has operated under a dual system of segregation and exclusion, hand wringing, indecisiveness, and ambiguity.

My professional experience places me in a position to experience firsthand the perception and biases that has impeded academic achievement for Black students. I am curious as to how and if different perspectives have impacted negatively the narrowing of the achievement gap and what strategically policies can be implemented between the District and community which can help bridge the gap. It is with this passion, that I seek to undertake this study to gain understanding into the leader perspectives on the achievement gap and if resilience is viable as a framework of change.

Ethics

All research inquires at some point face ethical issues and dilemmas that must be

handled quickly so as not to challenge the integrity of the participant or the researcher.

The really nature of dialogue issues can arise, because the researcher is digging and opening doors that are unfamiliar. The researcher asks that the participant be honest and open during the course of inquiry. Creswell (1998) outline the ethical obligations of qualitative research:

1. The researcher protects the anonymity of the informants, by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals.
2. A researcher develops case studies of individuals that represent a composite picture rather than an individual picture.
3. A researcher conveys to participants that they are participating in a study, explains the purpose of the study, and does not engage in deception about the nature of the study.
4. Determining whether the researcher should share personal experiences (p. 132).

It is the researcher's intention that no harm is visited upon the participant, this includes emotionally, financially or physically because they agreed to participant in the study. All interviewees will be asked permission to record the interviews. All participants will be explained the nature of the study and its purpose. Kvale (1996) further state "the ethical principle of beneficence means that the risk of harm to a subject should be the least possible" (p.116). The researchers' responsibility is to weigh out the possible harm or benefit to the participant and the potential benefit gained from the researcher and make a decision to protect the integrity of the study. Therefore, all interviewees will be asked if they would like to read the transcription prior to submission, any material deemed

inappropriate by the interviewee will not be included but noted in the field journal.

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) developed a section called Ethical Standards Section I, subsection B which provide guidelines for ethical research:

1. Educational researchers should conduct their professional lives in such a way that they do not jeopardize future research, the public standing of the field, or the discipline's research results.
2. Educational researchers must not fabricate, falsify, or misrepresent authorship, evidence, data, findings, or conclusions.
3. Educational researchers must not knowingly or negligently use their professional roles for fraudulent purposes.
4. Educational researchers should honestly and fully disclose their qualifications and limitations when providing professional opinions to the public, to government agencies, and others who may avail themselves of the expertise possessed by members of AERA.
5. Educational researchers should attempt to report their findings to all relevant stakeholders, and should refrain from keeping secret or selectively communicating their findings.
6. Educational researchers should report research conceptions, procedures, results, and analyses accurately and sufficiently in detail to allow knowledgeable, trained researchers to understand and interpret them.

Pilot Study

The purpose of a pilot study is useful to researchers in order help connect formal

work with the ideas for the dissertation. Piantanida & Garman (1999) view is that the pilots study for the researcher help focus the study (p. 51). The pilot study help the researcher craft their writing ability and interviewing skills, it is the pre-test before the actual test. Similarly, Janesick (2004) state: “Researchers do a pilot study or at least components of piloting techniques to sharpen their skills at interviewing and observations; from the pilot period, the researcher learns how to re-craft questions in an interview or be reminded of nuts-and bolts issues” (p.119). This process gives the researcher the confidence to move forward and to provide the foundation of their dissertation.

In spring 2008, a pilot study was undertaken to gain an understanding of how the participant’s perspective as a White student of segregated schools in Beach County, Florida during the early 70’s impacted his views on achievement and how have it affected his viewpoint and has it impacted his work with the Beach County School district. The individual was selected after hearing him speak at a workshop with new teachers that were hired for the new school year. During his training with the teachers he used words such as “cultural assets,” “social capital” and “social responsibility.” This was a different view that the new teachers were used to as well as for me. I approached him wanting to learn more about his perspectives, especially working with new primarily White females in predominately, Black schools in south Franklin, Florida. My participant was a White middle aged male that grew up in Franklin, Florida, during segregation. During his last two years in at his high school he witnessed the transformation of the population going from 98% White to 70% with the remainder of the students being Black. The experience of that period influenced the participant throughout his life and later as he went off to

college and pursued his career he thought about “democratic justice” for all. He felt that “common ground” had to be forged between the two races if real and meaningful change was going to happen for Black students. He described his goal as a consultant with the Beach County school district to bridge the gap of perceptions of the school district and Black community. This began my journey with the participant and coming away with a different perspective after doing the pilot study. The participant, proved to be very open, socially responsible and genuinely wanting to help influence policy in Beach County. He talked about events that he still remembered during the integration era and how peers and teachers were distrustful, biased and often hostile to Black students coming into previously all White schools. Some events he remembered were painful and even after so many years, he recalled them readily; others he recalled were joyful experiences and he appreciated the experience. Those experiences, helped shape his worldview and his belief of how the achievement gap has hindered social process.

The researcher used interviews and observations to find embedded themes and sub-terms and came away from the process with tremendous knowledge and a different perspective after going through the process with the participant. The process of interviewing, transcribing was intriguing and rewarding. The participants worldview was affected by segregated schools and the experience of re-living that period was an eye-opener for both the interviewee and the participant.

My journey from that process enabled me to ponder questions that as an educator I needed answers for as it related to the achievement gap between Black and White students. The history of that period is still deeply embedded for many and this dissertation will help deepen that understanding and forge a new bridge of dialogue.

Protocol A from Pilot Study the Interview- March 2008

1. Share with me your experience growing up in Franklin, Florida during the era of segregation and integration.
2. What was your most memorable memory about your education in Franklin, Florida during that period?
3. What were some of the experiences that stood out in your mind that you have reflected upon later?
4. How would you describe your experience in college and especially race relations at the University of Florida?
5. Tell me about your current job with Beach County school district?
6. What have you learned from working with new teachers in Beach County?
7. From your perspective explain why the gap between the school district and Black communities exists?
8. How do you define the achievement gap?
9. Describe and talk about how your philosophical framework has changed as a result of your work with new teachers?
10. Do you any questions you would like to ask?

The result of the pilot study proved to be helpful to the researcher because I had an opportunity to determine if the proposed study would work. It also allowed the researcher to correct several flaws in the interview instrument. The language had to be modified to increase the understanding of the participant. Based on the research gathered from the pilot question, I determined more research was needed to understand the achievement gap from the perspective of other key members of the district and community.

Chapter Four

This chapter contains four case studies which reflect the responses of the participants in regard to how and why the achievement gap developed and their understanding of how the district is moving forward. The participants were chosen for this study based upon their familiarity with community challenges and their work with the school district. All participants have been involved in school improvement for at least five years either directly through employment or indirectly through community organizations. Initially, the study was to present the perspective of five participants however, one participant withdrew before the study was completed because of retirement.

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain selected community leaders and educators' perspectives on the achievement gap in Beach County, Florida. Their articulation provided the foundation for the exploratory questions, which guided this study.

1. What are the components of their perspectives and how they are formed?
2. What beliefs support or hinder that perspective?

In addition what variables influence their perspective and vision? Exploring the data gathered during the collection process led to further questions which evolved naturally from the process of data gathering. In my reflective journal I jotted down the following question: "Can their perspectives help answer the question as to why an achievement gap exist in the first place"? Each case presented will address these questions. The results

attempt to answer these two questions through qualitative data analysis. Data analysis is a laborious undertaking which requires the qualitative researcher to be immersed in the data; As so elegantly written by Janesick (2004) “The qualitative researcher takes on the implicit task of working in a given community and does not have the luxury of being distant.” (p.107). Interpretation of the data began immediately during the interview process. Throughout the process the job of this researcher was to understand the data that was presented. Janesick (2004) states, “Interpreting data after a presentation of major and minor categories of the findings is a chief responsibility of the researcher.” (p. 156). It is the job of the researcher to help the reader understand the data from the study undertaken and the qualitative researcher often use charts, graphs or tables to compare or contrast the categories.

The data from this research included the development of themes and categories to help condense the huge volume of data collected during the process. Huberman & Miles (2004) states, “qualitative studies-especially those done by inexperienced or lone-wolf researchers-are vulnerable when it comes to data management.” (p. 429). As new themes emerged, protocols were compiled, organized, and coded. This process helped this researcher manage the data so that it wasn't overwhelming. Each participant was given a coded number, dated, along with a synopsis of the study. It was the lived experiences of the participants and their perspectives that I attempted to describe and understand. Some themes emerged relatively quickly during the first interview process and developed continuously throughout the study. In addition, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of each participant for the purpose of anonymity.

Description of the Setting

During the 90's, Florida's population rose by 3 million – only California and Texas grew by more during the decade. Slower growth is expected during the first decade of the 21st century with Florida population expected to grow to 18,881,445 by April 1, 2010. Florida is expected to break the 20 million mark before April 1, 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Florida's 65 and older population is expected to grow by 20 percent over this decade and represents 17.5 percent of Florida's total population in 2010. It is projected that by 2010, persons ages 19 and younger in Florida will represent 24.4 percent of the total state population. In terms of race, Florida's population has become increasingly nonwhite over the last decades (Statehealthfact, 2009). Florida's Spanish speaking population is projected to represent 21.5 percent of the total population in 2010.

According to the U.S. Census Report (2000), in 2008, Florida's population consisted of the following: Whites (79.8%), White non Spanish speakers (60.3%), Spanish speakers (21%), Blacks (15%), Asians (2.3%), Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders (0.1%), and American Indian and Alaska Natives (0.5%). Seventy-nine percent of Floridians graduated from high school and 22% have a Bachelor's degrees or higher. Florida's median household income average out to \$47,000 and 12% Floridians live below the poverty line. Florida has twenty-three public state universities and colleges and twenty-eight public community colleges. In addition the (*St. Petersburg Times*, December 22, 2009 reported that the latest rankings conducted by the respected *Education Weekly* ranked Florida in terms of K-12 achievement which measures only in-school learning climbed from 31 in 2007 to 7 in 2008 and 7 again in 2009, simply stating that Florida's K-12 achievement ranks 7th in the country, and the state ranks 10th overall.

Beach County

Beach County, located on the western peninsula, is home to fewer than one million Florida residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) and it is estimated that by 2014 the population will grow by an additional 12,000 new residents. Beach County is known for its service industry, political affiliation (220,000 republicans, 233,000, democrats), financial services, tourism, retail industries, and education. With approximately 8% of its residents ranging in age 18-24, 19% 18 and younger, and 20% older than 65, Beach County is relatively youthful shifting from its past image as a retirement county and half the population is women 52%. Beach County is one of the smallest in the state: 38 miles long, and 15 miles at its broadest point, for a total of 280 square miles. In addition, it has 587 miles of coastline, which is idea for fishing, boating, and swimming.

In 2008, Beach County's racial and ethnic composition was: Whites (79.8%), Blacks (15.9%), Asians (2.3%), Native Indian (0.5%), Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders (0.1%). Beach County has a growing Spanish speaking population, with Whites making up currently the higher percentage. In Beach County (2009), 12% of its residents attended school but did not earn a diploma, 66% graduated with a diploma or (GED), 23.89% attended college but did not graduate, 23% earned either an Associate or Bachelor's degree and 7.93 earned higher degrees, comparable to state and national averages. Its graduation rate at 66% in 2006-2007, was below the state average and a thorn in the side for the state legislature, fourth among the state's seven biggest districts and a full 10% below its neighbor county, Franklin. In 2008-2009, the overall rate jumped to 77% a vast improvement. However, for Black students in Beach County the current graduation rate of 64.9% is far below the White student rate of 83.1% and

Spanish speaking student's rate of 72.1%. In chapter 5, we will examine the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test within Beach County and assess their graduation rate and achievement gap versus White students. Beach County's education system is artificially divided up between North and South County with Berlin Road being the unofficial divider. South of Berlin Road is perceived as poorer, problematic, and having more minority students; North of Berlin Road the opposite is the perception, affluent, fewer minority students, and more stable households.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), in Beach County, Blacks hold the highest rate of poverty with 26.1% of the 2000 population living in poverty. The median income for a household in the County was \$37,111 and the median income for a family of four was \$46,925 and comparable for Blacks the median income for a family of four was reported to be \$30,405. The poverty threshold set by the U.S. government recognizes poverty as a lack of those goods and services commonly taken for granted by members of mainstream society.

Franklin – The City

Franklin is one of the cities in Beach County which was incorporated in 1892. The name came about as a result of a coin toss between two friends, using their birth places to combine into a singular name. The city is divided into sections, with two major streets dividing the quadrant into east, west, north and south. In the last 10 years there have been significant demographic changes that have redefined the housing patterns. Prior to this change Black residents were confined to a small area called south Franklin; however, areas once occupied by Black residents are increasingly becoming non-Black. Franklin has the largest dedicated public waterfront park system of any city in North

America; its waterfront park system is seven miles long and is used year round for all types of public events. According to the United States Census Bureau (2006), Franklin has a total area of 133.1 square miles – 59.6 square miles of it is and 73.4 square miles is water. There are approximately 240,000 residents, most of the population is white, 65.5%, 23.9% are Black, 5.9% Latino, and 3.0% Asian. The average median income is \$41,917 with 10% of the population living below the poverty line (Wikipedia, 2006). However, for Black residents in Franklin the median income for families is \$16,000. The average unemployment rate in Franklin is 11.3% which is consistent with the state unemployment rate. However, the unemployment rate for Black residents in Franklin is 20%. The following table represents a visible picture:

Table 4.1

Franklin Demographics

Population	240,000
Median Age	41.2
% Male	47.7%
% Female	52.0%
% White	65.9%
% Black	23.9%
% Latino	5.9%
% Asian	3.0%
Total Households	110,795
% High School Graduate or higher	82.1%
% Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	23.1%
% Married	48.0%

When Florida began to develop as a tourist attraction in the early twentieth century, Black workers were needed to build the infrastructure, railroads and work in resort communities. Jim Crow segregation was strictly enforced throughout the state with white residents living on or near the ocean and Black residents living “on the other side of the tracks.” In many communities, Blacks were not permitted to cross the bridges on the intercostals waterway to the luxuries beachside communities (*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 1996). Even though segregation is not officially enforced or sanctioned, residential segregation is still in effect in many Florida communities.

Racial violence has a long history in Florida. From 1889 to 1918, 178 Blacks were lynched in the state. One the more infamous cases in Florida were the Rosewood massacre in 1923. When a white woman claimed she had been assaulted by a Black man, a mob marched into Rosewood and literally wiped it off the map. Eight Black residents were killed. In recent times, racial violence has been more customary in Florida than in any other state.

According to *The Race Reporter* (1997), one of the main reasons for the serious racial climate in Florida is the low level of education prevalent in the state. Only 56% of the adult Black populations are high school graduates and only 9.8% are college graduates. These figures are below the national average. Florida is fourth in total population in the U.S. but ranks forty-seventh in dollars per capita spent for higher education (Statehealthfacts, 2009). The same economic and educational conditions that exist throughout the state are mirrored in Franklin. Black residents in Franklin have a long history of segregation in housing and education, with the *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) decision, reversing the *Plessey vs. Ferguson* (1896), slowly did the

education change. This setting is the background for the study on the participant's perspectives on the achievement gap.

Participant Selection

Five participants were initially interviewed, two females and three males, one female dropped out. The four remaining were interviewed individually regarding their perspectives on the achievement gap in Beach County, Florida. Each participant was formally interviewed twice and informally interviewed at least once for a total of 9 interviews. Each participant was audio taped two times totaling 9 taped and 5 non-taped interviews. Data was also collected in the form of observations, nine documents, artifacts, and researcher reflective journal entries. The participants displayed enthusiasm for their jobs and active roles within the community and school district. They each brought a wealth of experience and expertise in their particular jobs. Table 4.1 details the personal characteristics of the five participants who were interviewed and a general description of their involvement with the school district. Additionally, a brief summary of the four participants in the study follows with pseudonyms to protect their identities. The pseudonyms are based upon characters in history that complement either the personality or their role in the larger community. A brief description of each character is provided prior to each case description.

Table 4.2

Comparison of Personal Characteristics among the Five Participants Using Pseudonyms to Identity them

Participant	Race	Age	Community/School Board
Jonathan Gibbs	Black	54	Community based
William Lloyd Garrison	White	54	Community based
Nannie Burroughs	Black	50ish	School based
W.E. B. Du Bois	Black	54	School based
Maria Montessori	White	50ish	School based

The Case of Jonathan Gibbs: The Statesman: A Dual Voice

The statesman in this study is identified as Jonathan Gibbs who was the first Secretary of State and Superintendent of Public Instruction (Williams, 2000) during the era of Reconstruction from 1868 – 1874. The participant in this study was a product of the era of segregation and later integration which bear similarities to the Reconstruction era. Reconstruction was that period immediately after the Civil War (Fitzgerald, 2007). Reconstruction according to Franklin, 1961, was to address the following issues; how the Confederate States would regain self-government, be re-seated in Congress, determine the civil status of the former leaders of the Confederacy, and the Constitutional and legal status of former enslaved Blacks, especially their civil rights and whether they should be given the right to vote. Violent controversy erupted throughout the South over these issues and played a major role in the rise of Ku Klux Klan, which bear similarities to the era of segregation and integration during the late 50's and 60's during the latter century. During the short period of Reconstruction from 1865-1877, educational institutions for Blacks were built throughout the south and Black officials were appointed or voted into positions of power. Formally, Reconstruction ended in 1877, with the Compromise of 1877, which became known among former enslaved Blacks as “The Great Betrayal.” The Compromise of 1877 was an unwritten agreement between Republicans’ and Democrats that resolved the impasse about the result of the presidential elections of 1876. Historians have noted that the Compromise marked a turn in policy away from concern for newly freed Blacks in the South; with the election of the Republican candidate he would bring an end to Reconstruction throughout the south if he took office. Ultimately, this agreement helped usher in the era of Jim Crow laws

(segregation). Jonathan Gibbs rose to positions of influence during the Reconstruction period and lived in an era of great change and racial hatred. He was the brother of prominent Arkansas Reconstruction Judge Mifflin Wistar Gibbs, and the father of Thomas Van Renssalaer Gibbs, a delegate to the 1886 Florida Constitutional Convention, and a member of the Florida State Legislature. Gibbs High School, the first high school in St. Petersburg for Black students, is named after him. Gibbs Junior College (also in St. Petersburg) was named after him. The statesman in this case like Jonathan Gibbs is also the first Black appointed official in Beach County, he is also a product of his environment and grew up in the era of segregation and later integration. Consequently, the participant (statesman) here will be referred to as Jonathan Gibbs.

The Case of Jonathan Gibbs

The data from each case was comprised of interviews, observations, field notes and reflective journal entries. Each participant's perspective was informed by his relationship with the community, school based employment or both, Table 4.3 represent the overlapping of participants, community, and education perspectives. Each case presents the participant's perception of the achievement gap drawing upon his own social background, experiences, and future recommendation to improve the achievement gap between Black and white students.

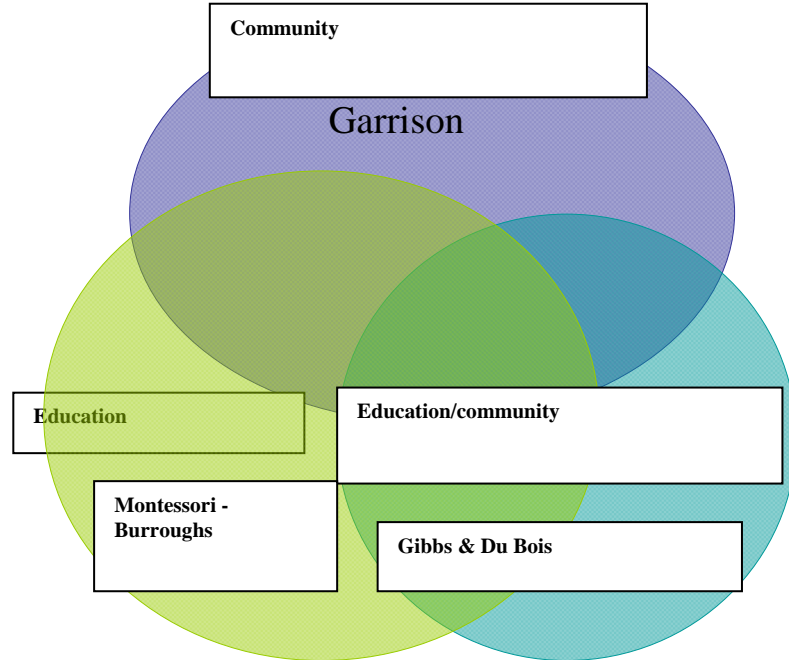


Figure 4.1. Overlapping Perspectives

The next few paragraphs describe Jonathan Gibbs and his leadership role within the community. Jonathan Gibbs is well regarded in Franklin because of his background and efforts to bridge the gap between the community and the school district. He has a friendly and authoritative demeanor: tall, neatly dressed, and always punctual and prepared. He is called the statesman in this study because of his ability to work with all stakeholders in the community to the sanguine of others who prefer to work with only likeminded people.

When I met up with Mr. Gibbs to give him the synopsis of my study and the consent form I learned that he also earned his doctorate degree from the University of South Florida as well as teaching a class once a week. I wonder how he does that with his extraordinary schedule. He states that he gets up early and is at his office by 6:00 a.m.

daily and ends his day usually at 8:30 p.m. [January 2009.]

Mr. Gibbs is a Black male, approximately, 6'4, weighting about 220 pounds, with a round face and bald head and about fifty-five years old. He dresses casually for both interviews wearing each time a suit jacket, with a shirt that is opened at the neck, and slacks. The first thing you notice is that he always carries three cell phones, which are placed on the table and during the interview they constantly buzz. [Excerpt from my reflective journal, February, 2009.]

For each interview he arrives at least ten minutes before his appointed time, he believes time is important and works from a regimented schedule that his secretary handles and confirms ahead of time. [Field notes and reflective journal excerpt, February 2009]. We met one week later at my office after work to accommodate my schedule. He has a firm handshake and easy smile and gave his undivided attention, even as his phones constantly vibrate.

He was born and raised in Franklin by his grandmother, mother, father, and grandfather whom he states instilled in him a driving work ethic and a sense of duty towards others and especially the importance of education.

He is regarded with pride by the Black community of Franklin because he was the first Black police chief who implemented policies that were in opposition to the status quo in regards to how Blacks should be treated by his police officers and those that did not adhere to those policies were promptly addressed. His policies spoke to the unequal treatment he witnessed towards the Black community and was determined to change during his “watch.” After retiring from that position he was appointed another high position in Franklin that further cemented his status as “statesman.”

I have been working with the superintendents dating back to Scott Rose (1981-1991) through the current superintendent and all in the areas of addressing issues relevant to the African-American student ... the community has a tremendous amount of distrust of the school system, because the system had failed them and now is failing their children. I believe in building bridges. Let me give you an example, it's like growing up here in the city and having to deal with an organization that I once headed, the Police department. You know when I became chief, when people came in and told me X, Y and Z happened, I didn't rule it out, because you know, I'm saying that it's possible, now let's see, let's investigate. I demanded that my officers treat people with respect and dignity.

This was unheard of and it caused uproar. But the community did not forget this [field notes, February 2009.]

You will often find Jonathan Gibbs at community functions in both the white and Black communities. You will also find him at the local Black schools in Franklin working with the principals. He has worked closely with the past three school superintendents and regards them each differently. More importantly though, Mr. Gibbs strongly believes, notwithstanding past hostilities between the Black community and the school board, a bridge of dialogue must be put in place to affect the achievement gap that exists. He discusses past relationships in regards to segregation versus integration. Past policies have impacted the Black student and the recent June 2009, negotiated settlement of the *Bradley vs. Board of Public Instruction of Pinellas County Florida (1970)*. The settlement became known as the "Memoranda of Understanding." Mr. Gibbs further believes that teacher training and relationship building must be a priority of the school

board. These are initial themes that eventually are developed into the major themes identified and expanded upon in the section below.

Two Major Themes Identified in the Data

The leading insight garnered from the perspective of Jonathan Gibbs produced two major themes: (a) political and social resistance that contributed to the achievement gap within the organization that defined the relationship between Black and White students and (b) lack of organizational vision and defining a strategic direction. Changes have occurred over the past forty years and most recently within the last ten years, which have led to procedural changes within Beach County School Board. These changes are discussed within the three following sub-themes: (1) integration versus segregation, (2) community challenges, and (3) looking at the developmental assets of Black students.

Political and social resistance that contributed to the achievement gap within the organization. During the past forty years after integration of education was achieved in Franklin, different schools of thought emerged attempting to explain why Black students weren't achieving academically versus white students. Mr. Gibbs talked about two prevailing ideas that exist, which he strongly disputes; lack of parental involvement and the politics of poverty.

Today the Beach County school system has operated under this philosophy that kids from poverty can't learn. We were kids in poverty and we did extremely well because the expectation was that you would learn and a very enriching, supportive and nourishing environment. Teachers were very important, even though we had at times outdated supplies or no supplies at all. They improvised, and more importantly, a very important aspect of the times then versus now is you hear

teachers and administrators today say “parents aren’t involved.” They don’t come to the school or what have you. I distinctly remember being in elementary school, teachers would make home visits like doctors make home visits. My parents had to work, plus, my teachers lived in my community and it was rare for our parents to visit the schools Now this notion of poverty that’s taught results in a self-fulfilling prophecy. People who buy into that have low expectations for the kids thus they end up with low ... low outcomes. Young boys around 4th grade, or what have you have is a tendency to be very rambunctious and you find that a lot of them are being channeled into areas that aren’t very productive...I think some of the contributors stem from the fact that, as I said earlier, there’s this expectation that poverty kids “can’t learn.” They buy into Ruby Payne’s book. That’s asinine. (Framework for Understanding Poverty, 1996).

Sub-theme one: Integration versus segregation. Jonathan Gibbs reflects upon the benefits of integration versus segregation and its impact on the community and students. From his perspective, he believed that integration was a necessity to challenge the prevailing Jim Crow laws and that integration helped dismantle the politics of inferiority held by the white population. However, he ponders the question he asks of himself, what were the cost to our students and the loss to the Black community [field notes and reflective journal excerpt, October 2009].

It changed with integration ... with the concept of integration we lost a lot of supportive teachers and we got into a system where it was more about the business of just going in and doing what was rote, in terms of trying to educate kids. We lost the community cohesiveness and the overall community

supervision. Because when the busing and so forth started for purposes of integration, you would be bused into communities where basically you could be anonymous, other than the fact that you would stand out if you weren't in school, but nobody really knew you. And that was contrary to the segregated system where if I didn't go to school everyone in the community knew, because there was that constant oversight. It also made it easier for the community to interface with the schools and we lost that. So losing that community connection and walking into an area where you went from high expectations to virtually no expectations, it really made a difference. Then there's still some in the African-American community who believe integration is necessary in order to have quality education. Basically ignoring the fact that prior to integration, it appears that we fared a lot better overall. I'm not suggesting that Caucasian or white teachers are not interested in African-American kids but there are a whole host of cultural differences that I think have impacted kids in terms of their ability to be successful.

Jonathan Gibbs is passionate about the removal of barriers between the school district and the overall community. He empathetically believes that this can only be accomplished through dialogue and collaboration with all stakeholders. He dislikes the notion that some teachers and administrators have bought into the belief that something is wrong with our kids, because that means the expectation of achieving is diminished.

Lack of organizational vision and defining a strategic direction. The Beach County School Board as an organization struggles to define its vision and strategic direction. Like most large organizations it is constantly called upon to address the issues

of often competing issues. According to Bolman & Deal (2003), they have identified four organizational frameworks that most organizations fall within, a) the structural frame; b) the human resource frame; c) the political frame and; d) the symbolic frame. I propose that the Franklin School Board falls within the political framework: “Viewed from the political frame, politics is simply the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests” (p. 181) This view puts politics at the heart of decision-making and agendas to appease diverse interests. Mr. Gibbs believes that some barriers that impede the organizational vision especially in addressing the achievement gap, i.e. the teachers union, and professional development for teachers. He is quick to point out that he sees some progress in the organization and is extremely optimistic that the current superintendent is working towards uniting all major stakeholders in a united vision.

She (superintendent) understands the problem immensely. I mean she taught for a while in her native country...she understands the differences in terms of what needs to happen. The key is going to be how do you move the bureaucracy? And a big part of that bureaucracy is the rules, regulations, and legislations that the district is hampered by. However, I think another part of that is what I consider a bifurcated system. North County schools where you know work is relatively easy versus South County schools where there are some challenges (as a result of forced busing of Black students). But what we really need are teachers to be committed and I think we should be paying a differential pay for those teachers who work and make progress in challenging schools. Finally, the line between North County and South County, you know, many may assume that because kids

were in the same environment that it would facilitate learning whereas we know that there is a gap and we know that something has to be done to eradicate the gap. But there's a small group who seems to think that if you do for one group, i.e. the African-American population that you're taking away from others which is ludicrous. I just think the politics of it dictate that we be persistent and look for ways to get it done.

Sub-theme two: Community challenges. After over thirty-five years of court ordered busing in Beach County, the county school board applied for and was granted "Unitary Status" in 2000. This simply means that the school system has eliminated and removed all the patterns of racial segregation; following this, Beach County implemented in 2003, its controlled choice plan. This is an attempt to provide choice while maintaining ethnic and racial integration (Alves & Willie, 1990). Controlled Choice plans to do away with neighborhood attendance districts, create zones and allow families to choose within their school zone providing that admitting students does not upset the racial and ethnic balance at that school. In 2007, a school district survey of Beach County found that the majority of all races were in favor of sending their children to neighborhood schools, or close to home. When neighborhood schools were implemented in 2008, it caused heated debates centered on the consequences of resegregation. Oppositionists fear that single-race; high poverty schools will harm student achievement, in part because studies show that the quality of teachers in such schools lack experience, turnover is greater as is a lack of academic focus. Proponents of neighborhood schools argue that closer proximity means more parental involvement, strengthens schools and programs.

What we've found is that through this social engineering, we put them on the bus

and we drove them miles and miles to school and now we've found basically in the data that the assumption was that if they were there, they would get a better education. The converse is true. So there's nothing magical about sitting in a class from an educational perspective with different ethnicities even though you know it may enrich you to know different cultures or what have you, it seems to be more detrimental for us than it was beneficial. I don't agree that neighborhood schools are wrong or bad. I believe it will allow for greater input. I think from a community perspective, we have to deal with the reality and the perception of disruption as it relates to South County schools specifically when they tend to be predominately African-American, I say that we need to send resources monetarily to where the achievement gap is going to be most pronounced, you also need to ensure that you have good teachers. Also, as a community we've got to do more as it relates to basically re-instilling some of the old values that we had with our kids in terms of you are special. You can learn. You will learn. You will be respectful and so forth because kids are kids.

Sub-theme three: Looking at the developmental assets of Black students. Jonathan Gibbs confirms that there are challenges, but in his estimation they are challenges of society, because schools mirror the issues of society, such as lack of affordable housing, jobs, drugs, neighborhood rivals and social failures [field notes and reflective journal, February 2009.] Gibbs contends that schools must look at Black students from a holistic point of view. His belief is that in order to harness the assets of the Black students, there first must be recognition that there is a valid story to tell: "we gotta be active in telling our kids the story ourselves and promoting those assets that we have" [field notes,

February 2009]. Finally, he argues that the perception from the media and others tend to perpetuate the view that something is bad and harmful about the community and feeds into the erroneous assumption that Black students can't or won't learn.

So when I say you gotta deal with it holistically, I'm talking about sustainable communities, the way that the press and media will highlight an instance, South County versus North County, the way that you write and talk about the community and schools in a way that tends to perpetuate things that are not conducive to building good living sustainable communities. Holistically means addressing the whole child. If the kid has a bad draw and doesn't have what one would consider to be an ideal home situation, there still must be some effort to address that kid and that kid's issue and not just saying well I can't do anything about it.

Summation: Looking to the future. Jonathan Gibbs has great hope for the future of Black students because he sees progress within the school district and community. He also understands that real dialogue between both entities must focus on tearing down barriers from the past while focusing holistically on the child and getting quality teachers in Franklin, who are willing to make a commitment for the long haul in order to help close the achievement gap.

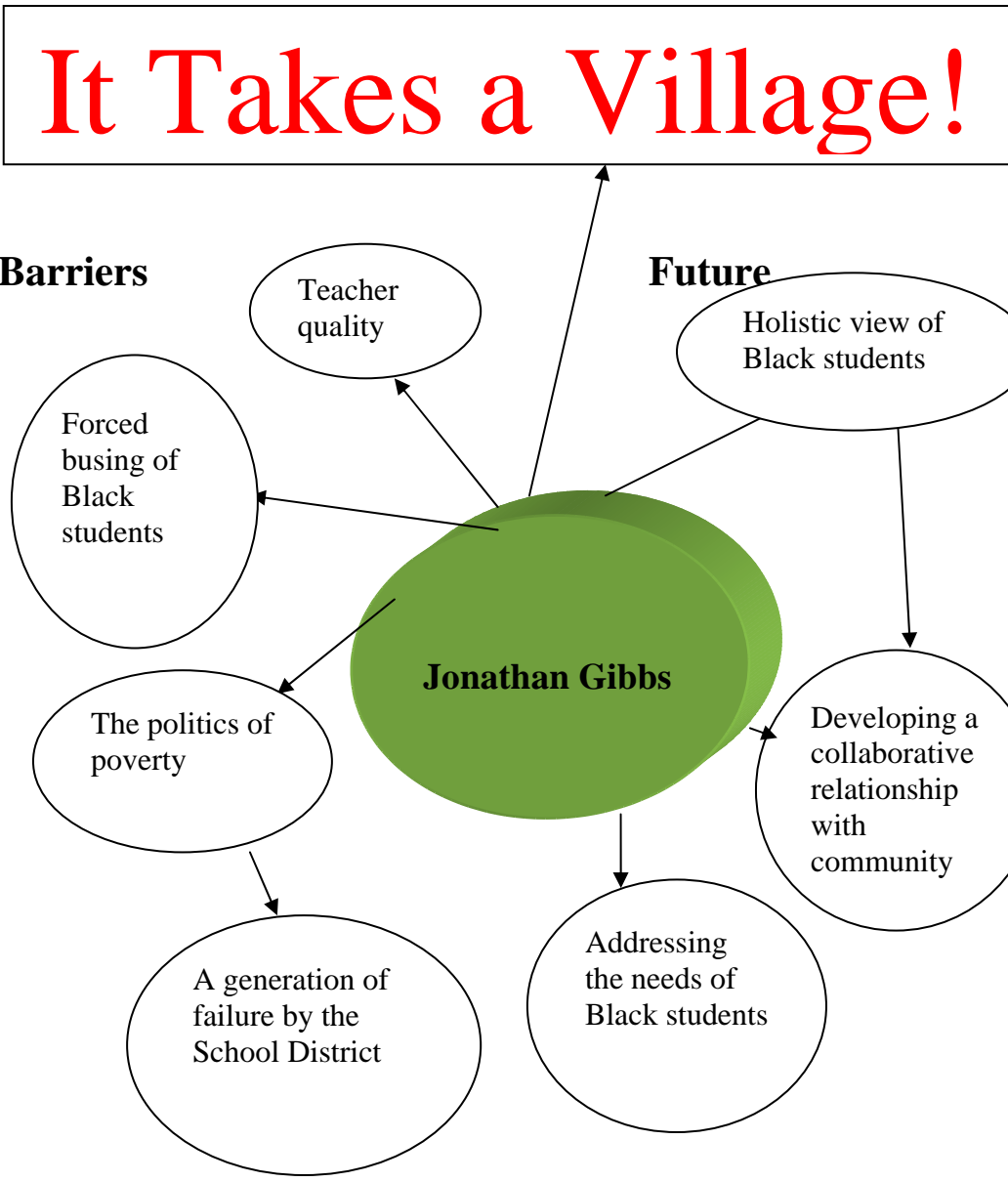


Figure 4.2. Visualization of the components of Jonathan Gibbs perspective

The Case of William Lloyd Garrison: The Reformer

This case describes a community member perspective who believes in change similar to William Lloyd Garrison. William Lloyd Garrison is best known as a prominent

abolitionist and social reformer during the 18th century. He is best known as the editor of the radical abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator* (Mayer, 1998). His views often put him in danger because he called for the “immediate emancipation” of enslaved Blacks. In fact, the State of Georgia offered a reward of \$5,000 for his arrest, and he received numerous death threats because of his outspoken views.

William Lloyd Garrison was born December 13, 1805 in Newburyport, Massachusetts. He didn't start out as an abolitionist, prior to that he was a member of the American Colonization Society, an organization that promoted the removal of free Blacks to a territory on the west coast of Africa, as a means to reduce the number of free Blacks in the United States, and thus to help preserve the institution of slavery. Later, Garrison changed his position and publicly apologized for his error and later wrote articles condemning his previously held view and others who wanted to maintain the institution of slavery. In 1831, Garrison founded the weekly anti-slavery newspaper, *The Liberator*. In the first issue, Garrison wrote:

I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I don't wish to think, or to speak, or write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest-- will not equivocate --I will not excuse-- I will not retreat a single inch-- AND I WILL BE HEARD.” The apathy of the people is people is enough to make every statue leap from its

pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead.

Over the next forty years Garrison, worked tirelessly in the abolitionist movement and later after the abolition of slavery in the United States, Garrison continued working on other reform movements. He had other causes that needed his attention such, as the emerging women's suffrage movement. His work was not done; he believed that women, like Blacks, needed to be free. The reformer in this case is referred to as William Lloyd Garrison.

William Lloyd Garrison met me at the library for our initial interview. I had given him the synopsis weeks in advance, had not heard from him and was wondering if he were indeed going to participate as he had agreed [from reflective journal, February 2009.] As he approached, I noticed that he was casually dressed with slacks and a plain shirt; he was about 6'2 tall, weighing about 180 pounds, with white hair. He is about 55 years of age and wears glasses. He warmly greeted me and explained that he also was a student and earning his Masters degree in addition to working, explaining the lapse in time getting back with me. I was interested in his history. I had heard about him because of his community involvement and especially his involvement working with the various education committees in Franklin.

I'm a trained community organizer and my background is in Sociology, and I was trained as a community organizer back in the 90's. We moved to Franklin in '91, I had gotten very involved here in community affairs and I was the lead organizer of a coalition of thirty-seven religious congregations called Congregations United for Community Action.

The Congregations United for Community Action was founded in 1992, and tackled

issues such as economic development; drugs and crime; race and interfaith relations and public education. Its main focus has been on education and challenging the Beach County School system to pay attention to the needs of at-risk kids, stressing literacy, safe schools, and justice in suspension and expulsion policies related to Black students. He also served on the District Monitoring Advisory Committee (DMAC) when it was implemented in Beach County. When Beach County was granted Unitary Status, the courts also established DMAC, a community based group to monitor and advise the district. The committee's purpose is to review information and make recommendations to the school board concerning equity and diversity. This body does not have enforcement power.

Two Major Themes Identified in the Data

The leading insight garnered from the perspective of William Lloyd Garrison produced two major themes: (a) political and social resistance that contributed to the achievement gap within the organization that defined the relationship between Black and White students and (b) lack of organizational vision and defining a strategic direction. Within the political and social resistance framework, one sub-theme emerged (1) integration versus segregation and within the theme of lack of organizational vision and defining a strategic direction, two sub-themes emerged, (2) community challenges, and (3) looking at the developmental assets of Black students.

William Lloyd Garrison has worked extensively with Beach County School Board in the area of education. As the district moved away from forced busing his concerns were the high suspension rate and other discipline problems affecting Black students he believed the district could do more to address those issues to determine why the data continuously show a disproportionate number of Black students receiving the brunt of the

discipline referrals. It is within this context that we explore barriers that Garrison believes contributes to the achievement gap between Black and White students.

Sub-theme one: Integration versus segregation. William Lloyd Garrison shared his experience and work with DMAC passionately; it is a cause that he deeply believes in and he eagerly talks about his role. He quietly reflects on his own understanding and experience as a young child going to school when he became aware of the racial inequalities regarding educating Black students [field notes, March 2009.]

The concept of schools within schools just doesn't make it, doesn't do it. You know the institutional factors that contributed to this too, that got us to where we are have sort of been at odds with one another over the course of time. Busing which was originally you know intended, I could never understand when I was kid...I remember when I was in about the 5th or 6th grade, I was riding the school bus, I was going to Catholic school at the time. It was about the time that busing was being talked about for desegregation purposes in the 60's. I used to say to myself, I don't understand why we have to bus kids to good schools, why don't we build good schools where the kids are?

For William Lloyd Garrison, in hindsight, integration came at a negative cost that was not foreseen during the time it was used to remedy a real problem. I got the sense from him that institutional forces were behind the scene orchestrating the resistance to change [field notes, March 2009.]

I think that it (busing) was originally intended such that white kids would be bused to predominantly Black schools and Black kids would be bused to predominantly white schools but we found out over the years is because of the

power (collective will) of the white parents and the will of the administrators, that the Black kids bore the brunt of travel, and so what ended up happening was that the cohesiveness at the neighborhood level didn't exist anymore. Well you only have to look back in history and say... You know you often hear folks say "back in the day when we had segregated schools, it was better". When you talk to people about that they'll say you know what it comes down to is that there was a sense of belonging, there was an attachment, cohesiveness of the community that has been lost over time.

He then connects his philosophy his worldview, to the Social-democratic framework while expounding further on the effects of integration and segregation:

Breaking down the walls of segregation and the institutional walls of segregation in our society in the last forty years, but it's a byproduct of that. But you know the walls still exist and in a sense the achievement gap in school reflects the achievement gap in the economy and the achievement gap in society with the same dynamic. I think it's the vestiges of slavery and oppression and we're not honest about it.

As William Lloyd Garrison speaks he becomes more animated with his hand gestures and facial expressions, I am intrigued as he spoke [reflective journal, March 2009]. Garrison, states that while in college he did a lot of studying and was greatly influenced by some of his professors who were Marxists. He acknowledges his political views are those of a social-democrat, which is a moderate version of Marxist. The fundamental difference between social democrats thought and Marxism is a belief in the primacy of political action as opposed to the primacy of economic action (Berman, 2007). The Social

democrats' aim is to reform capitalism democratically and to create programs that work to counteract or remove social injustice. Garrison went on to state: "the greatest amount of resources should be placed where there's the greatest amount of need. And what we do in our society, in our school system, is that we do exactly the opposite. The good schools get the reward and the others punished."

Lack of organizational vision and defining a strategic direction. As the district worked to implement change, it became apparent that it needed all the stakeholders at the table. It could not operate from the old premise of laying out plans that everyone readily accepted and implemented them. What was missing was the community voice. The community wanted highly qualified teachers, how was the district going to address the discipline referrals, how was the district going to address the separate schools within the schools such as the magnet programs, how would the District ensure that more Black students graduate with a high school diploma and how could a partnership be formed to address the achievement gap.

Sub theme two: Community challenges. From William Lloyd Garrison's perspective the challenge of closing the achievement gap must begin by looking at the whole education system first. For him it is not a simple fix.

I'm not you know an educational researcher but I think that the system has become unwieldy and that the schools in the past several decades have come too large and that they aren't able to create the kind of cohesive learning community that it requires to have the personal attention between student and teacher and student and administration and teacher and administration that it requires for quality learning. And I think that the solution wise, it won't be a simplistic, it's

obviously very complicated, but the solution basically lies in having a will to create those smaller communities that allow us to create a culture of learning.

Another thing is that because of busing the Black community had been apart for so long and not entirely of one mind when it came to education, but are much closer together than in the past. So the community challenge is to have a collective will, if we're going to ever improve the situation, we're going to have to do it together, we're going to sink or swim together.

Sub theme three: Looking at the developmental assets of Black students. This sub theme speaks to the need to harness those assets within the community to help Black students become resilient and thereby successful academically. Research has shown that a host of factors contributes to the resiliency of students at risk and, indeed, those same factors have been responsible historically for sustaining Black children/students. Some of those factors have been caring adults developing positive relationships; role models within the community; teachers; the church; the extended family; community organizations and cultural assets. I was interested in Garrison's perspective on this and how it could impact the achievement gap.

That organization is the family and the family unit. Having the school system directly involved in the family unit, in both directions, is probably the key thing. You know we have broken down our resources so much in terms of how much individuals get (students), we have these huge mega schools that we build now and put resources in and then you have a lack of resources and social workers needed to work with our families. But beyond that the next thing I would look at is that there are an awful lot of organizations around all the communities and we

certainly have them in Franklin that does remedial work in the community with young people, with students. They are very successful and they're in community centers and they're in churches and I have said for a long time that we should be concentrating a lot of our education dollars in that direction because that feels like home. Our young people need an environment, a cultural environment where they're comfortable and open to learning, and it isn't antagonistic, that's huge if we're willing to make that leap, to provide more resources to those community based programs that do remedial teaching.

Summation: Looking to the future. William Lloyd Garrison sees a changing future and hope for moving forward. When I asked him if he were in charge of closing the achievement gap what would he do, his response was surprisingly simple, nothing elaborate, he stated:

The first thing I would do is to come up with a very simple mission statement of probably one or two or three sentences in collaboration with everyone who's involved. And we would form that together and then once we agreed upon what that mission was in terms of closing the achievement gap, then we would all pledge ourselves to it and have commitment to it and we would own it. My job would be to hold myself and the others accountable to the extent that we're fulfilling that mission. That mission would be everywhere, it's important for people who are in leadership and understands their role, and their success is going to be measured against that. It's about real accountability.

A Lack of Will to Change!

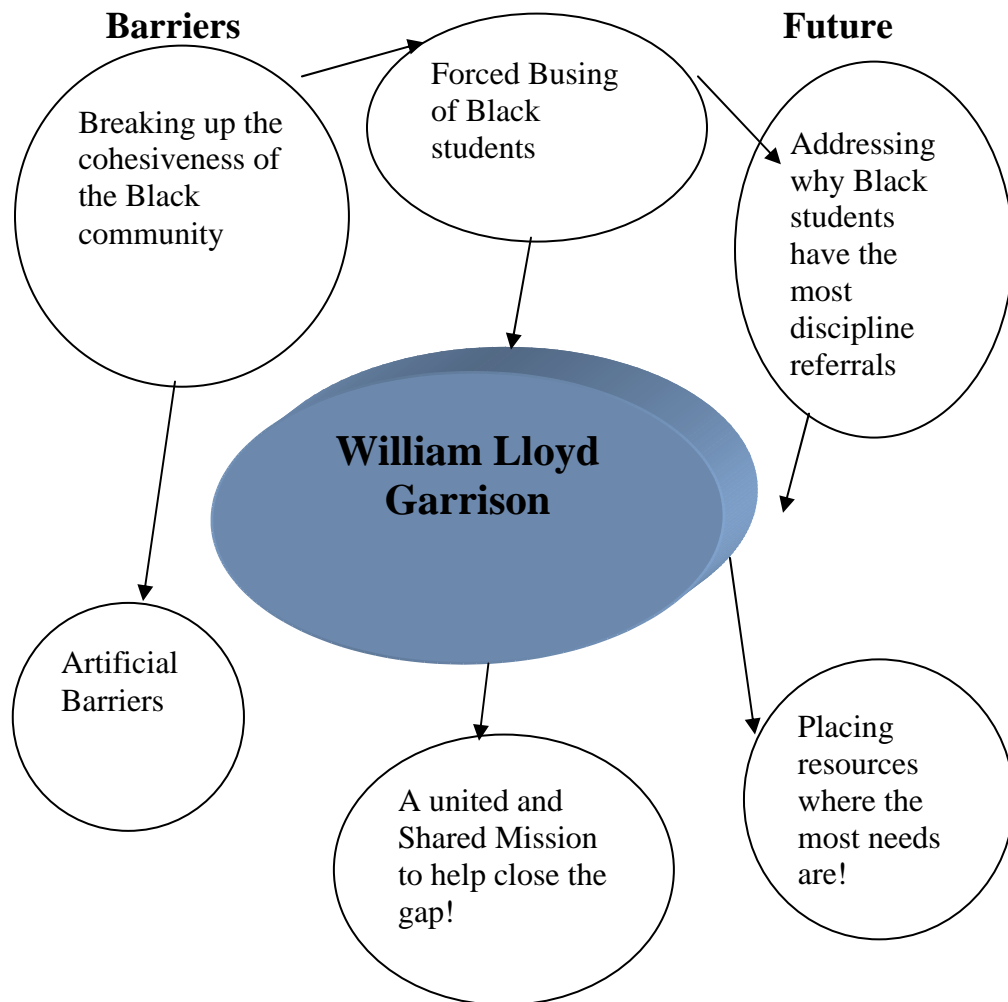


Figure 4.3. Visualization of the components of William Lloyd Garrison perspective
The Case of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois: The Politician

W. E. B. Du Bois- The activist enjoyed a long life, living until he was almost ninety- six years of age. He was born in 1868 and was known as an American civil rights

activist, a scholar, author, Pan-Africanist, and editor. He was the first Black to graduate from Harvard University with a Ph.D. He was gifted academically and believed he could use his knowledge to empower Blacks. Towards the end of his life he moved to Ghana, Africa and became a citizen (Lewis, 1994). He lived during a time of great upheaval for Blacks who sought to make it within the social and political fabric of America and couldn't because of skin color and the legacy of slavery. W. E. B. Du Bois had a long turbulent career in which he tried every possible solution to address the problem of racism. He often found himself on the outside with the poorer sectors of Black community because of his political views and writings. However, he found his voice among the other aspiring Blacks who believed that they should be the ones to lead and govern by virtue of their education and status within the Black community. He wrote several prominent books such as *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), *John Brown* (1909), *Black Reconstruction* (1935), and *Black Folk, Then and now* (1939). His philosophical duality led to one of the most heated discussions during his time, between him and Marcus Garvey, an outstanding activist and organizer of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Marcus Garvey organized millions of Blacks throughout the world calling for self-determination and the unification of Africa. Many Blacks agreed with that view, while W. E. B. Du Bois did not agree and called for the "talented ten," those that possessed the intellectual ability to govern and lead the way for Blacks by virtue of their education and their proximity to power (Grant, 2008). Later, many believed that W. E. B. Du Bois collaborated with the F.B.I. to discredit Marcus Garvey and his organization. W. E. B. Du Bois was brilliant, academically gifted, troubled by the limitations imposed because of Jim Crow laws but well regarded within

the African world. His legacy as a politician and spokesman lives on despite the controversy surrounding his life's work. He was a dapper man, well dressed and perceived himself as a power broker among his people.

The politician. This case describes a former educator and current Associate Superintendent with the Beach County School district, who reminded me of W. E. B. Du Bois in appearance when I first met him and shared other similarities they share. I call him the politician because of his ability and his own perception of himself that allows him to meet and speak with all sectors with ease and confidence. I perceive him as a politician, because of his unique position within the Beach County School Board; he is present for all major discussions in the district, all cases dealing with equal opportunity, for all major positions openings and promotions and the person most Black employees go to for advice if they are attempting to move up in the district. He is perceived as an insider and enjoys the respect of members of the Black community. I chose him to hear his perspective on the achievement gap in Beach County especially because he works closely with the core group responsible for implementation of district wide policies. Another reason was because he was known in certain sectors of the community because he liked to keep abreast of the pulse of the different community organizations. Knowing what was being talked about and being on the inside seem to be important to him [reflective journal, January 2009.] W. E. B. Du Bois has been in education for over twenty-seven years. According to him "the real purpose of education is to provide equal education opportunities for our students and making sure the playing field is even for all kids". Prior to joining the Beach County school district he worked in the private sector.

W. E. B. Du Bois looks similar in body structure as his namesake; he is about 5'9,

weighting about 160 pounds, and about 54 years of age. He is well dressed and well spoken, always with a suit and tie and constantly in motion. He often comes across as abrupt and impatient; he always gets straight to the point, and doesn't waste time on small talk. The synopsis was sent out two weeks ahead of time and I played phone tag with his secretary for a week attempting to set up our appointment. I was squeezed into an afternoon slot while he was between appointments. The day of our initial appointment he arrived promptly, sat down at the circular table in my office and asked if I was ready, I had double checked my recording device twice and had my questions on the table anticipating that he wanted to get started as soon as possible [field notes, January 2009.]

W. E. B. Du Bois speaks quickly, and emits a confidence of someone use to being in charge. His position allowed him to meet with different layers within the Beach County School system, from instructional leaders in the classroom, to school based administrators, school board members, and the superintendent. For a very long time he was the lone Black higher level associate within the district, and many outside of the district perceived him as the power broker, the person to go through. Adding to the situation, W. E. B. Du Bois in the past was responsible for district compliance with equal opportunity issues working closely with site based administrators and district offices. This gave him access to many people and situations within the district and in the community at large. W. E. B. Du Bois has also played a role as a speaker and organizer of various national organizations that empower Black educators. As a speaker nationally he has traveled throughout the country and has created networks among various individuals and organizations that speak to the needs of Black students and teachers that promote academic achievement [field notes, February 2009.] There are two major themes

identified in the data collection that relate to W. E. B. Du Bois and his perspective on the achievement gap. These themes revolve around the components of his beliefs and how they were formed; what beliefs support or hinder his perspective.

The leading insight garnered from the perspective of W. E. B. Du Bois produced two major themes: (a) political and social resistance that contributed to the achievement gap within the organization that defined the relationship between Black and White students and (b) lack of organizational vision and defining a strategic direction. Within the political and social resistance framework, one sub-theme emerged (1) integration versus segregation and within the theme of lack of organizational vision and defining a strategic direction, two sub-themes emerged, (2) community challenges, and (3) looking at the developmental assets of Black students.

Political and social resistance that contributed to the achievement gap within the organization. The district has undergone many political changes within the past ten years, one change have been the implementation of the No Child Left behind Act (2001). NCLB is a federal legislation based on the theories of standards-based education reform. The belief is that by setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education. NCLB requires states to develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades, if those states are to receive federal funding. NCLB does not require a national achievement standard; standards are set by each individual state (Meier, et al, 2004). Additionally, the NCLB requires schools and districts to focus their attention on the academic achievement of traditionally underserved groups of students such as low-income, students with disabilities and students of major racial and ethnic subgroups. Schools and districts are expected to make Adequate

Yearly Progress (AYP) within each of the sub-groups or face state mandated sanctions.

Most high and middle schools in Franklin did not meet AYP in most of the sub-group categories for two consecutive years, requiring them to comply with additional state mandates and support. W. E. B. Du Bois talked about the impact of NCLB on the achievement gap between Black and white students.

I think the intent of NCLB was noble. However, I think the implementation of NCLB should have been phased in as opposed to being dropped in, perhaps it should have come with a bit more guidelines and let the kids become prepared to do that and teachers to deal with those kinds of issues. I think there are some unrealistic standards for NCLB, given the kids that we are dealing with. But the good thing about the NCLB is it disaggregates the data so we get a chance to look at who is performing, who's not performing. It includes all the sub-groups that we need to look at and traditionally, those are the groups that have really fallen behind, they have really had the most astounding impact upon the achievement gap in having the gap so wide.

Sub-theme one: Integration versus segregation. W. E. B. Du Bois talked about his experience growing up during the era of segregation and later integrated schools.

I'm an offspring of a military father so we had an opportunity to attend military school. Beyond that I attended early on a segregated school, segregated set to meaning all African-American students. I didn't attend any high school that was integrated until I was in the 11th grade. In the military school we was all integrated so it was a little bit appalling for me to move to an area where we had just one race, but I felt comfortable there. I believe I got what is deemed a good

education. People were supportive and at that time teachers tended to value the education that they were trying to provide for the students. People went out of the way after initially rejecting us; some actually tried to show support that they were not prejudice or believed that we could all co-exist in the same environment. Let me share this story because I believe it captures the essence of what integration was all about. We had books that had been used by those that were not African-American, but we had an environment or a culture where education was embraced. Almost everybody that I can recall that went to school with me finished school. There was no drop-out rate, there was no separation rate. We all went to the same school, we knew people in the community, and they would encourage us and make sure that we were in school. Integration changed some of that. I think part of that was it broke up the community. With integration we started dividing up and then we start labeling kids as ESE and all the various labels that we put on kids, and we start sending them out of the classrooms taking tougher levels of discipline. Even though we decided to get rid of corporal punishment, we started disciplining the minds of our kids, we started breaking them down mentally, having them think that they could not do what other kids do and have them think that they could only compete with other kids on the football field or basketball court, but not academically. Academic was a Caucasian game that they played, that they would win at every time. Only a few guys, a few of our Black kids did not drink that kool-aid.

As the interview process progressed, W. E. B. Du Bois became more open and less reserved in his answers to questions, the above response was a breakthrough from

interview one to interview two, I attributed his initial interview to his job with the district and secondly, to his job promotion that happened between interview one and two and being more comfortable with the process [reflective journal notes, October 2009].

Sub theme two: Community challenges: From W. E. B. Du Bois perspective he firmly believes the community has to take responsibility for the lack value students place on education and help in motivating students to achieve. He talks about several challenges that the community and other stakeholders should address to narrow the achievement gap, such as lack of community support, lack of parental support, high quality teachers, and distribution of those teachers in certain schools and the philosophy of the students.

I believe there's a plethora of things that really impact the performance gap. I think there is an issue of will. I think kids have to make a commitment that they really value education and want to make sure they take advantage of the education that is provided. I think there are parental issues in terms of support for education and support for that kid's learning. I think there's an issue of readiness when kids come to school they come at a different level of readiness. We're educating different kids from the kids that we had in the past when we had other means that we could kind of motivate them. I think kids come to school, they're not focused, and you got too many distractions. I think cell phones, television, socially trying to fit into different groups, peer pressure. It's a whole slew of things that have impacted upon kids and something the community has to address. Now our kids don't even take home homework. The parent doesn't get involved. Finally, we are a County where socioeconomic is a factor. We are in a County where variance

levels of affluence exist. Some of these kids come together, they don't get the quality of education they start out with, in other areas they have kids who come to the school unready, don't have the support of the community, don't have the support of their family, and don't know where their family members are. It's a lot of issues here that when you look at school board members who are trying to get elected and what their agendas are whether in fact they're willing to address those things and represent the constituency from their areas. Everybody got to take the approach that these kids are all our kids, no matter where they live.

The second interview with W. E. B. Du Bois happened during the same week he received his promotion. As I was led back to his new office, the set up of the office space of the new department reminded me of a mice maze, with the different twist and turns to reach your destination, there were tiny cubicles that housed various district level employees, the office set up was confusing and kind of disjointed. I wondered who designed the layout was the layout a reflection of confusion elsewhere in the district [reflective journal, November 2009.] His office was clean and small with mahogany furniture, as you enter you are struck by the beautiful artwork displayed on the walls and pictures of his family on the credenza. As I sat at the small table waiting for W. E. B. Du Bois, employees kept knocking on the door trying to speak with him, rendering it impossible to continue our session, we only got to question #5, making plans to continue at a later date[field notes, October 2009.]

Sub theme three: Looking at the developmental assets of Black students: Years of research have identified 41 developmental assets that have a proven relationship to healthy youth development (Project Cornerstone, 2004). Developmental assets are

building blocks, young people need to grow and become caring competent adults. Developmental assets promote thriving behaviors such as valuing education, and succeeding in schools, role models and caring adults. W. E. B. Du Bois is ambiguous about developmental assets, instead his view is to turn this concept to its opposite, such as working on weakness first which flies in the face of current positive research on the subject [reflective journal, November 2009.]

We all gravitate to what our strengths are, however, it becomes problematic because if you have strengths you don't have to put as much effort and interest in terms of developing your strength as you have to do developing your weaknesses. That's where we fall through the cracks at. I think we actually have to focus on our weaknesses just as much, perhaps even more than we focus on our strengths. But you know there are some proponents that really feel that you develop your strength and at some point you build them up to a level they will be able to do something about their weakness. The dichotomy is not to do or the other; I think you have to do both.

Later when reflecting on W. E. B. Du Bois answer, I wondered if the question was unclear and questioned whether more explanation should have been given concerning developmental assets and research on harnessing those assets of resiliency to overcome at-risk minefields, but was cognizant not to lead the question, but let it unfold naturally without undue influence [field notes, December 2009].

There are school district initiatives such as 5000 role models an excellent program if we could get it solidified in all of the schools. We'll actually have people who come in the school and provide some assistance to these kids and we could really

develop a curriculum that really gets at achievement and first of all to motivate these kids to help those to reduce their discipline problems and get them focused. There are many programs even target females. I think the program you are doing here at Ranch High is great. Many, many of those programs need to be replicated and duplicated throughout the district. We can also and always improve upon the process and include more become a little bit more inclusive of all kids. I think all of these kids whether they are Black, white green or whatever; they all need the same kind of thing.

Summation: Looking to the Future. W. E. B. Du Bois is extremely optimistic about the future even as he criticizes the community and Beach County School district “you’re going to have to get a system of improvement going and it can’t be simply one thing, we have to declare war on this achievement gap”. Another key component of W. E. B. Du Bois perspective is motivation and valuing education he believes this is a missing element in the community. He believes those two factors contribute to the gap between Black and white students.

I hate to compare and contrast the time that I live in. Just simply think about there was some intrinsic motivation for kids who actually wanted to do well. They may or may not have been the first one to come out of an education setting who were motivated to actually get an education. They always wanted to be educated and the parents want the kids to do better than they did because most of the parents who were sharecroppers or agrarian individuals who did not have the education. But they were highly skilled people, self-taught. They took it upon themselves to make sure that they educated they kids and I think that’s really impacted the

value, how they valued education.

W. E. B. Du Bois is optimistic about the future and closing the achievement gap.

I do think we have a shared vision in terms of the achievement gap. I think what we disagree on is the approach or how we get to closing the achievement gap. I think everybody shares the same or similar vision regarding what the achievement gap is and how we meet the approach, what priorities, what comes first, how we deploy that. We have changed from the past, there are some issues regarding what's statutory and what's state mandates and how we go at that. We have some barriers of resources and where they should be going. Other barriers I think are the lack of knowledge in terms of some people who are actually trying to accomplish and meet the goal of reducing the achievement gap. The capacity of those individuals come into play; resources, financial, both human and financial resources. Other barriers are lack of community support, lack of parental support, high quality teachers, and distribution of those teachers in certain schools, and the philosophy and the students themselves. You gotta take a look at them; however, the gap can be reduced.

A Lack of Motivation!

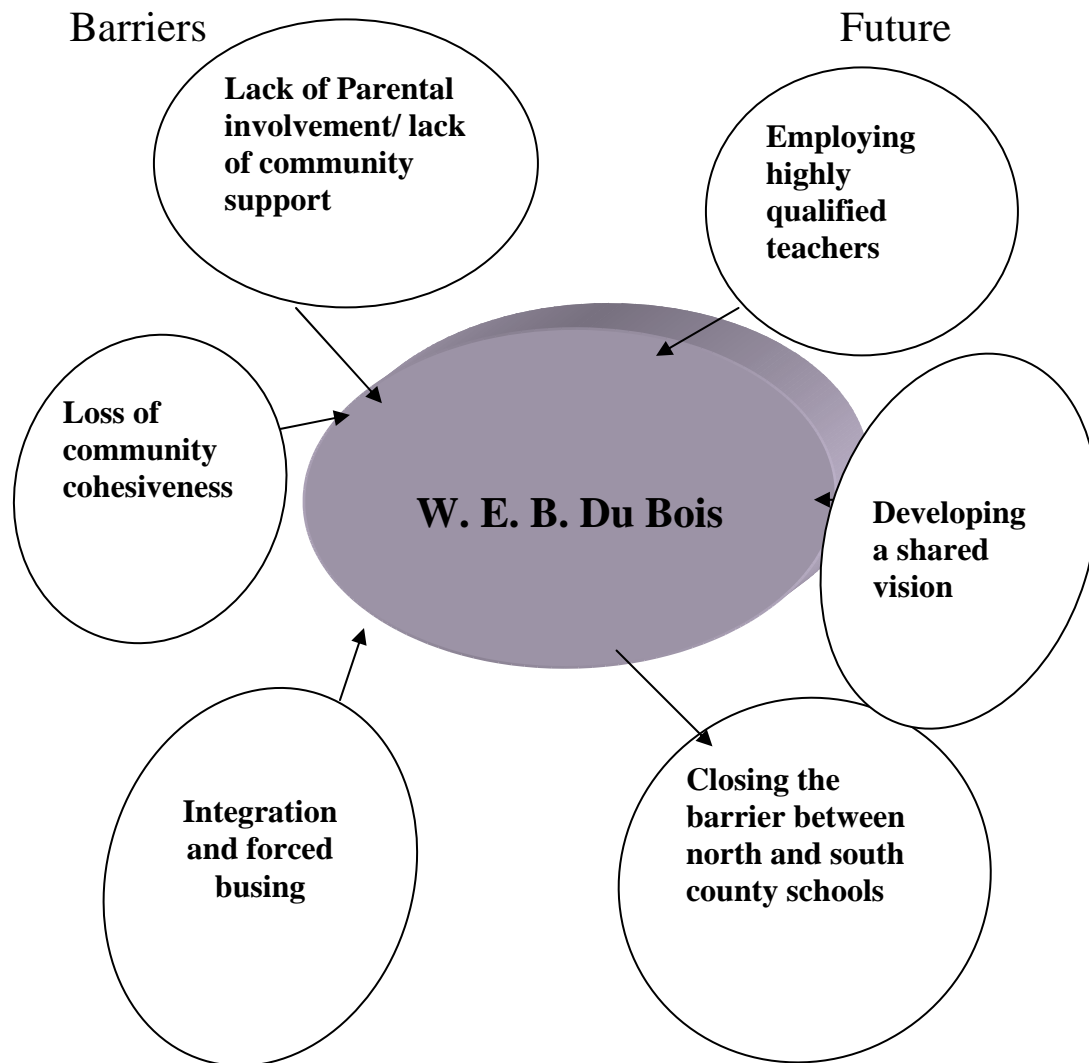


Figure 4.4. Visualization of the components of W. E. B. Du Bois perspective

The Case of Nannie Helen Burroughs- The Visionary

Nannie Burroughs was born in 1879 in Orange, Virginia as a free woman and died in 1961. Nannie Burroughs was an educator, orator, religious leader and businesswoman. Nannie Burroughs lived during a period of profound changes for Blacks and pursued opportunities for her community and family, which were denied her parents. Her mother moved the family to Washington, D.C. after the death of her father, in hopes of educating her daughters. Burroughs was educated at the only Black school in Washington, D.C. and later received an honorary M.A. degree from Eckstein-Norton University in Kentucky in 1907 (Rashidi & Johnson, 1998). Despite the fact she did not have a college degree she sought a teaching position in Washington, D.C., when she was denied a position that did not deter her from pursuing other avenues. She later moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and became associate editor of *The Christian Banner*, a religious newspaper. Ms. Burroughs later returned to Washington, D.C. and passed the civil service exam with a high rating, hoping to pursue her dream of becoming an educator. Again, she was denied to teach and moved to Louisville, Kentucky and accepted a position as secretary of the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention. In 1909, with the support of the National Baptist church, she founded the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington. The school emphasized preparing students for employment in domestic science and secretarial skills but also in unconventional fields at the time such as barbering, shoe repair and oratory speaking. Burroughs adopted the motto of “We specialize in the wholly impossible” for the school which taught courses on the high school and junior college level. She believed that industrial and classical education was compatible and was an early advocate of African-

American history, requiring all her students to pass that course before graduating.

Contemporary Achiever - This section focuses on the contemporary Nannie Burroughs, who resides in Franklin and works for the Beach County School district. I chose Nannie Burroughs to represent the participant in this study because they both share some similarities. Nannie Burroughs in this study is also known within the district and community as an educator, extremely active in her church, singer, and a businesswoman like her predecessor. Nannie Burroughs rose through the ranks in the school district by her hard work, attention to details, displaying a no non-sense approach to work, accountability and advocate for students. She became principal at one of Beach County's fundamental schools. A fundamental school focuses on parent-teacher-student commitment to excellence, self-responsibility, strict discipline, daily homework, dress code and required parental participation at monthly meetings and conferences. Later, she was transferred to a traditional high school to help change the culture and image of that school. Later, she was promoted to a supervisor in the district office, working with principals to assist them in implementing and interpreting school board policy. She is a strong advocate for student rights and is known as a stickler for adhering to policy. When she was asked to participate in this study, she did not hesitate. She was sent the synopsis to read beforehand. Nannie Burroughs agreed to do the interviews in her office after my school day was over. Her office is located in a converted classroom portable on the property of another school in the back. The converted portable is small and portioned off into small offices. Nannie Burroughs office is small and only big enough for a desk and small round table with a chair. It is neat and sparsely decorated. [The location of the site is not centrally located, especially given the number of schools she is in charge of from

South and North County, reflective journal, April 2009]. Nannie Burroughs is tall, approximately, 5'9, weighing about 190 pounds, and always wears dresses or two piece outfits below her knees, I have never seen her in pants. Entering her office, she was on the telephone and indicated that she would be finished in a few minutes. Waiting, gave me the opportunity, to pull everything out of my bag so that the interview could begin promptly. I asked Nannie Burroughs if she had read the synopsis, she had, we were ready to begin.

The leading insight garnered from the perspective of Nannie Burroughs produced two major themes: (a) political and social resistance that contributed to the achievement gap within the organization that defined the relationship between Black and White students and (b) lack of organizational vision and defining a strategic direction. Within the political and social resistance framework, one sub-theme emerged (1) community challenges, and (2) looking at the developmental assets of Black students.

In addition to working with her church, Nannie Burroughs sits on a number of committees in the community, which oversee and address the achievement gap in the county. She is particularly interested in how parents can work with the district to address issues such as discipline and academic success of their student. A major concern that the community have asked the district to account for is the high suspension and discipline referrals of Black students. Black students make up only 19% of the district population but account for over 50% of the discipline referrals.

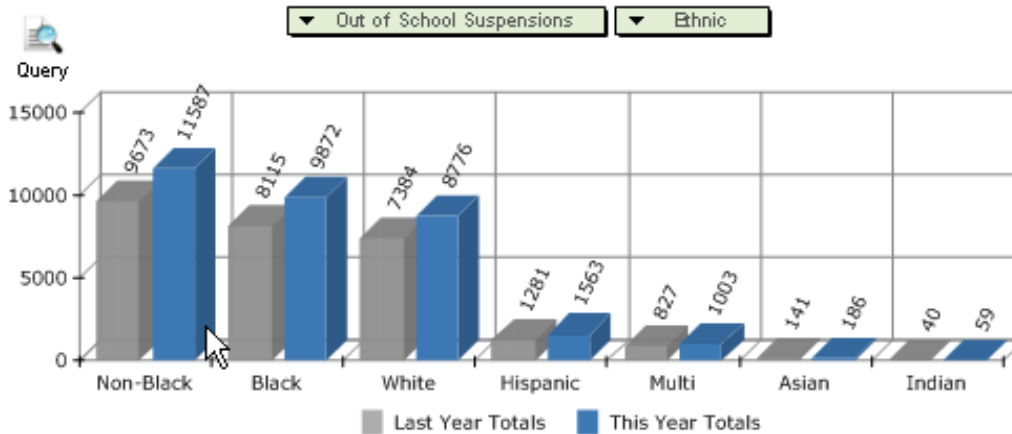


Figure 4.5. Discipline Data – Beach County All High Schools (2008-2009). FDOE (2008)

Political and social resistance that contributed to the achievement gap within the organization. Part of Nannie Burroughs job responsibility requires looking at student discipline data and how the disproportionate numbers of discipline referrals that Blacks receive versus White students directly impact the academic achievement of Black students in the district. Her insight on the achievement gap was multi-layered, requiring participation from parents, students and community. In her opinion there are no fixed or fast answers, she used her own background to help shape her perspective.

Let me answer by saying something about my own background. I come from a background of a mother who didn't finish high school, but yet I did. People would say that I would be a statistic, because I had no father in the home. I had no role model of anyone who had gone to college. But it's just that expectation, my mom know that I was going to college. But it's just that expectation; my mom knew that I was going to finish school. That is what she expected. And so I think the perspective that I have is that kids can do much more sometimes than they are expected to do. Kids go to class and teachers have preconceived notions of what they can do and sometimes their behavior gets in the way of what they can do. We

ought to not just be surprised when John “Ahh! He can read!” He can do this. I think expectations or lack of are barriers. I believe firstly that people look at it (achievement gap) and say that it’s the school district burden but yet I believe that it’s a community burden or responsibility because children only spend one third, if that much in school. But having said that, the responsibility of Beach County is to meet the students where they are and that may have to be individualized because again students come at different states of readiness. We (instructors) should be prepared to give them the three R’s, which are Respect, Relationship and Just Readiness or Responsibility versus Reading.

Sub theme one: Community challenges: When Nannie Burroughs was asked to espouse upon what challenges the community must address in turning around the wide disparity between Blacks versus White students she did not mince her opinion. [As she talked I was reminded of the readings on the fiercely pride, Nannie Burroughs of the 1800’s, who believed in creating a vision for herself and community, and criticizing even her own community in her opinion for not taking charge of their student’s education, reflective journal, May 2009].

The parents need to start being parents. But they have to have the ability to know how to parent. Part of the problem is a community problem right now that’s it’s almost like an epidemic that we have so many younger kids having young kids, having kids at such a young age. And when you have this situation, they don’t have the emotional maturity to make those kinds of decisions. And then when they are 15 years old, the cycle perpetuates. You have 15 year olds who are parents and 30 year olds who are grandmothers and 45 year olds who are great

grandmothers. When is it going to end? I don't have an answer but those are some of the things that we have to address as a community. Not everything begins with the school but certainly it does end within the school and it's impacted by the school. That's the perception of a community that it's the schools who are failing our children. But I think people are beginning more and more to realize that it starts way before you get to school.

Sub theme two: Looking at the developmental assets of Black students: The framework of developmental assets is grounded in extensive research on what kids need to succeed (Search Institute, 2003). The developmental assets in the lives of young people are consistent with the strength-based approach and what kids need to be successful throughout childhood and particularly in school. Linking asset building with the achievement gap for Black students has the potential to contribute to the academic success of all students. Nannie Burroughs shared her perspective on this concept of boosting Black students' academic achievement.

We have had and we will continue to have brilliant minds that may come from the most underprivileged circumstances. And so it's incumbent upon us as educators to find a hook to interest and to keep the interest of those kids. But once we get their interest then we've got engage their minds. And again, the best way to do that is by using various styles of teaching and also to use what it is that that they bring, their multiple intelligences that they bring and to use those intelligences to incorporate it, if you will to let it overlap with what's happening in the classroom. Whatever the topic is integrating that topic. The only teacher in the classroom is not the college graduate; the students in the classroom are teachers as well.

Summation: Looking to the future. Nannie Burroughs shared her thoughts on how to change the future for Black students, her view includes a partnership forged in equity between the district and community and stopping the blame game.

I have sat through several community interest meetings, the perception is much as it is throughout perhaps the county, is that much of the blame falls upon the shoulders of the school. If Johnny can't read it's the school's fault. If Johnny is not passing the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) because the school is not teach him or her, that's what I believe the perception is. But we're doing our best to change that perception, looking at some true tale data. I believe the first thing the community has to understand and has to do is look at what is actually happening. I say that folk who don't walk in the halls of the schools, once they do that as the adage "it takes a village," it's going to take more than a village, it's going to take the village and, everybody in the community, the state. Our kids are doing things that as young fold we ourselves never heard of never thought of doing. It's just out of the box. It's going to take a community coming together with a common purpose, not independent of each other, not for glory over here in this corner or that corner; it's going to take literally rolling up our sleeves and having some cordial conversations. Not about the community versus the school, but the community and the school coming together, recognize what the problems are. And you can't solve them all but maybe pull one or two and try to work on that.

Forging a Partnership!

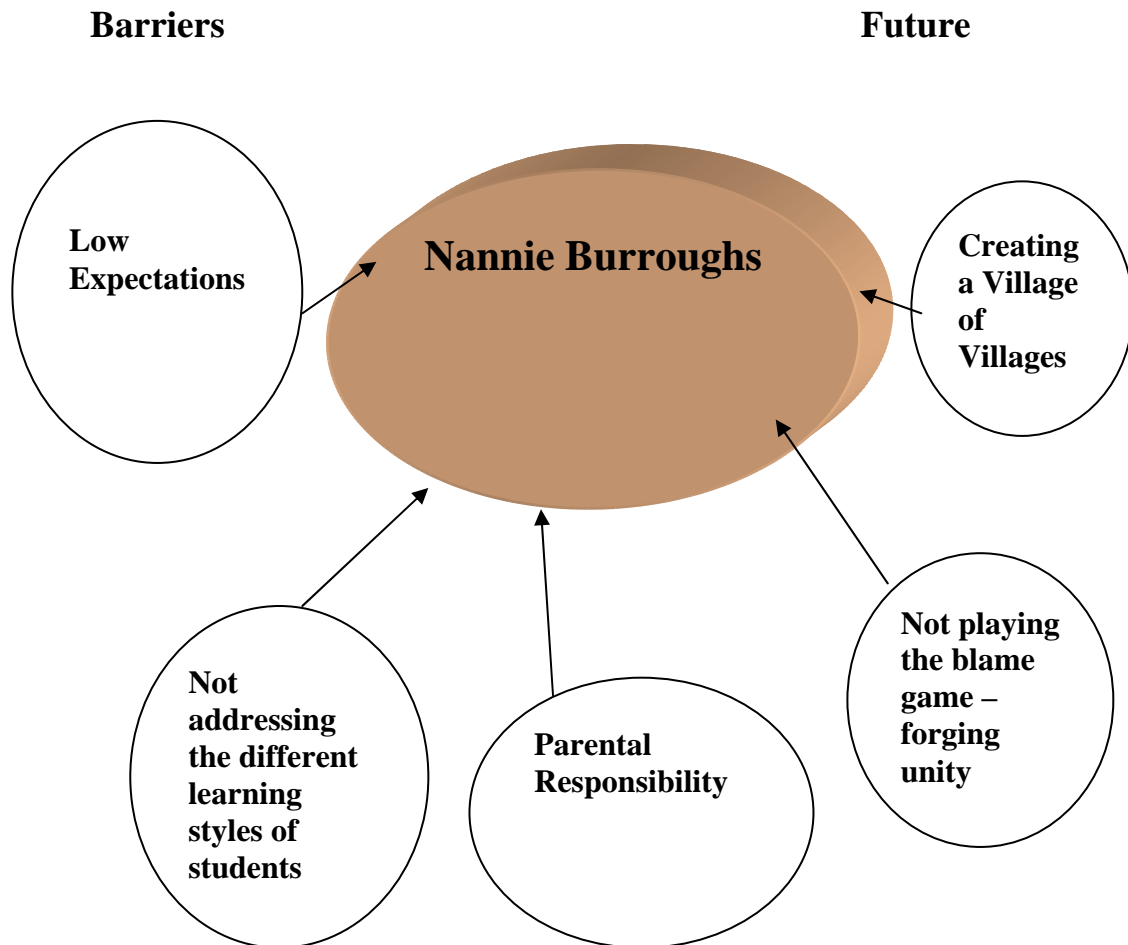


Figure 4.6. Visual components of Nannie Burroughs perspective

Summary

A total of four participants completed the study, each involved in the education process either through employment or community activists' centered on education

reform. The format for each case is the same with relevant historical background on each person using pseudonyms, describing the participant and their setting in the study and using journal entry to provide more background information. The participants were all similar in age, representing gender and ethnic differences. Before the cases were presented a descriptive study was provided on the state of Florida, Beach County and the city of Franklin. In addition field notes and a reflective journal was used throughout the studies to enhance the thought process of the interviewer or to provide additional descriptive information obtained through observations. Case one: Jonathan Gibbs, the Statesman, represents for some within the Black community, one of their own, who understands the simmering anger beneath the surface because of perceived historical wrongs, and a champion for bridging the gap between the school district and community. He advances the African adage of “it takes a village”, to bridge the achievement gap. Jonathan Gibbs is aware of the political dynamics that exist within the school district as well as the community. He acknowledges the political resistance to change and barriers that prevent the pursuit of a united vision. Jonathan Gibbs encourages dialogue from all stakeholders in the community, and work with a diverse group of people to achieve a united vision. He is aware of the changing school patterns that resulted in neighborhood schools but is not deterred by naysayer that neighborhood schools has reversed the progress over the past forty years. Jonathan Gibbs strongly believe that academic achievement can occur even if a school is majority Black and is willing to entertain any discussion that say otherwise. He gladly points out that his generation was a product of all Black schools and did not suffer for the worse. The themes in his interview reflect social and political awareness and building collaborative relationships among all

stakeholders. Case two: William Lloyd Garrison is interested in change between the “powers that be” meaning those in power and those without power “Black community”. His goals are to facilitate real democratic reform because for him political and social unwillingness breaks down the fabric of a true democratic society. Barriers to change is not just limited to education but also is reflected in unjust housing and jobs exclusions, which in turn reflects the achievement gap between Black and White students. He is very aware of the need to initiate change and to create a sense of belonging for the Black community. William Lloyd Garrison strives to create collaborative relationships between the school district and the different communities, which is why he has worked with diverse community organizations, especially around the issues of discipline, expulsions and academic achievement of Black students in Beach County. He believes that in order to achieve “equity” that resource distribution must be based on need, as opposed to monetary rewards to those schools that are doing great based on high stakes testing and punishing those schools that are struggling based on their demographics. Doing the interview process he gave an example and analogy of a meeting that was held in the office of a previous superintendent in attendance were some members of the Black community wanting to talk about the perceived lack of willingness of the superintendent to dialogue with the Black community around issues of concern. He states that upon arrival the group was ushered into the office and was immediately struck by the décor. The whole room was decorated in the colors of his alma mater (Alabama University) including relics and memorabilia of his era. The group felt after seeing that, it confirmed for them the unlikelihood of any meaningful dialogue on change and inclusion [from reflective journal, April 2009], Garrison believed it meant the status quo would remain

the same. The themes in his interview reflect political inertia and an unwillingness to change based in part on historical relationships, which contributes to the achievement gap of Black students. The third case was on William Edward Du Bois, the politician, who is socially and politically aware of the achievement gap. He acknowledges how segregation and the by-products of that system still lingers after the implementation of Brown vs. The Board of Education, however, he believe that today's youth lack motivation than the previous generation of Blacks. William Edward Du Bois believes that his role is to empower others to do the right thing by employing highly qualified teachers and breaking down the perceived barriers of North verses South County and developing a shared vision. He also believes that the community must also play a meaningful role in the education of their children and he criticizes the (Black) community for its lack of parental involvement and for promoting a culture that doesn't value education as the previous generation. He has been instrumental in promoting and giving advice to Blacks in the district who want to move up, by hosting forums, promoting committee involvement and providing a listening ear. The theme of William Edward Du Bois interview reflects a willingness to address the achievement gap as a shared problem, while acknowledging a lack of motivation and parental involvement as contributing factors. The fourth case is Nannie Burroughs, the achiever, who has a positive attitude and believes that the achievement gap can be closed. She is a doer, and has no patience for slackers. Nannie Burroughs strives to promote and build relationships within her community and on her job. She is socially aware, maintains a professional presence on her job, and believes in modeling the expectation she has for others whether as a past principal or her current role within the district office. Nannie Burroughs believe that her job is to promote a safe,

caring, respectfully, and challenging atmosphere so that students can achieve at their highest level. She strongly believes in parental involvement and criticizes those parents that are unwilling to be involved, she also believes that teachers must be willing raise their expectations of Black students and promotes differential learning styles among students. Nannie Burroughs also believes that the achievement of Black students is a shared problem and not just on the shoulders of the school district. The theme of Nannie Burroughs interview reflects her belief of forging a partnership between the school district and school. She advocates collaborative relationships and creating a village for everyone to participate in closing the achievement gap. Nannie Burroughs is firm and plays by the book; she dismisses the notion of blame and champions excellence for all.

In summary, chapter four provides the reader with a presentation of the data collected for this study. The data collection revealed two major themes and three sub-themes for each participant. The data revealed some similarities between the participants and some differences. In chapter 5, I will respond to the exploratory questions which guided this study as well as present the following sections: a summary of the study, qualitative methods, analysis of the major themes and sub-themes in each case, model of the study, and impact of the study on the researcher, conclusion, ethic, and recommendation for further research.

Chapter Five

Analysis, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study described and explained the perspectives from the point of view of community leaders and school board employees regarding the achievement gap between Black and White students. In this chapter, I will present a discussion of qualitative methods, responses to exploratory questions that guided this study, the major themes and sub-themes in each case, a model of what was found in the study, the impact of the study on the researcher, the conclusions based on the findings, and ethical issues emerging from the study. This study also incorporated the methodology of conflict theory that was introduced earlier in the study as a way of assessing resiliency as a framework to help practitioners and educators understand that both conflict theory and resiliency are part of the same family, and a means to extend the dialogue on the achievement gap from the perspective of the alienated Black student. This approach emphasizes social interaction as a means for creating meaning for the Black students using their assets as a bridge for Black students to construct their own meaning and thus take ownership of their education. The concept of resiliency was developed to describe the relative resistance to adversity of at-risk children. Resiliency is the process of coping with adversity, change or opportunity in a manner that result in the identification, fortification, and enrichment of resiliency qualities or protective factors. Critical theory holds that adversity will exist for

the oppressed by virtue of the economic system that maintains the status quo between the oppressed and the oppressor. Resiliency and conflict theory only acknowledges that serious problems exist, but by no means a permanent fix for this complex issue. Finally, I will make recommendations for further research and practice.

Qualitative Methods

The Florida State constitution spell out the role and responsibility of the state under article IX, section 1, read in part “the education of children is a fundamental value of the people of the State of Florida. It is therefore, a paramount duty of the state to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders ...” Therefore, school districts and their boards are empowered to carry out the strategic vision of educating all students. Today local school boards are on the front lines of public education, they are responsible for providing the cornerstone for students to learn and achieve at the highest levels possible. The school boards primary agenda along with the Superintendents is raising student achievement and involving the community in the attainment of that goal. The school board helps to formulate the following: vision, standards, assessment, accountability, alignment, climate and culture, collaborative relationships and looking at continuous improvement. The Beach County School District sums up their strategic direction as follows;

Beach County School’s District Strategic Plan is based on student and community requirements for Highest Student Achievement, Safe Schools, and Effective and Efficient Operations. These three areas are known as the District’s Strategic Directions. Our Vision unites with the community to provide a quality education enabling each student to succeed. The Mission of Beach County Schools is to

educate students by creating systems that align all resources to assure that each student achieves at her or his highest level (Beach County School Board, 2009).

Under the goal of highest student achievement, Beach County breaks their goal down into two parts called “Aspirational Goals”, “each student shall demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies and meet district graduation requirements”. Goal two, “the district will work to close and eliminate the achievement gaps”.

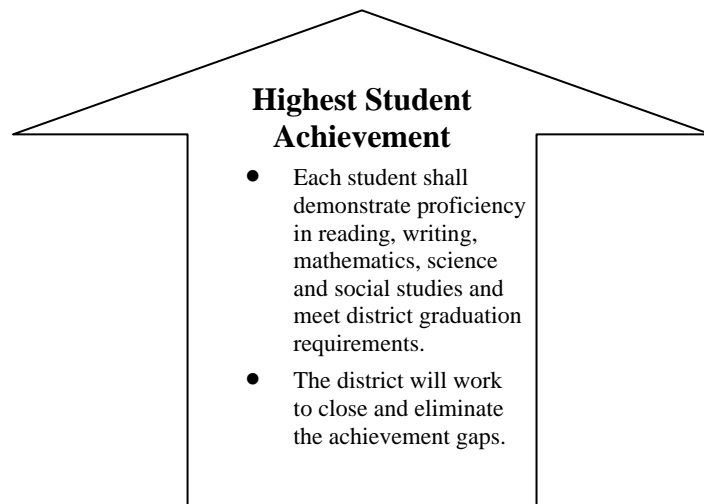


Figure 5.1. Strategic Direction on the achievement gap

As the organization in charge (school district and board) with implementation of the strategic direction it is imperative for the district to be in alignment and focused on achieving a clear voice for all of its stakeholders; with big organizations come complex problems all attempting to vying for priority and agendas, in response organizations will often opt to hire outside experts, such as consultants to help align the organization.

According to Bolman & Deal (2003), “when managers and consultants fail, government frequently jumps in with legislation, policies, and regulations, constituents badger elected officials to “do something” about a variety of ills” pg. 9. This sums up the situation with the Beach County School Board regarding the achievement gap. That something has

resulted in an array of solutions such as “coaches” for schools that have failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Coaches are trained experts in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. Also, the district has implemented “focus lessons” targeting areas of concerns across specific content areas which all teachers in the identified content area is to teach during the first 10 minutes of class once a week. The policies are endless and the demands “to do something” intensifies. Below is data from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test on the following years, 2001, 2003 and 2009.

Table 5.1

FCAT Results for 2001, 2003 and 2009 READING Black and White students scoring level 3 and above. From the FLDOE report 2009.

school2	grade	Year	record type description	# of Students	% >=3
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2001	Total Students	7786	48
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2001	White	5806	55
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2001	Black	1292	20
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2001	Total Students	6988	46
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2001	White	5415	53
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2001	Black	939	16
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2003	Total Students	8612	54
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2003	White	6200	62
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2003	Black	1525	22
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2003	Total Students	7313	41
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2003	White	5472	48
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2003	Black	1082	13
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 08	8	2009	Total Students	7816	56
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 08	8	2009	White	5093	65
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 08	8	2009	Black	1392	24
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 10	10	2009	Total Students	8044	37
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 10	10	2009	White	5330	45
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 10	10	2009	Black	1440	12

Table 5.2

FCAT results for 2001, 2003 and 2009 MATH, comparing Black and White students scoring 3 and above. From the FLDOE report 2009.

school	grad	Year	record type descriptio	# of Students	% >=3
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2001	Total Students	7791	57
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2001	White	5807	65
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2001	Black	1288	25
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2001	Total Students	6973	65
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2001	White	5401	72
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2001	Black	938	29
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2003	Total Students	8602	59
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2003	White	6174	67
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 08	8	2003	Black	1540	26
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2003	Total Students	7087	66
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2003	White	5332	74
DISTRICT TOTALS - GRADE 10	10	2003	Black	1060	31
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 08	8	2009	Total Students	7780	66
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 08	8	2009	White	5079	76
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 08	8	2009	Black	1376	33
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 10	10	2009	Total Students	7996	66
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 10	10	2009	White	5299	76
DISTRICT TOTALS GRADE 10	10	2009	Black	1433	33

In the past Beach County was perceived to be on the cutting edge of innovative ideas and a visionary organization that moved all stakeholders towards shared goals and direction. This study has the potential of making a contribution to the achievement gap discussion by looking at the four participants perspectives. Each of the participants is a leader who has knowledge of the achievement gap and represents class views that drive their understanding.

Qualitative research allows the researcher to be immersed in the process of gathering information and observing the participants, likewise for the participants, “people make sense of their world as filtered through the lens of their own lived experiences...” (Janesick, 2004, pg. 38). I used the case study approach for this study and

originally five participants were selected as participants. They were chosen because of their direct employment with the school district or because of their involvement with community committees concerned about the achievement gap between Black and White students. Each of them possessed broad experiences through their employment or as community leaders that understand the collaboration between district and community is a necessity, because one can't exist without the other.

For this study, the following was utilized in the data collection process, interviews, observations, researcher field notes, digital photographs of the participants, Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, and documents from Crowley vs. Pinellas County School Board. I also, reviewed the county's graduation data, suspension and referral data, and the district's web site on strategic directions. I assembled a three prong notebook, which contained the participant's transcribed interviews, consent forms, field notes from each interview and data pertaining to the achievement gap. Each of the transcriptions was labeled and each had page numbers to identify the interviews. Citations throughout this document reference direct quote from the data collected and filed. Appendix A provides sample field notes. Appendix B provides a sample journal entry from the researcher's reflective journal.

The sampling of participants for the study was purposeful. Three males and two females, Black and White were selected and interviewed. In order to participate in this study, the participants met the following criteria (a) leaders within their organizations who were directly impacted by the achievement gap, (b) individuals who were lived through the era of change from segregation to integration, (c) who were involved in community change either through community committees or school district committees

addressing the achievement gap, (d) participants who believed in change within the school district and community. Each of the participants were interviewed at least twice totaling 9 formal interviews, additionally, each were interviewed informally once prior to the formal interview. Each interview was audio taped, transcribed, and coded. Each interview lasted 45 minutes to one hour. The interview questions were semi-structured as well as opened ended. Two interview protocols were created and used as a guideline for interviewing questions; see Appendix C, for protocol A questions used for the first interview. See Appendix D, for the second set of questions. Initially during the first round of interviews, each participant was given a numerical number that was used to identify each one, see Appendix E. During the second round of interviews each participant was identified by an alpha number and both set of interviews were filed in folders, and coded by color in their individual folders along with the themes that emerged from the interview process. Each transcription was transcribed verbatim and given to each participant to check for accuracy. Data analysis was ongoing and was based on authentic documents, observation field notes, and researcher reflective journal entries. See appendix F for the thank you letter send to participants; See Appendix G giving the participants a copy of their transcription. Appendix H is an excerpt from the consent form given to each participant. My peer review was done by a friend and graduate doctoral student who also served as my mentor during the whole process, see Appendix I.

Responses to Exploratory Questions

Two exploratory questions guided the study.

1. What are the components of their perspectives and how they are formed?
2. What beliefs support or hinder that perspective?

The responses to the exploratory questions and the key components and variables are discussed below based on the data collection and findings. The responses to the questions are also displayed in Figure 5.2, Visual model of exploratory questions with answers from data collection findings.

The four participants determined that student achievement, especially the achievement gap between Black and White students is a major component of the school district strategic vision and mission. However, to get there was complex, and hindered by various variables. All four of the participants agreed that the future direction that the district is heading is correct, including building collaborative relationships with a broad base of community groups, organizations and parents. The four participants agreed that student achievement must address how to effectively harness the resiliency of Black students using their cultural assets to help close the achievement gap. This includes using differential learning styles, breaking the mold “of the one size fit all” approach of teaching and retaining highly qualified teachers in the districts most challenging schools. Jonathan Gibbs perspective is that the school district must develop a holistic view of the Black student, meaning to analyze past belief systems and policies to address the achievement gap. William Lloyd Garrison perspective advocates placing the most resources where the most challenges exist, instead of punishing them and by extension Black students. W.E. Du Bois perspective means developing a shared vision between the school district and the community. Nannie Burroughs perspective calls for improved parental and community involvement to help close the achievement gap.

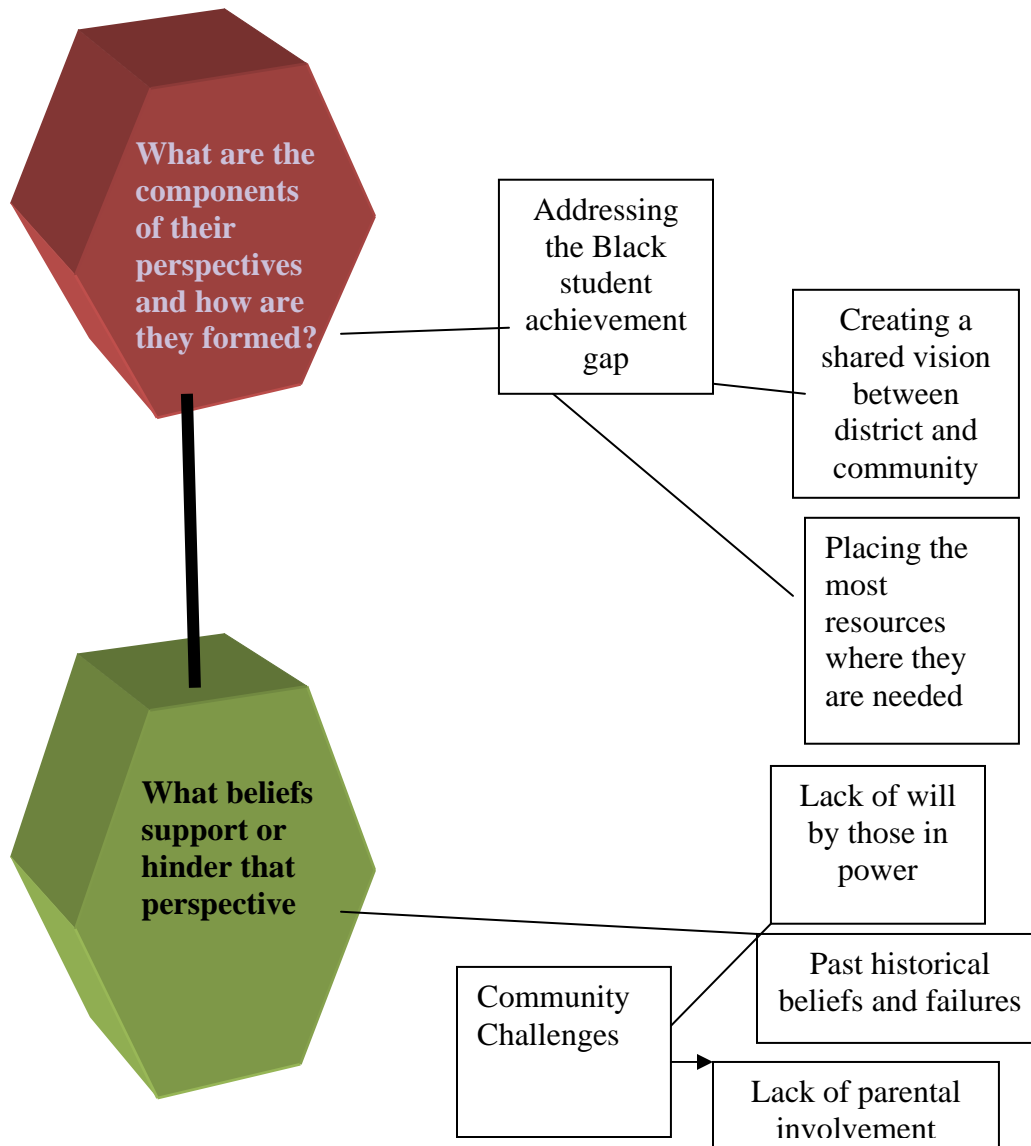


Figure 5.2. Visual images of participants' perspectives on the achievement gap

The discussions from all the participants regarding their perspectives on the achievement gap led to the development of Theme One: Political and social resistance that contributed to the achievement gap within the organization. All participants recounted possible barriers within the organization that they attributed to resistance to closing the

achievement gap between Black and White students. Those conversations included segregation, integration, the politics of poverty, and breaking up the cohesiveness of the community. This led to common challenges discussed by each participant on moving forward in the future. Those discussions led to Theme Two: What beliefs support or hinder that perspective. An analysis of the sub-themes and variables follows.

The achievement gap. Each of the participants was aware of the achievement gap between n Black and White students and was keenly aware of the implications for the school district and the community at large. Each of the participants was also aware of how the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test has impacted Black students and affected their ability to get a diploma and graduate from high school. High stakes testing, AYP, No Child Left Behind, the Bradley vs. Pinellas County negotiated settlement (2008), and dismal graduation rate for Black students have brought the achievement gap front and center. Finally, all the participants are aware of the school district promise to address the achievement gap and make it a priority within the organization and felt the pressure “to do something”.

Segregation versus integration. Three of the participants was aware of the era before integration and had strong opinions on the negative impact that segregation played politically in Florida and especially in Beach County. In hindsight three of the participants wondered if the cost of integration to the Black community was worth it. Two participants discussed how Black students in the district bore the brunt of forced busing and how it destroyed the cohesiveness of the community and further divided the community from the school district. They wondered what was gained from this especially contrasting a sense of belonging and achievement that was expected during the era of

segregation versus integration. They spoke nostalgically and with pride how failure was not an option and the concept of the village was evident throughout the community. They all acknowledged that community and district collaboration is an essential ingredient in order to move forward but each had individualized opinions in how best to achieve that goal. Each of the participants was aware of how politics determines the organizations view and willingness to act in the best interest of Black students. Organizational politics are determined by who has power, how it is exercised, by whom and determines the end result, school districts are not stand along organizations acting separately and apart from the community but often represent a particular perspective.

Community challenges. The communities of North and South County are different. Materially, they represent the have and have not's, yet each have their own unique set of problems, yet the perception by two of the participants is that North County determines the political direction and policies for the whole district. All of the participants are acutely aware of the need to work together as a whole; they recognize the need to have a shared vision and united school district in order to address the achievement gap. This view was expressed practically as ensuring that resources whether materially or by teacher retention, that those schools with the greatest needs must be supported which in turn benefits the whole district. South County has undergone tremendous changes in the past forty years which all the participants have acknowledged overall as positive in rebuilding the infrastructure in South County, which had long been neglected; such as new schools, attracting new businesses and essential services. However, social and political realities such as lack of health care, affordable housing, high unemployment, prison growth and juvenile jailing have remained for the most part

unchanged, further deepening the economic crisis in the community. The economic crisis in the community is perceived as contributing to an understanding that Black students can't learn because of economical policies.

One of the participants refers to this as the politics of poverty, which he strongly believes hamper forward progress this belief succinctly says that Black students can't learn because of poverty. Mr. Gibbs strongly disagrees with this mindset and points to him and many others who were considered "poor" but succeeded. What he didn't say was that this was part of the resiliency framework, of caring adults, high expectations, and set boundaries provided by the community and families. However, what he perceives now are, lowered expectations, less qualified teachers, watered down curricular, reinforcing the idea of the school to jail pipeline. Two of the participants strongly believe that lack of parental involvement is a direct correlation between academic achievements and Black student failure rates.

Analyzing the themes and sub-themes. Research from the literature review on at-risk students and academic achievement revealed from the data collection that each participant views support some aspects of the resiliency framework.

Political and social resistance that contributed to the achievement gap within the organization. Jonathan Gibbs perspective supports the ideas of Dewey (1960), Freire (1968) and the contemporary writings of Kozol (2005), which primary view the purpose of education as part of the social transformation process of society and continuous reconstruction of a democratic society for all. Both participants believe that political and social resistance to this belief has led to failed policies by the Beach County School district and by extension a failure for all. This view is also shared by William Lloyd

Garrison, who believes that policies enacted over many years have not benefited the least served in the community but the most affluent, those with the political connection and power to maintain the status quo to the detriment of Black student academic achievement and by extension the Black community. Jonathan Gibbs and William Lloyd Garrison perspectives reveals that the role of schools must be aligned with other progressive individuals and organizations to help plan for a just and equitable distribution of the nations' wealth for the 'common good' (Liston and Zeichner, 1997). Jonathan Gibbs data supports the belief by other researchers that the lack of opportunities or perception of such, breeds social conflicts, racial hatred and that poverty place many Black students and the community in the bottom tier of the economic scale, leading to social upheavals and risks that compromise the academic achievement and resiliency of Black students. Therefore, the job of schools should be to approach educating Black students from a holistic framework, not just educating the student but empowering the community as well. William Lloyd Garrison similarly reveals from his data that social inequality is the product of past history which contributes negatively to the upward social mobility of the Black community. The common threads of their beliefs are that education should help in transforming the individual and the community, building bridges of support and empowerment of the community. The following image represents their beliefs and common threads.

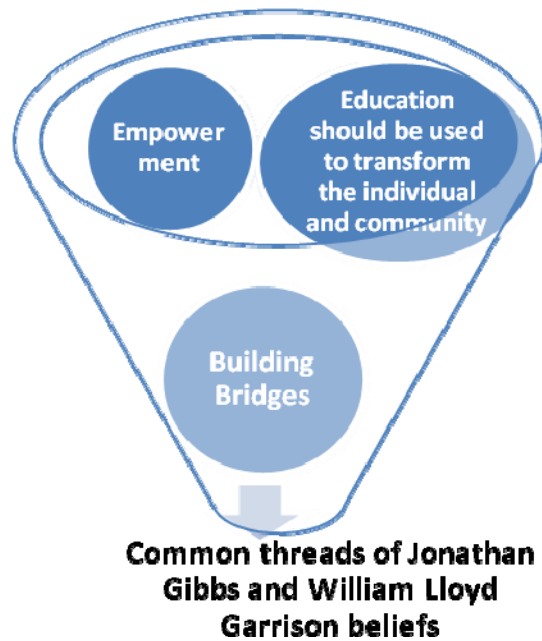


Figure 5.3. Common threads of Gibbs and Garrison beliefs

Jonathan Gibbs disputes the idea that parental involvement is the missing key to closing the achievement gap, which is echoed by many in the education arena. He believes this view is another way to blame the victim and to justify the community/parent as a problem community or as socio-pathological. He reflected on his own educational upbringing and those of his generation. He quickly reminded the researcher that his teachers lived in the same neighborhood and went to the same stores and worship at the same churches but his parents were busy working to provide for the family and did not visit the schools, yet he did well. His view reflects two important factors of the resiliency framework, strong neighborhood ties, strong adult presence; role models that were indirectly and directly responsible for helping Black youth maintain high levels of academic achievement and higher levels of graduation. Jonathan Gibbs called this the village concept throughout his interview.

On the other hand the perspectives of W.E. Du Bois and Nannie Burroughs revealed similar views on what factors contributed to the achievement gap. Both acknowledged that past policies, and racial attitudes played a role in the current achievement gap, however both cited the central role of parental involvement and lack student motivation as additional factors. Both are compassionate and strong advocates and have strong beliefs about what it will take to close the achievement gap. Their views are similar to James Coleman (1960) who believed that schooling had relatively little effect on the ultimate equality of students' life outcomes but the involvement of parents had a greater impact on their life success. Later contemporary writer Evans (2005) wrote similarly that the achievement gap is not a problem for schools, teachers or administration to simply solve, but are a result of outside influences that schools have no control over. From their perspectives the achievement gap is a shared responsibility, especially among students of poverty. Parents must be taught how to parent, have less television and providing for early interventions such as pre-schooling and extended schooling.

W.E. Du Bois recounts during the interview process that parents must assume more responsibility in their child's education, "turn off the televisions", educate parents about teenage pregnancy, and help students to value education. Nannie Burroughs believes that parents must be involved in the education of their children and place blame where it should be. She also shared that her single mother raised her to excel in school. Their views on the role of education are similar to Coleman (1960) and Evans (2005) who believed that the real role of education is to provide opportunities and not necessarily education. This simply means that the education is there but the community

and parent must help the child take advantage of those opportunities to be academically successfully. W.E. Du Bois and Nannie Burroughs data collection revealed that if the achievement gap is to be closed, than there must be a re-focus and new priorities set by the parents and the community. The focus must not be on blaming but building collaborative relationships between the community and school district. The figure below is a visual image of their perspectives related to political and social factors that hamper the achievement gap for Black students. Their perspective supports the resiliency framework which states that parental and community support is identifiable protective factors that must be harnessed for eventual academic success.



Figure 5.4. Common threads of Burroughs and Du Bois perspectives.

Lack of Organizational Vision and Defining a Strategic Direction

Over the past ten years the Beach County School district has experienced tremendous changes that challenged its past vision and strategic trajectory causing small cracks in its foundation. The organization has went from implementing forced busing over a forty year time span to neighborhood schools; mandated by the state to implement high stakes testing in the form of Florida Comprehensive Assessment Testing, which shows huge gaps in reading and math between White and Black students; implementing

the NCLB act; faced two lawsuits (1) Bradley vs. Pinellas County School Board (1992), a negotiated settlement was reached in June 2008 challenging the race ratio system of forced busing, high discipline referral rate of Black students and inadequate facilities in the South County schools; (2) Crowley vs. Pinellas County Schools (2001) charging the district with the failure to educate Black students in the district, targeting the achievement gap, this case have not gone to trial yet; state intervention at the communities once highly respected jewels, Gibbs High in St. Petersburg, Florida; coupled with a dwindling economic base of support because of the housing market crash, resulting in high rates of foreclosures throughout the state impacting revenue for schools and students. This scenario which is not unique to Florida has caused debates on public education, with the public losing confidence in the school system to operate in the same old ways. Today there are more demands for fundamental schools, charter schools, and private schools demanding more public monies in the form of vouchers.

The participants recounted their perspectives on the future of the school system, all believing that it is moving in the right direction despite the numerous challenges it is faced with. Chief among their belief is that the district has placed the achievement gap as one of its main strategic direction and has asked for goals from schools on how to narrow the gap.

Jonathan Gibbs works collaboratively with the city of Franklin and the school district in hammering out problems, such as teacher development, and creating partnerships with faith based organizations to help mentor Black students. William Lloyd Garrison strongly believes the district must focus its resources more on south county schools in order to narrow the achievement gap. W.E. Du Bois works closely on internal

structures within the district on personnel issues such as, hiring quality teachers, retaining and training, and ongoing professional development to help ensure that Black students get highly qualified teachers and support staff members in challenging schools. Nannie Burroughs works on numerous committees both north and south county to ensure that procedures and processes around Black student discipline and referral rates are aligned to the district strategic direction of narrowing the achievement gap.

Organizations are filled with people who have their own interpretations of what is and should be happening. Each version contains a glimmer of truth, but each is a product of the prejudices and blind spots of its maker (Bolman & Deal, pg. 17). What this simply means that in any system, one part has an impact on the other, they are all interdependent, conflicts, and bias shape and determine strategic direction and vision of the organization. According to research on resiliency when all parts work well together, the result is high student achievement and greater satisfaction among all stakeholders such as the community, teachers, staff and students.

Sub-Theme One – Integration vs. Segregation

From the perspectives of Jonathan Gibbs, William Lloyd Garrison and W.E. Du Bois their data revealed the following related to *segregation*: (1) neighborhood cohesiveness, (2) a strong sense of self worth and self pride, (3) strong school pride, (4) high expectations around education, (5) teachers were considered role models and a strong community. Looking at *integration*, the participants talked about the following: (6) the breakup of the community, (7) isolation and distance from the schools, (8) lower expectations for Black students, (9) lower teacher quality, (10) a widening achievement gap. From the perspectives of the participants they viewed integration as a failed system

based on the following factors: higher dropout rates among Black students, higher discipline referrals, higher arrest rates for Black students, and a widening gap between the community and district. All of the participants expressed a strong belief shared vision between the school district and community is one of several solutions to narrow the achievement gap. The following figure represents the common thread among them.

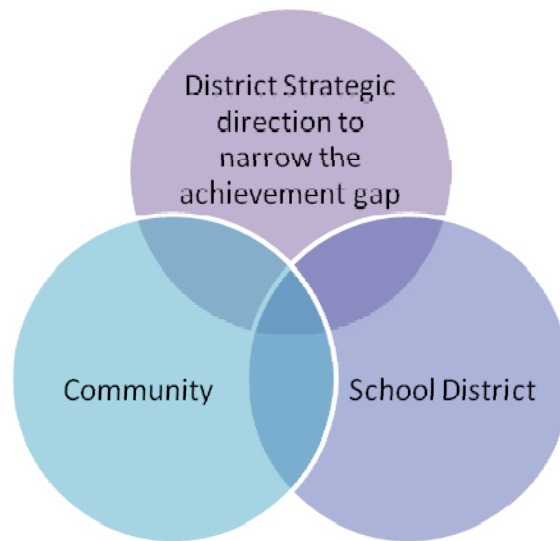


Figure 5.5. Building a collaborative relationship for student achievement

Sub-Theme Two- Community Challenges

Today most communities are under stress because of a variety of reasons; families are challenged by changing demographics and income gaps in their areas. There are fewer jobs providing sufficient income to meet the rising demands of taking care of a family. Those areas where the Black families were able to garner support from are also challenged by economical instability, such as the extended family, community service organizations, and local churches and subsidized housing.

All of the participants recognized the need for community involvement and

building collaborative partnership between the district, parents and students. Jonathan Gibbs, W.E. Du Bois, Nannie Burroughs, and William Lloyd Garrison recalled their own upbringings and how the community provided a life line for their own achievements. Jonathan Gibbs recalled fondly “if I was out in the neighborhood and did something wrong, Mrs. Such and such would spank me and then call my mother”. W. E. Du Bois recalled that when he went off to college, his neighbors and friends while poor pitched in to provide monetary support and expressed their pride in my accomplishments, because his success was theirs as well. Today, they agreed that some of that tradition has been lost because of political policies such neighborhood and family displacement and economical challenges. They still believe that the priority has to be empowering the community and deal openly and honestly with the challenges of the community, such as drugs, violence, poor role models, and lack of health care and high unemployment. Their data collection revealed that they all believe in the village concept, but expanding that to include everyone from the local government agencies, business partnerships to community based groups and individual.

The research from the resiliency framework is compelling in its support of building collaborative partnerships between all stakeholders in narrowing the achievement gap. Resilience is fostered in the family by strong cultural belief systems that increase options for solving and overcoming problems, thus promoting healing after a crisis or finding creative ways to resolve problems. Schools or districts recognizing these factors can go a long ways towards building and maximizing Black students resiliency. Building bridges of support can impact the effort and motivation of Black students this would have a positive effect on academic achievement. The resiliency

framework recognizes that there are several barriers that the communities have to overcome in building partnerships; there are also barriers that the district must break down to help in this process such as creating a welcome atmosphere in schools, enhancing and encouraging community access to schools and personnel, strengthening communication between schools, families and communities, and enhancing the learning opportunities for families.

Sub-Theme Three- Developing the Assets of Black Students

According to research there are several factors that are critical to healthy development and academic success; 1) caring relationships, 2) high expectations, 3) opportunities for participation and 4) harnessing student's unique cultural assets.

The data collection from the perspectives of the participants revealed similar assumptions. Jonathan Gibbs believed that one drawback that Black students faced during busing was the loss of close and caring adults that lived and worked in their communities, he saw this as a disconnect. Black students often felt isolated from their communities because of distance, often could not participate in school extracurricular activities. W.E. Du Bois, view was that often teachers had lower expectations for Black students creating a vicious cycle of behavioral problems, and apathy, resulting in a lack of motivation. This approach became a self-fulfilling prophecy, "I can't, so I won't". Nannie Burroughs, views focused on how students learn and teachers developing differentiated learning styles to engage students. William Lloyd Garrison, views take into account the unique aspects of the community, calling for creating smaller learning centers in the community and creating the political will to make changes.

Closing the achievement gap and helping Black students become successful is a

priority within the education system. For this to transpire schools must adopt a new vision of helping underachieving students. That new vision according to Belinda Williams (2003) is the need to move beyond restructuring of schools to the “re-culturing” of education. Re-culturing focuses on the unique cultural assets of the community such as beliefs, values, events, traditions and the positive habits that characterize the students’ community. Developmental assets are forty identifiable factors that can help youth transition from adolescence to young adults, these factors are used to promote positive behavior and protect youth as they bounce back from adversity. The first twenty assets called external factors focus on positive experiences that young people receive from family, and caring adults in the community. These factors stimulate and nurture positive development in youth through informal and formal structures within the community. The next twenty are called internal assets and are those things a community and family nurture within youth so they can contribute to their own development. External assets are identified as support, empowerment, boundaries and expectation. Some of the internal assets are identified as commitment to learning, positive values, positive identity and social competencies. According to research the more assets exhibited by youth the better youth can achieve academically and mitigate adversity. The following figure represents how developmental assets can help Black students achieve academically if enough internal and external factors are present.

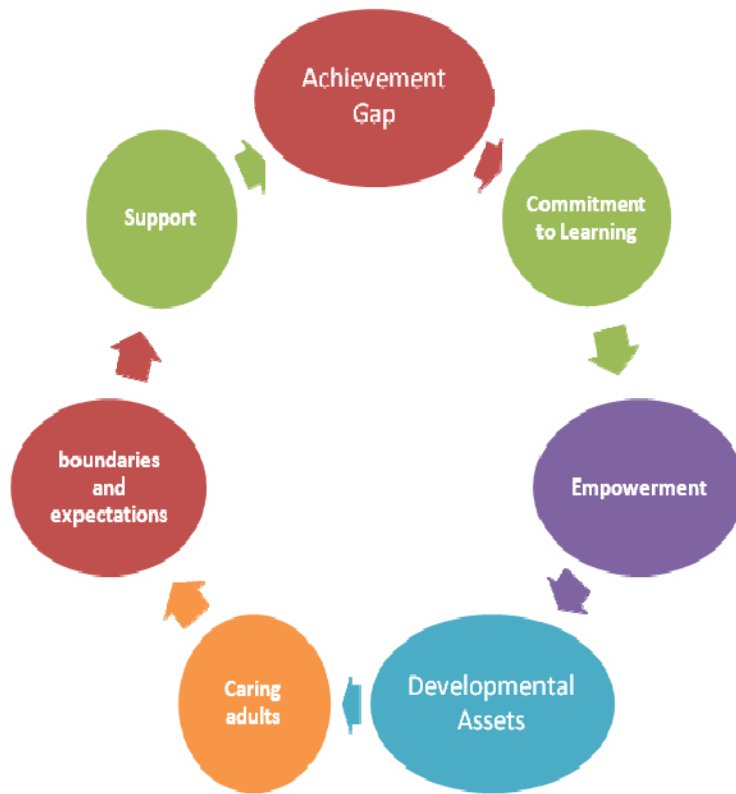


Figure 5.6. Using developmental assets to narrow the achievement gap

Using the information from the data collection from all the participants on how developmental assets can help Black students narrow the achievement gap each identified the problem and how developmental assets can help. The following chart represents their perspectives.

Table 5.3

Represents the perspectives of the participants and how developmental assets could be used to narrow the achievement gap.

Name	Achievement Gap	Problem	Developmental Assets
Jonathan Gibbs	Fueled by past history	Lower expectations politics of poverty	Empowerment
W.E. Du Bois	Lack of motivation, lack of focus	Creating a shared vision with community	Commitment to learning must be enhanced
Nannie Burroughs	Lack of parental involvement	Must utilize differential learning styles	Establishing boundaries and Expectations
William Lloyd Garrison	Past oppressive history	Lack of will by those in power	Using community centers to do remedial work with Black students

In summary, the major findings of this study reveal that a united strategic direction with the community and school district is a major component of all the participants' perspectives on the achievement gap. The participants all have different jobs yet are united in their understanding that the achievement gap represents a crisis for parents, and students but they were unsure how the district strategic direction would be implemented throughout each school. Each of the participants believed that collaboration is a major key between parents, students and teachers, that collaboration should be based on best practices and understanding the diversity of the community. Their perspectives represent the dual role of looking towards the future as well as understanding that past policies, racial views, and distrust can impact future plans and programs. Beach County School district have undergone tremendous changes and find itself on sort of a crossroads by these changes, attempting to address the NCLB mandates, struggling with schools that have failed to make AYP, intervention by the state into Beach County schools,

implementing the negotiated settlement of the Bradley case, preparing for the upcoming Crowley Case; The district is struggling with a host of problems such as, teacher quality, stringent mandates from the state, less resources from the state budget, a demoralized school staff, a distrustful community to name a few. None of the participants agreed on every point. All the participants were hopeful that the district, parents, schools and students can move forward in addressing this urgent issue.

Impact of the Study on the Researcher

I was surprised by assumptions that I had concerning the participants and their worldviews and perspectives. I had assumed that two of them, William Lloyd Garrison and Jonathan Gibbs, were more conservative in their ideas and that their answers would reflect that. What was surprising was that their thinking was more open and “liberal” and it was an aha! process for me. The two persons that I thought would be more “liberal” thinkers, W. E. B. Du Bois and Nannie Burroughs were more conservative and guarded in their perspectives. All my assumptions were wrong and I learned through the qualitative process, that lines and thoughts can be blurred and not exactly what the researcher initially thought the outcome would be. Another surprise for me was that two of the participants held to the deficit model in their beliefs about the achievement gap between Black and White students. In attempting to explain the widespread achievement gap, many teachers, administrators and policy makers often attribute the achievement gap to the community and parents – characteristics often rooted in their cultures and communities. That is to say research grounded in this school of thought blame the victims of institutionalized oppression for their own victimization often referring to the lack of parental involvement and other stereotypes regarding oppressed or marginalized students.

This perspective often overlooks the root cause of oppression by placing the cause on the families and community. Under this assumption schools are in part absolved from their responsibilities to educate all children appropriately and this charge is shifted almost entirely to Black students and their families.

My own values were shaped by the era I grew up in and later by my political involvement as a student at Florida State University demanding change through the Black Student Union, which I was extremely active and later my involvement with the Uhuru Movement. I believe that education is a political weapon, serving the purpose of maintaining the status quo based on the economic policies of the pervading social system. For the oppressed education is used to shape a consciousness' that is outside of the boundaries of everyday reality such as lack of health care, dying of incurable diseases earlier, subject to arrest, and longer incarceration. Education for the oppressed to be meaningful must be maintained and struggle to overturn what Freire (1960) calls the banking concept. Education is for the purpose of depositing information, especially, the norms and values of the oppressor.

As a result of this study I have grown as a researcher as well as my knowledge of resiliency and the achievement gap. I gained tremendous knowledge of how the participants were shaped by the events over the last forty years regarding integration and how it impacted the community and lives of Black students. I had prior to this undertaking heard about resiliency but the depth and research was remarkable and gave me a broader view of how it can be used to help promote and protect Black students as they transition from adolescence to teenagers. I discovered that the district is huge and that politics can and do over shadow what is best for students, because infighting,

legislative mandates and budget cuts can create politics of expediency as opposed to study and implementing what is best for Black students. I also discovered that among the participants that race and class did not play an important role in their understanding of the achievement gap from their perspectives, which was another assumption that I had. In fact those factors were not evident during the interview process. This led me to the discovery that each of the participants approached and understood the achievement gap from their own upbringings and not something they necessarily read in a book.

As the researcher I also learned the joy and headache of doing qualitative research, because it takes time, energy, organization and determination to move ahead despite the setbacks. Some of the setbacks were the taping recording giving out in the middle of an interview, text lost because of computer glitches, and time issues that threaten to overtake the researcher. It was a rewarding experience because it helped the researcher become organized, clearer in thought and purpose. The participants were honest and took time from their extremely busy schedules to share their perspectives with me which was rewarding. I found that during the data collection process I learned from their shared experiences, they each had exciting stories to tell and share. This study also helped me realize the urgency of addressing the achievement gap and providing Black students with the best curriculum and practices that are available is critical, and tying in the resiliency framework to help narrow the achievement gap.

Furthermore, this study helped me understand the complexity of the achievement gap and how it is viewed. I learned that the complexity of the question is equally as complex as the solution. The school district has numerous programs in place such as Read 180, which is an intensive structured reading program for low and struggling

readers, as well as intensive math, numerous predictive testing programs to determine the probability of success to gauge outcome of success for the FCAT test. However, several things came out of this study; the one size fit-all approach does not work. Two, schools and students are impacted by real life such as economic, social and political policies that doesn't simply stop at the school door in isolation from the community. Three, honest dialogue must happen so that real collaboration can happen between the school district and community. I remembered when William Lloyd Garrison, recalled bringing Black community members into the office of a former superintendent, he was outraged by the memorabilia displayed. Just when he thought progress and dialogue was opened up, they (community members) were reminded without words that they were still considered objects and not members of the community who cared about the future and of Black students. Finally, the district along with the community must be willing to implement innovative programs that speak to the needs of a changing and dynamic community such as the Harlem Children Zone in New York or the E3 Power Program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The E3 Power Centers offer skill-building experiences for out of school and in school students that are viewed as at-risk, this program is grounded in resiliency and youth development. E3 stands for education, employment and empowerment and approaches education from a holistic framework. The district must be willing to take a bold stance not simply having words on paper about the achievement gap but willing to implement those words into practice.

Finally, I remember a teacher who was given the assignment to teach majority Black students in a pre-advanced placement class. They were identified through their test scores but had never been challenged. They were extremely excited to be in the class as

were as their parents, because, the class was designed to prepare and support them for one semester before going into other higher level content classes. However, the teacher was operating from the premise that the students were poor and couldn't learn even with the evidence of their high scores. She often made comments that they couldn't handle the work load that they were discipline problems and before the end of the 1st six weeks she had failed the entire student body. The students were demoralized, the parents were upset and nothing was working to change the situation. Finally, after providing the teacher with training and support I realized that it was the teacher that was the problem not the students. She was immediately routed out of that course and another teacher was asked to teach the class. The change was remarkable. He didn't change the curriculum he didn't make them believe that they were incapable, what he did was raise the bar and challenged them not to fall victim to the previous teacher low expectations. They excelled under his teaching. He built relationships with them, and believed that they could do the work. The surprise was that teachers were white, one was female and the other was an older white male about to retire. I thought about Jonathan Gibbs and his statement about poverty and how that can unconsciously impact how teachers approach to teaching Black students. Thus, the findings of this study supports that a cohesive organizational vision, community partnership, a relevant curriculum and the political will to move will make a difference in narrowing the achievement gap.

Conclusions

Reports of the disturbing conditions of Black youth and academic achievement continue to capture the attention of local and state policymakers, resulting in uncomfortable silence or the politics of blame, with school officials and community

leaders pointing the finger at each other, however, that doesn't solve the problem of academic achievement. Although, it is appropriate to recognize and understand the desperate social and economic conditions that affect the Black student, it is also important to look at other methods and innovative ways to address the issue. It is important to understand how some Black youth succeed despite the overwhelming odds against them. Understanding the concept of resilience is one way teachers, administrators and policymakers can design more effective intervention models and programs to help achieve academically. There is a direct correlation between protective processes that foster resilience and risk factors that derail Black students from realizing their full potential and becoming successful in general.

The transformation of schools and communities to foster resilience is no easy task because it requires fundamental changes in beliefs, visions and behaviors of educators and community members to work in shared partnerships. For the most part schools have remained largely unchanged for the last century, despite changes in society. The organizational structures of schooling are similar for both majority-culture children and minority students it can't be a one size fit all approach; a resiliency framework allows for the unique assets of the Black students to be addressed. In this new vision of educating Black students to help them achieve academic success, it is important to view students' experience, prior cultural history and knowledge as strengths – not deficits. Believing and expecting that Black students have invaluable experiences can contribute to the teaching and learning process. Black students must be given the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths and know that they are valued. Opportunities must be created for them to demonstrate what they know and can do in schools and in their communities.

The family and overall community play a significant role in the transmission of values, beliefs and culture to its members. While there are similarities in the expectations of different ethnic groups for their children future, it is also important to recognize the uniqueness of each. The various researchers recognized that external factors continue to be a source of risk for Black students, that despite those factors, they have survived and overcame tremendous odds. All the research and literature that I have read give great hope to future research and how some of those external factors must be addressed, not in isolation from each other but as part and parcel of the need to navigate policies and programs designed to promote those protective factors that Black families and the community possess. Finally, the old African adage that it takes a village to raise a child is true. This paper is by no means exhaustive of the research needed to further understand resiliency and education achievement for Black students; I hope to continue on this trajectory in the future.

Ethical Issues Emerging from the Study

During the study, all the participants were willing to describe and explain their experiences. I felt obligated to guarantee that their confidentiality would be safeguarded throughout the process. Some hold district jobs and others held leadership jobs within the community it was my responsibility to ensure the integrity of the process and also for them to be open and comfortable. My initial contact with each of them was to let them know that their audio-recordings would be kept locked and would not be shared with others. I also asked them to read their transcript for accuracy. I coded each interview with numerical numbers and provided each participant with a pseudonym to further ensure the integrity of the participants during the interview process.

Additionally, as a researcher I was careful not to let my own views influence their answers. My own bias prior to the research was that there was no comprehensive understanding of the achievement gap and that politics and history helped dictated all decisions related to the achievement gap. I developed my bias through my own experiences from working within the school system and working in the community. I did not mention my bias during the interviews. I was extremely careful to let the participants speak for themselves and not project an impression that their vision or perspective was negative. I wanted to uncover their truth and let that be the guide for me.

Recommendations for Further Research and Practice

The study data address the discussion of the importance of a cohesive united vision with the goal being to address the widening achievement gap between Black and White students. Each of the participants was able to articulate the importance from their stations the urgency of this task and were able to articulate a future direction they hope would lead to intervention and leadership. Each knew that the achievement of Black students is crucial for the integrity of the district and instructional staff and by extension the state. Each participant believed that collaboration was another key in narrowing the gap. They also realized that past historical barriers of hostility, distrust and isolation would take time for the community to move beyond.

It is clear from the Literature Review and from the data that the resiliency framework is another important component part, because it moves away from the old concepts of poverty, viewing the community as defective or pathological. The resiliency framework view cultural and developmental assets as part of the arsenal to battle dominate society views and shift towards the understanding that historical oppressed

people must be part of the discussion and re-construct of a social just society. Below are some future recommendations that researchers may benefit from.

1. What are the views of parents regarding the achievement gap?
2. Did Black students fare better with all Black schools, why or why not?
3. How did the Brown vs. Board of Education decision affect academic achievement and why?
4. What innovative programs or initiatives would work to close the achievement gap?
5. What are the perspectives of educators and administrators regarding the achievement gap and what variables influence their perspectives?
6. Can Black students be educated under the current model of one size fit all approach, why or why not?
7. Do different perspectives and worldviews play into why an achievement gap exist, or is it impacted by political, social and economic relationships?

In summary, the finding of this study conclude that Beach County must evaluate how the discussion to close the achievement gap is addressed, it can't be left to individuals at the site base to implement change, but visionary leadership must come from the top, setting the tone of importance and holding those in position of authority accountable.

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Appendices

Appendix A

A211 - January 10, 2009

Descriptive Notes

Notes to self

I hope I have everything, because I don't want to be late.

Ok, it will take about 30 minutes to get to the office from the freeway.

Selected Excerpts of Field Notes

I am rushing because my meeting is at 3:00pm in Largo and I have a parent that want to meet with me regarding her daughter recent suspension to reduce her days. I am feeling rushed because the parent is upset and wants to continue to re-visit the same concerns. I agree to reduce her suspension to one day (student was fighting with another girl). Now the mother is attempting to negotiate no time off. I firmly but politely states NO! And apologize that I have to leave for an appointment. I promise mother that I will call her in the morning so she can pick up assignments. I dash for the door.

I am sweaty and didn't get a chance to wash my face. I locate some face tissues and begin to clean off the sweat as I am driving. How long will it take me to get from south St. everything that I need? Ok, questions, audio-tape, notebook, ink pen, and extra audio-recorder (no, I forgot).

I arrive with 5 minutes to spare, great. As I drive up to the parking lot, it reminds me of a deserted area. I see five or six portables and wonder which one she is located in. I immediately spot the correct one because her name is on the front with her title.

In order to get into the door to the portable I have to walk up a long ramp. I am thinking how inconvenient. Once inside you feel as though you are in a box. The secretary is the first person you see and the area is extremely tight. I am thinking there is no privacy if she needed any. She is pleasant and states that she will inform the participant of my arrival. I look around and wonder why they are located in boondocks and in such cramped quarters. To the right of the secretary is the office. The secretary ushers me in and reminds the

Wow, the office is tiny. Why do they have them in such a small isolated area away from the main office?

What was she going to tell me and why tell me? I am curious and anxious for this information to be revealed.

participants of her upcoming appointments; now I really feel under pressure to get this done in a reasonable amount of time. Participant a211 is of medium height, fair complexion, with medium brown hair. She has a warm handshake and immediately puts you at ease with her easy mannerism. I notice that she has glasses on the top of her head held up with a chain. She is slightly overweight, but would not be considered obese. She has light blue eyes behind the glasses. She is wearing a gray pants suit with a white shirt. Her shoes are black and remind me of nurses' shoes for some reason. Her office is very small but neat. I did not see any family pictures. Her credenza had teacher items (I imagine from her days as an elementary teacher) such as wooden apples with saying. There were books on the book shelf and several works of children's art in frames. In the center of the credenza was a clock, which was shaped like a school house. The phone rings and she politely ask her secretary to hold her calls. However, the secretary knocks on the door and whispers something, and the participant, agreed to take the call. I told her I would wait outside, because there was no privacy if it was something important. She waves her hand to indicate for me to stay put. It is now 3:10 and she apologizes for the interruption. I told her it gave me time to get my own things in order so it was not wasted time. She laughs. I begin by asking her why they were located so far from the main hub. She sweetly replied that the district really wanted to spread out the different offices so that they were more central and could meet the needs of the area they were responsible for. She also, states "I am going to retire soon" so it doesn't bother me. I wanted to ask why because that was news to me. I refrained from going into that direction, and ask if she was ready to start. My first question: *Tell me something about your background and how did you get into education?* She surprised me and asks me to turn off the audio-recording for a minute. I am puzzled and curious at the same time. I comply. She begins to talk about her upcoming retirement. I sense there is something more about this conversation than what she is

saying. I start to read between the lines. Clearly, there are some other issues at stake. I listen intently to what she is saying, but it doesn't make sense until much later on (weeks later) I go back to our conversation and understood better why she ask that I don't record certain portions. I agreed not to record that portion and listened while she talked about her family and why she was leaving at such a critical time in the district.

Appendix B

Sample Journal

Jonathan Gibbs is a community leader and looked upon as the “unofficial Mayor”; people who know him respect his leadership and he is looked upon as a voice of reason. He understands the community and stays abreast of concerns and attempts to mediate potential problems before they become bigger. He is viewed with pride by most of the community. His passion for education and working to bridge the gap between the poor sectors and other sectors is well known and documented. He works with all groups and individuals to the chagrin of his employers and perhaps even his close circle of friends. He knows the city inside out and is legendary for the hectic and demanding schedule he keeps. He is a strong advocate of uplifting his community, especially the education of Black youth.

W. E. B. Du Bois is known for his wide circle of friends inside and outside the district. He was known as the go to person within the district for advice and training for up and coming teachers who wanted to move to the next level in their careers. He is aware politically, and seems to be aware of the social implications of the community. He is part of the community but yet separate from the community. He is well liked by those who know and work with him.

Nannie Burroughs sub-theme reveal that she is a strong advocate of parental involvement in the education of their children. She displays self-confidence and self-awareness about what she believes in. She works tirelessly inside the community on different committees on education. She is a socially aware district administrator and works to improve relationships with all stakeholders.

William Lloyd Garrison is a strong community activist interested in education reform and the equitable distribution of wealth within the educational organization. He is aware of past policies which he believe hampered progress in the past and hope that future endeavors will overcome some of those concerns. Fix the problem is his mantra!

I am wondering how I will put this altogether and make sense. Wow! They each have strong views and I don't want to influence them with my own biases. How will I code this information accurately so that it makes sense to me and the readers? I have a lot of work to do and a hectic schedule on top of this study? I am excited by this process, because I believe my analytical skills are good. I hope I get lots of data from each of them (suppose) I don't then what?

Appendix C

Protocol A- Questions

A Descriptive Study of the Perspective of the Achievement Gap in a Florida, county

1. Tell me a little about your background and your interest in Education.
2. Can you describe for me what it was like attending school for you either in an integrated school or desegregated school?
3. What is your understanding of the achievement gap and what components do you believe contribute to the achievement gap?
4. What is your perspective on how Beach County schools can help narrow the achievement gap?
5. What are your own beliefs on the achievement gap between Black and White students?
6. Do you have any beliefs about how the achievement gap can be narrowed? Please explain.
7. How do you see Beach County School district dealing with the challenges of the achievement gap? How do you see yourself as influencing this challenge?
8. Do you believe that a child's, strengths, the ability to survive despite risks and adversity can be used to narrow the achievement gap, if so how?
9. Is there anything else you wish to share with me at this time?

Appendix D

Interview Questions – Protocol B

A Descriptive Study of the Perspective of the Achievement Gap in Pinellas County

Interview Questions 2

1. What are some factors that have caused resistance to a shared vision regarding the achievement gap?
2. What are some of the variables that might influence the lack of organizational cohesiveness in addressing the achievement gap?
3. Based on your perspective what are some factors that can cause political resistance toward implementing a holistic approach to the achievement gap?
4. How will the Memoranda of Understanding, recently negotiated in the Bradley case impact the achievement gap in Pinellas County?
5. Describe your thoughts on race and class and the achievement gap.
6. What is your perspective on the impact of integration on Black student's academic performance?
7. How will neighborhood schools that are predominately Black impact the achievement gap?
8. Describe community organizations or groups that may help black students.

9. If you were in placed in charge of implementing a plan of action, what would be first thing you would do?

Appendix E

Selected Excerpts from transcript

Interview for Doctoral Dissertation on A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF PERSPECTIVES ON THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN A FLORIDA COUNTY

Interviewer: Harriet Waller
Subject: Participant A209
Date: February 10, 2009
File name: WS110019. and WS110020.

Int: I'm going to start by question number one. Good afternoon.

Sub: Good afternoon.

Int: Tell me a little about your background and your interest in education.

Sub: Okay. I'm a native of St. Petersburg. I went to Davis Elementary, 16th Street Junior High, St. Pete High School. From there I went to Rollins College for a bachelor's degree, University of South Florida for a master's degree and Florida State for a doctorate. I have been working with superintendents dating back to Scott Rose through the current superintendent and all in the area of addressing issues relevant to the African-American population, specifically young African-American males along the lines of

achievement gap, discipline and other areas of inclusion such as clubs and what have you.

Int: Can you describe for me what it...what it was like when you went for example at that time Davis Elementary and I think you said Hopkins or 16th Street, I should say...

Sub: Yes, it's Hopkins now.

Int: ...yeah...were segregated schools. What was it like? What was that experience like?

Sub: It was a very rewarding experience, very high expectations. Unlike today where the Pinellas County School System has operated under this philosophy that that kids from poverty can't learn, we were kids in poverty and we did extremely well because the expectation was that you would learn and was a very enriching, supportive and nourishing environment. Teachers are very important, even though we had at times outdated supplies or no supplies at all. They... They improvised, and more importantly, a very important aspect of the times then versus now is you hear teachers and administrators today say "parents aren't involved," i.e. they don't come to the school or what have you. I distinctly remember being at Davis Elementary and other schools, John Hopkins, what have you, that teachers would make home visits like doctors made home visits. Okay? So you know there was an expectation that the parent would go to the teacher, the teacher

went to...went to parents. And I can remember vividly having to I call it "raking the sand," because we had to make sure that the house was clean. Anyway, but you gave it extra measures when you knew your...your teacher was coming. So they would also invest in us in terms of weekends and ensuring that we had other activities that were enriching so, a very supportive environment.

Int: What changed and why? What do you think changed?

Sub: It changed with...with integration. There was... With the whole concept of integration we lost a lot of supportive teachers and we... we got into a system where it was more about the business of just going in and doing what was rote, in terms of trying to educate kids. We lost the a...the community a...cohesiveness and the...the overall community supervision because when the...the busing and so forth started, for purposes of integration, you would be bused into communities where basically you could be anonymous, other than the fact that you would stand out if you weren't in school, but nobody really knew you. And that was contrary to the segregated system where if I didn't go to school, everyone in the community knew that I should have been in school and there was that that constant oversight, you know. It also made it easier for the community to interface with the schools and what have you and we lost that. I'm not suggesting that Caucasian or white teachers are not interested in African-American

kids but there are a whole host of cultural differences that I think have impacted kids in terms of their ability to be successful. For example, this whole notion of poverty that's taught to kids...

Int: ok

Sub: ...results in a self fulfilling prophecy. I mean people who buy into that have low expectations for the kids thus they end up with low...low outcomes. Young boys around 4th grade, or what have you, have a tendency to be very rambunctious and you find that a lot of them are being channeled into areas that aren't very productive. Whereas, when I was a 4th grader in the segregated system we were just as rambunctious but we had teachers who understood that they would put us in our appropriate place with just good verbal speeches and talking and not necessarily channel us or suggest that we need to be on drugs and so forth.

Int: good observation

Sub: I mean you find today that you got too many kids on drugs, too many kids are just acting out, too many of 'em are in environments that are permissive in school such... It makes no sense to me. So losing that community connection and walking into an area where you went from high expectations to virtually no expectations, it really made a difference. Just an example for it, you know when I was in school with African-American males, we were all segregated, and there were just a lot of bright people all

around you that looked like you. Okay? And they would tell us all the time that y'all have to be better, you gotta be smarter, you gotta be prepared because you gotta compete in...in the larger society and in a white world. Well, my son, who is a product of the Pinellas County School System, well, when he was in school he was in Magnet programs and accelerated programs because he's a good student. But with the...the busing and the isolation, unlike me, where I was surrounded by a whole cadre of very bright people, he found himself maybe being only one or two or three African-American males in a room with a lot of white males, a couple of white females or what have you. So much so that when he went to Florida A&M University, which was a predominantly black HPCU, one of the first things he did was call me and said, "Dad, guess what?" I said "What?" He said, "Man, there are a lot of smart black men up here."

Int: Whoa.

Sub: And that... That's revealing for a lot of reasons. Because being one of two or one of three or one of four or five in what he considered to be somewhat of an isolated situation...

Int: yeah

Sub: ...didn't really give him the perspective that there were a lot of other people like him so he felt like he was an oddball, you know?

Sub: And then when he discovered that what I was saying was true, he was...he was really elated.

Int: Wow! That's... That's really... That's important.

Sub: That's... That is very powerful.

Int: That is.

Sub: Because most people don't really comprehend some of the unintended consequences...

Int: consequence of integration.

Sub: ...of integration and busing. I mean it really gave him a perspective that... I know... I mean he looked at me and he looked at his mom, yeah, well, that's mom and dad, they're...

Int: Right, that's different.

Sub: That's different, right.

Int: Right.

Sub: Now I'm in a school situation with a lot of black young men but I'm over here in a magnet and the majority of them are out there in 'traditional'.

Int: ____ schools.

Sub: Yeah. So they're making me feel like that you know I'm different from them and so forth but...

Int: Because there's been a lot of...of books that's been written about students that... that they... that they don't want to be bright, they don't want to be in those type of schools because they

are...and...because they feel left out and isolated from their community...

Sub: Yeah. Right. Right.

Int: . You felt like you were something special but he felt... It was refreshing for him to find out that he wasn't an anomaly, that there are a lot of very bright African-American males.

Int: That's important. I'll have to come back to that one.

Sub: Okay.

Int: That's... Yeah, we've got to talk about that second one.

That's a good point. Tell me what is your understanding of the achievement gap and what are some of the components do you think contribute to that?

Sub: Essentially, African-American kids performing at levels that are not consistent with the performance of Caucasians and others in the school system. And it's very...very critical in areas such as Reading and in Math and Science and what have you. I think some of the contributors stem from the fact that, as I said earlier, there's this expectation that poverty kids "can't learn." I mean now and the thing that that makes it very obvious in the system is when you look at where the majority of our people are versus the select ones that are pulled out and slated into magnet programs, okay?

Appendix F

Thank You Letter to Participants

January 2010

Participant

Address

Dear,

Thank you for agreeing to being part of my dissertation study and allowing me to interview you over the past year. I am very appreciative of your willingness to take time out from your busy schedule to meet with me. Your perspective on the achievement gap was invaluable for me as the researcher and for the overall study.

As I mentioned to you, I am a doctoral student at the University of South Florida and this study was extremely important for me and hopeful can provide some insight on the different component parts provided by your perspective as to why an achievement gap exist.

Please be assured that the collection of data will be confidential and you will not be identified which is why I used pseudonyms to maintain your privacy. The purpose of the study was to get your perspective and not pass judgment.

Again, I want to thank you again for your valuable time and being open and willing to share your experiences with me. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at home or via e-mail. If you would like a copy of the finished product after my presentation, please let me know and I will be happy to forward you a copy.

Cordially,

Harriet Davis-Waller

www.davis-wallerh@pcsb.org

Appendix G

Member Check Forms

University of South Florida
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

A Descriptive Study of Perspectives of the Achievement Gap in Beach County, Florida

November 21, 2008

Dear _____.

Thank you for an enjoyable and insightful interview. Attached please find a draft copy of the verbatim transcripts of the interview. Please review the transcription for accuracy of responses and reporting of information. Please feel free to contact me at 727-432-1405 or via e-mail at Davis-wallerh@pcsb.org, should you have any questions.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study.

Cordially,

Harriet Davis-Waller

Appendix H

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands:

- What the study is about.
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used?
- What the potential benefits might be.
- What the known risks might be.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Harriet Davis-Waller

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813-974-1274

Appendix I

University of South Florida
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

A Descriptive Study of Perspectives of the Achievement Gap in Beach County, Florida

Peer Reviewer Form

I, _____, have served as a peer reviewer for “A Descriptive Study of Perspectives of the Achievement Gap in Beach County, Florida” by Harriet Davis-Waller. In this role, I have worked with the researcher throughout the study in capacities such as reviewing transcripts and assisting in emerging issues.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

About the Author

Harriet Waller- Davis is a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and she matriculated to Florida State University and received her Bachelor's of Science degree in Political Science in 1981. She started her teaching career in Oakland, California, prior to moving to St. Petersburg, Florida where she was hired as a Social Science teacher in 1994 at Pinellas Park Middle school. During that timeframe she completed her Master's degree from University of South Florida and was later appointed Assistant Principal at the same school in 2005. In 2007 she was appointed Assistant Principal at Lakewood High school in St. Petersburg, Florida where she currently works.

Ms. Davis philosophy beliefs are similar to Pablo Freire that the oppressed and the oppressor nation have two different belief systems that require a different approach to education and how oppressed children are taught and what is taught. Ms. Davis believes that the oppressed must have total input into the educational process that recognizes the importance of dismantling old moribund ideas, beliefs and values that does not recognize economic systems and social classes as major contributing factors that guide education practices and policies.