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A Comparative Perspective of Black College Males on the Achievement Gap: Implications for School Counselors

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A Comparative Perspective of Black College Males on the Achievement Gap:
Implications for School Counselors

by

Detra Bethell

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Vernita Cleare, sister, Portia Ingraham, nephew Ivoine, Torres Ingraham and my friend, the late Nikita Curry.

Mommy, you have been the most wonderfully supportive mother in the world. Throughout my life, you have always shown undying support and agape love that has sustained me through all of the challenges of my life. You are my earthly rock!!! I love you and can only aspire to be half the mother and woman you are. If I achieve that, I would have done well in life. I thank God for you.

Porsh, my other mother, just like mommy, your support and love is ever present. You have no idea how thankful I am that you are my sister. I could not wish for a better sister than you. I love you. You are the best, in part, because of who you are and also because you have given me the most wonderfully awesome nephew that an aunt could ever hope for, Ivoine Torres Ingraham.

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Nikita, you waited until I left to pursue this degree before dying. Sometimes I am angry with you for dying so soon, but I know that it was your time. This dissertation is also dedicated to you because you were the one person who always pushed me towards a Ph.D. even when I, myself, did not want it. I can still hear you saying, "Detra you are too smart to remain where you are, go get that Ph.D.!" I can imagine that as you were leaving this world, your last thought of me was that I finally listened and have left to work on my Ph.D. Nikita, your strong opinions and constant challenges have helped me develop and have posthumously helped me to continue even when this process got tough. I have said this in life and I will say after your death, I love you and thank you for being you and for being who you are to me. Rest in peace my friend.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
Abstract	vi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Background	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions	7
Significance	7
Definition of Terms	11
Study Assumptions	12
Study Delimitations	13
Study Limitations	13
Chapter Two: Literature Review	14
The Achievement Gap and Black Males: An Overview	14
Black Male Identity	16
Race and Ethnicity	18
Family Factors	24
Racial socialization	24
Parental support	25
Parenting style	26
Parental monitoring	27
Socioeconomic Status	28
School Characteristics, Policies, and Practices	29
A Strength Based Approach to Assessing Black Male Achievement	35
Resilience	37
Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory	39
Microsystem	41
Mesosystem	41
Exosystem	41
Macrosystem	42
Chronosystem	42
Use of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory	42
Role of School Counseling	44

The United States	44
Academic development	44
Career development	45
Personal/Social development	45
The Bahamas	45
Pre-school and national primary standard	46
Junior high school national standard	46
Senior high school national standard	46
Chapter Three: Methodology	48
Research Design	48
Qualitative Research	49
Study Instruments	50
The researcher	50
Establishing trustworthiness	53
CD-RISC	54
Setting and Participants	56
Setting	57
Participants	58
Procedures	58
Data Collection	60
Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Results	64
Data Analysis	64
Interview data analysis and emerging themes	64
Survey data analysis	65
Results	66
Interview Participants Portraits	66
Research Question 1	72
Factors contributing to Academic Success	74
Theme I - School socialization	74
Theme II - Need to be liked	75
Theme III - Need to be appreciated	77
Theme IV - Low teacher expectation	78
Theme V - Irrelevant class content	79
Theme VI - Self-reliance	79
Theme VII - Perseverance	80
Theme VIII - Sense of hope	81
Theme IX - Support	82
Theme X - Overcoming negativity	84
Theme XI - Sense of purpose	85
Theme XII - Spirituality	85
Research Question 2	86
Resilience	86
Research Question 3	95
Little Impact of School Counselors	95

Need to trust School Counselors	96
Research Question 4	96
Lack of programs	97
Lack of awareness of the role of the School Counselor.....	98
Summary	98
Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications	100
Emerging themes	101
Resilience.....	110
Impact of School Counselors	112
Implications for School Counselors.....	112
Limitations	120
Future Research	121
Conclusion	122
The encouraging voice of the Black male high school graduate	129
References.....	131
Appendices.....	152
Appendix A: University of South Florida IRB Approval Letter	152
Appendix B: Participant Demographic Data	154
Appendix B: CD-RISC	155

List of Tables

Table 1: Portrait of Resilience: APA task force on resilience and strength in Black adolescents and children.....	38
Table 2: Conner Davidson Resilience Scale Scores by study group characteristics.....	55
Table 3: Descriptive statistics of CD-RISC scores for each level of response to the question “On a scale of 1 – 5, how much did you enjoy high school?”	66
Table 4: Interview participant’s individual description of success and a self- rating of success on a 1– 10 scale.....	73
Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for T-tests	90
Table 6: Descriptive statistics of the 8 interview participants for the one tail t test	92
Table 7: Mean scores, differences and effect sizes between the Bahamian and American Survey survey participants.....	93
Table 8: Effective programs for Black males from an ecological perspective.....	117

List of Figures

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework	9
Figure 2: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model	40
Figure 3: Black male college students' resilience scores with a 95% confidence interval for Mean	87
Figure 4: Distribution of resilience scores represented by a Q-Q Plot	87
Figure 5: Black male college students' in the United States resilience scores with a 95% confidence interval for mean	88
Figure 6: Distribution of resilience scores of US Black male college students represented by a Q-Q plot	88
Figure 7: Black male college students' in the Bahamas resilience scores with a 95% confidence interval for mean	89
Figure 8: Distribution of resilience scores of Bahamian Black male college students represented by a Q-Q Plot	89
Figure 9: US versus Bahamian Black male college students' resilience scores with a 95% confidence interval for mean	91
Figure 10: Comparative Distribution of scores for US and Bahamian study participants represented by a Q-Q Plot	91
Figure 11: Interview participant's resilience scores compared to the overall population sample	94
Figure 12: Comparative Distribution of resilience scores of interview participants compared to the overall population mean represented by a Q-Q Plot	94
Figure 13: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological model.....	116
Figure 14: Study themes incorporated in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model	116

Abstract

The dominant discourse regarding Black males in America is that they are less academically successful than European American males and Black females. Similarly, Black males in the Bahamas are described as less successful than Black Bahamian females. School Counselors are in a unique position to alter the trajectory of success for Black males if they are knowledgeable of factors contributing to Black male academic success; have an awareness of the potential impact their unique roles can have; and develop and execute comprehensive, culturally responsive school counseling programs. While there is little research on the Achievement Gap in the Bahamas, much of the research in America has been conducted from a deficit perspective. This study uses a strength based perspective to identify and compare factors contributing to academic success in Black male high school students in the Bahamas and the United States and suggest a framework for responsive school counseling programs. Study results indicated that school counselors in the Bahamas and the United States were ineffective in meeting the needs of Black male students. These needs included supportive teachers, friends, parents and community mentors; a socially responsive school environment; being liked, accepted and appreciated; high teacher expectations; self-reliance (resilience), perseverance; a sense of hope and a purpose; and spirituality. Study results were analyzed from an ecological perspective and a comprehensive, culturally relevant framework was

suggested to assist school counselors develop programs that are responsive to the needs of their Black, male, high school students.

Chapter One: Introduction

Background

The study of Black academic achievement has been the focus of researchers for many decades (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McParetland, Mood, Weinfeld & York, 1966; Coleman, 1988; Hopkins, 1997; Mandara, 2006). Much of the information gathered has reported that Black students have been and continue to perform at lower levels than their white counterparts (National Center of Education Statistic, 2003). Despite decades of research efforts, Black students are still not achieving at similar levels as the dominant culture. Sperling and Vaughn (2009) stated “One might assume that more progress would have been made in achieving academic parity if the general public is as worried about the plight of Black students as they claim to be” (p. 146).

According to Isom, (2007), academic achievement is moderated by gender in the Black community. The comprehension and operational meaning of success differs between Black males and Black female (Conchas & Noguera, 2004). Academic success is often considered more appropriate, or, at least more common in Black females (Hudley & Graham, 2001). Additionally, Conchas and Noguera (2004), suggested that Black males often feel less academic support from family and school than do Black females. For Black males, athletic prowess and other non-academic involvements such as social clubs are often used to define their success (Isom, 2007). Gender based disaggregation of achievement data by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2006) indicated that Black females are more academically successful than Black males. Similar support is

found in the work of Irving and Hudley (2008) who reported that Black males have lower graduation rates, higher dropout rates, and lower standardized test scores than Black females (Irving & Hudley, 2008).

There are social and economic hardships that are a part of everyday life for Black people. Incarceration, unemployment, suicide, low infant mortality rate, decreasing life expectancy, racism, oppression and poverty are prevalent in Black communities (Center of Disease Control & Prevention, 2006; Kunjufu, 2004). Additionally, the Black family often has structural factors that can hinder Black male success. These factors include low parental education level, low socio-economic status (Bornstein & Bradley, 2003; McLoyd, 1998), and the hardships that might be a part of single parent homes (Teachman, Day, Paasch, Carver, & Call, 1998). These factors may also contribute to the ability of Black males, to receive an adequate education.

Researchers have long reported that Black students are failing in school (Deutsch, 1967; Ogbu, 1997; Sampson, 2002). As education is a spring board for future success, it is necessary for Black males to be academically successful. Unfortunately, there are many obstacles for Black males to overcome.

One concern for Black school aged males is their over representation in special education. Gardner and Miranda (2001) suggested that Black students, particularly males are more likely to be labeled as mentally retarded or learning disabled compared with their White counterparts. Besides being labeled retarded or learning disabled, Black males were also under-represented in advanced placement and honors courses (Harris et al., 2004; Ford, 1998).

Another discouraging trend facing school-aged Black males is the rate of school suspension. In a study conducted by Day-Vines and Day-Hairston (2005), Black males accounted for approximately 34% of the suspensions from high schools in a Chicago area. Additionally, not only are Black males more likely to be suspended, they are also more likely to be expelled as a disciplinary measure (Davis & Jordan, 1994).

Besides the administrative decision to expel Black males for disciplinary reasons, many school-aged Black males voluntarily leave school. It has been reported that in one particular year, almost half of the Black male population in the United States dropped out of school or was expelled (Schott Educational Index, 2006). Expulsion and drop-out rates have had grave impact on the status of Black males in education. The Schott Educational Index (2006) indicated that only 47% of Black males graduated high school as compared to 75% of White males. This alarming statistic is evidence that a significant number of Black males were not succeeding academically if one were to measure academic success by rate of graduation.

The high dropout rate mentioned above is saturated with implications that might have farther reaching social significance for more than just the individual Black male. Day-Vines and Day-Hairston (2005) discussed the findings of the Justice Policy Institute which indicated that 52% of Black males in America who did not graduate high school had prison records by the time they were 30. As a result, there are families left without fathers, husbands, sons, brothers, uncles, and grandfathers. According to the Education Information and Accountability Services Data Report (2009), the state of Florida reported a 65% Black graduation rate and an 83% White graduation rate in 2009. In comparison, the Florida Department of Corrections (2009) reported that 46.5% (19,088) of inmate

admissions were Black (male and female) as compared to the 49.9% (20, 479) White. This would not immediately send any alarms unless one was to compare this to the overall population statistics of the state of Florida. The U.S. Census Bureau (2008) reported that the Black population (males and females) in Florida was 2,914,206, which is 15.9% of the overall population of 18,328,340. This would mean 15.9 % of the population in Florida (Black persons) is the source of nearly half (46.5%) of inmate admission in 2008.

The underachievement and discouraging status of Black males is not unique to the United States. Though research is limited, predominantly Black Caribbean countries have reported that Black males are often less academically successful than Black females. According to Minnis, Plumridge and Ward (2002), the Bahamas Ministry of Education reported that Black males accounted for 35% of A, B, C, grades in the Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education, the country's national high school terminal examinations. Additionally, Black males in The Bahamas are underrepresented in higher education (Minnis, Plumridge & Ward, 2002). From a community perspective, Black males in the Bahamas also have a dismal status. According to statistics from Her Majesty's Prison, males account for more than 95% of inmates.

Statement of the Problem

There exists an achievement gap characterized by Black males attaining lower levels of academic success than their white counterparts and Black females. There has been decades of research that address this issue. The problem is that there is a lack of research about the factors promoting academic success in Black males from the perspective of the academically successful Black male. Research should also include

school personnel who play a direct role in educating them. Shifting the research from a deficit to strength based perspective, and targeting the role of key educational stakeholders such as school counselors can help to improve the educational outcome of Black male students.

There are commonly understood environmental and social factors that influence academic success. However, much of the data to support these findings have focused on factors that contribute to the failure and not success of Black males. Additionally, much of the previous research has failed to ask Black males themselves about the factors that contribute to their success. Instead, quantitative data such as standardized test scores, drop-out and graduation rates and incarceration statistics have been used to highlight the lack of academic success in Black males rather than exploring factors that can help them succeed. For Black males, identified factors include racial identity development (Prelow, Bowman & Weaver, 2007; Wong, Eccles, & Samaeroff, 2003), socioeconomic status (Bornstein & Bradley, 2003; Coleman, 1998, White, 1982), family functioning (McLoyd, 1998; Mandara & Murray, 2000; Teachman, Day, Paasch, Carver, & Call, 1998; Wilson & Williams, 2009), and school policies and practices (Burnette, 1998; CEP, 2006; Gardner & Mirander, 2001; Hillard, 1992; Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson & Bridgest, 2003; Oswald, Coutinho, Best & Singh, 1999).

Though the lack of academic success of Black males has been the focus of research for decades, Black males continue to perform at lower standards than other races and ethnicities and lower than Black females. There needs to be a shift in the focus of research. Focusing on the success and not the failure of Black males and including their

perspectives on finding solutions to the problem is fundamental to improving their success.

Purpose of the Study

Pedro Noguera (2008) indicated that it is necessary to include the voices of successful Black male students in conversations aimed at narrowing the school achievement gap. According to him, “understanding how students navigate this difficult terrain may be the key to figuring out how to support the achievement of larger numbers of Black students” (p.63). The purpose of this study was:

1. To identify and compare factors that facilitated Black male college students’ successful completion of high school
2. To explore resilience in successful Black males
3. To explore the role school counselors and school counseling programs play in the academic success of Black males
4. To explore the thoughts of Black males regarding initiatives that have the potential to improve existing school counseling programming or generate new programming ideas to bolster Black male success

Additionally, this study seeks to highlight the fact that there are Black males who successfully graduate high school, attend college, and are not involved in the criminal justice system. Therefore, this study will use a strength based perspective to add to the growing body of information that counters the plethora of research placing underachieving Black males at the center of inquiry, thus, diminishing the impact of high achieving Black males. According to Toldson (2008), all Black communities contain examples of young Black men who have been academically successful “regardless of

immeasurable social disadvantages. Exploring characteristics that vary on the spectrum of African American male achievement levels provide greater depth and insight to factors that are associated with high achievement among African Americans males” (p.8). The position of this study is that Toldson’s statement is true for Black males globally.

This study seeks to identify academically successful Black males, record their stories, and use their insight to provide school counselors with valuable information that has the potential to effectively address the academic needs of Black males. It will also explore the measure of resiliency needed to overcome the obstacles many Black males experience.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study include (1) What factors contribute to academic success in Black high school males? (2) How resilient are Black college males who recently graduated high school? (3) What role do school counselors and school counseling programs play in Black male achievement and resilience? and (4) What types of school counseling programs could be implemented to increase academic success and resilience in Black males?

Significance

Improving the academic success of Black males is pivotal in improving the social status of Black males. The state of Black males in education has impacted Black families and communities. Black males are being lost to many social ills including drugs, incarceration, and early death. Improving their academic outcome has the potential to increase the quality of life for all. Exploring the perspectives of successful Black males on factors that impact their success is crucial to affecting positive change. Additionally,

providing educational stakeholders with information on how well they are addressing the needs of Black males can serve to improve programming efforts.

In order to overcome many of the challenges Black males face, it is necessary for education stakeholders to continue to address school systems and program implementation to increase the retention and academic success of Black male high school students. One such stakeholder is the school counselor.

The American School Counselors Association (ASCA) (2003b) states that school counseling programs should be aimed at (1) eliminating barriers that impede student development, (2) creating opportunities for all students to learn, (3) ensuring access to high quality school counseling, (4) collaborating with others both within and outside school to help meet students' needs, and (5) promoting positive systematic change in schools. Accordingly, it is incumbent on school counselors to provide programs that will address the specific needs of Black male students.

This study will identify and compare factors that contribute to academic success in Black male high school students in the Bahamas and the United States and suggest a framework for effective school counseling programs that are responsive to their needs.

Conceptual Framework

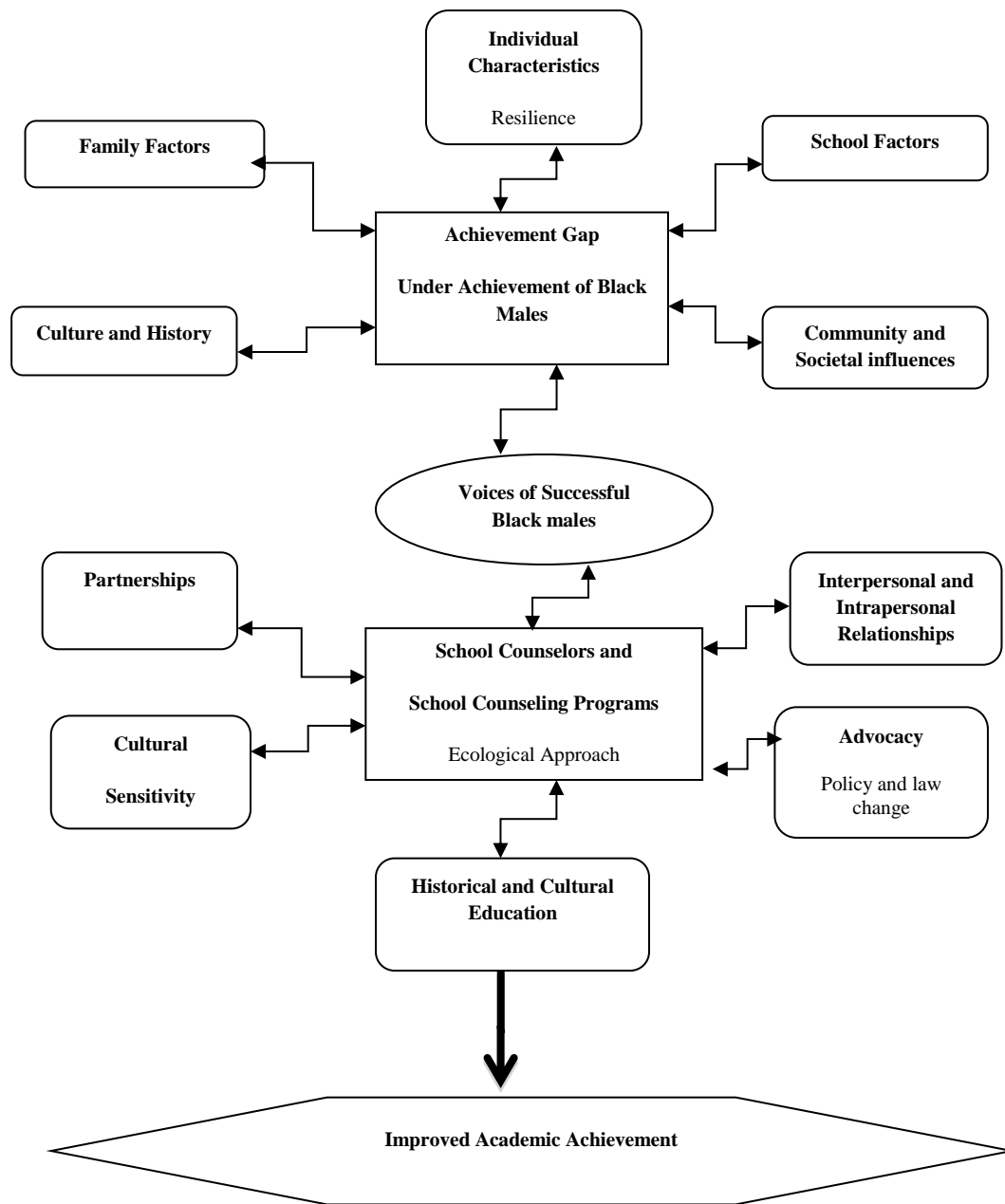


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

This study's conceptual framework is informed by Bronfenbrenners's Ecological Theory. This theory allow achievement gap research to be conducted from a strength based, holistic perspective.

According to existing research, there are number of factors contributing to the lack or underachievement of Black males. These factors include, but are not limited to, Black males' individual characteristics, family factors including socioeconomic status and parent involvement, school environment, culture, history, community and societal experiences, norms and values. There are conflicting schools of thought regarding the most effective method to improve Black male achievement. This is exemplified in the discourse regarding racial identity development and its impact on academic success in Black males. Ogbu (1997) and Willie (2003) recommend deemphasizing racial identity to increase Black male academic success, while Chavous et al. (2003) and Wilson (2009) suggest that a high racial identity is important for academic success. The strength of this body of research on racial identity development and Black male success is that recent studies have recognized the importance of hearing the individual voices of Black males who have achieved a measure of academic success.

This study suggests that the above mentioned factors are all major contributors to the underachievement or lack of academic achievement in Black males. The ecological model suggests that an individual's development is contingent on the interaction of all aspects of his or her environment. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes Black male achievement as contingent on the health of the Black male's environments.

An ecological framework is used to understand the achievement gap as a product of the Black male's inter and intrapersonal characteristics, family and school factors,

cultural, community and historical influences. It is also used as a framework to create school counseling programs aimed at improving the academic outcome of Black male students.

Data collected will be analyzed from an ecological perspective. Comments and suggestions from interview participants will be categorized on a microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem level. Study identified factors that influence academic success in Black males and suggested counseling programs will be categorized by the level of direct influence and participation the Black male himself has in the process.

Definitions of Terms

Achievement gap: The disparity in academic achievement between Black males and other school aged populations including Black females.

Black: African Americans and all other individuals classified as Black by race or ethnicity.

Successful: Black males who have successfully gained entrance into college or university, are actively enrolled in classes and have maintained a grade point average of at least 2.50.

Resilience: Refers to the ability of an individual to recover after encountering a stressful event.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory: A theoretical approach that holistically focuses on the context and quality of the individual's environments and asserts that the individual's environments can facilitate or retard his or her development. This theory is subdivided into a five systems depending on the level of direct involvement the individual has with the environment.

School counselors: Trained school professionals with the mission to prepare today's student to become tomorrow's adult. These professionals focus on the academic, career, personal and social development of their students through a number of efforts including individual and group counseling, classroom guidance and other programming initiatives.

Study Assumptions

This study was based on several fundamental assumptions. One major assumption was that participants willingly and honestly told their stories. This assumption was based on the knowledge that subjects participated on a voluntary bases in both the survey and the interview. Interview participants were also able to select the interview date, time, and place. This assumption is particularly relevant to the qualitative component of the study.

Another assumption on the part of the researcher was that the Black male participants faced a number of barriers to their academic success. The knowledge gleaned from their experiences can help other Black males succeed by informing school counseling personnel and programming.

A third assumption was that school counselors want to help their Black male students succeed. However, this desire is often mediated by a lack of knowledge of how to help and by policies and practices enforced by school administrators.

A final assumption was that the successful Black male who has been accepted into a college or university and is actively enrolled in classes has a level of resilience that is greater than the average level of resilience in the general population of adult males and females.

Study Delimitations

This study did not investigate Black achievement using Black women or any other sex, gender, or racial category as a comparison group. The only persons eligible for this study were individuals who self-identified as Black males currently enrolled as a freshman or sophomores in a College or University in The Bahamas and/or the Southern United States. The study was not open to Black male college students in Canada, Europe, or South America.

Study Limitations

This study had several limitations. Participants were recruited through contacts made in offices of Student Affairs, Academic Advisement, Student Involvement and Activities, and College Deans at universities in the Southern United States and the Bahamas. Participation was voluntary. Besides the resilience measure, there was a relatively small number of study participants when compared to college students in general. However, qualitative work is often characterized by a small number of participants. A small sample size limits this study's ability to generalize. However, the objective was to provide a vivid description of factors that impacted the success of the selected Black males in an attempt to help school counselors think through their school counseling programming.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to identify and compare factors that contributed to academic success in Black male high school students in the Bahamas and the United States and suggest a framework for effective school counseling programs that are responsive to their needs. This literature review will briefly address the academic success of Black males and its mediation by gender, race, socioeconomic status, family functioning, and school policies and practices. It will discuss a strength based perspective on researching Black male achievement and concludes with the role of the school counselor and school counseling programs.

The Achievement Gap and Black Males: An Overview

There is a disproportionate number of Black students failing academically. The Schott Education Inequity Index (2010) reported that 28% fewer Black males than White males graduated high school. This disparity has been coined the achievement gap. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2007), the achievement gap is the difference in academic performance between ethnic groups. While this definition of the achievement gap has been accepted for decades, Hilliard (2003) suggested that it is problematic because it compares the performance of African American students to normative European American standards. He asserts that the achievement gap should be viewed as differences in performance and levels of excellence. Based on this definition, the disparity in achievement outcomes between Black males and Black females can also be considered the achievement gap.

According to Chambers (2009), the achievement gap should actually be called the “receivment” gap. In an article titled the “Receivment Gap: School Tracking Policies and the Fallacy of the Achievement Gap’, Chambers suggests the term ‘receivment gap’ as an appropriate descriptor of the racial disparities in the outcome of American education. She postulated that school policies are not equitable. There is a disparity in the dispensation of school finances, quality teachers, access to technology, quality pre-school preparation, and home support. Using school tracking as her example, Chambers investigated differences in the quality of education received by seven African American students in a mid-sized metropolitan school. Two females and one male represented the high track students; one female and one male the regular track; and one male and one female student represented the bridge track, which was comprised of students who were placed in an alternative setting and labeled incapable of academically functioning in the mainstream setting. For three or four days a week over a period of one school year, the researcher conducted classroom observations, document analysis, and individual and focus group interviews. Chambers found significant differences in the quality of teachers, working environment, and classroom management styles between the bridge students and the high track students. In addition, the separation experienced by tracking from as early as elementary school served to further highlight the differences among students. These findings suggest that in order to limit the racial achievement gap, educational policies should be investigated from a systems perspective with the aim of an equitable revision.

Despite the definition of the achievement gap one adheres to, there is a disparity in the academic outcome of Black males and other populations. This phenomenon has concerned researchers for many years (Coleman et al., 1966; Deutsch, 1967; Ogbu, 1997;

Sampson, 2002). More specifically, the failure of the Black male has netted much research. Friend (2009) indicated that scientists began to develop theories to explain the mental inferiority of the Black student. However, subsequent research on cognitive ability and racial differences has concluded that the perceived mental incapacity of Black males is incorrect (Guthrie, 1976; Guthrie, 1991). As a result, researchers began to focus on alternate hypotheses including the role of the individual, family, and school environment to explain racial gaps in academic performance (Friend, 2009).

Black Male Identity

Black males often struggle to establish their identity. According to Corbin and Pruitt (1999), Black males often struggle between two value systems: African American and White. This struggle has been a part of the Black male's plight for decades. Dubois, in his 1903 book "The Soul of Black Folk", named this a "double consciousness". The conflict experienced between viewing oneself from the White dominant culture and from his Black heritage often creates a challenge for Black male. To further exacerbate the problem, as Black male students began to experience difficulties with academic marginalization and labeling, they often create their own coping strategies (Davis, 2009). Two common categories are verbal (joking; rappin') and social strategies (the cool pose) (Wright, 2009). According to Wright (2009), joking represents an exertion of social control, language socialization and verbal play. It also represents attitudes of strength, pride, independence and is a way of managing hurtful situations (Wright, 2009). By extension, rappin' is often an artistic form of a verbal coping strategy through which Black males often share their thoughts, emotions, and feelings. The "cool pose" is a social strategy used by Black males to connote leadership. It is often used to convey

racial and ethnic pride in their walk, and strength and confidence by their stance (Wright, 2009). Despite the positive messages these strategies intend, they often reinforce popular negative gender stereotypes of Black males and lead to lower academic performance and disciplinary consequences. Black males frequently jeopardize their social position and face being ridiculed and accused of acting White if they decide not to follow some of the Black coping strategies characterizing Black masculinity.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) found that Black high school students often associated achieving good grades, being intelligent, dressing in a particular manner, and using Standard English as a sign of acting White. In a qualitative study by Lewis and Gordon (2007) of 70 Black and White suburban high school students, Black students were more likely to perceive racial inequality and feel as if race would limit their chances of academic success. However, the high achieving Black participants reported receiving negative feedback from White peers and teachers in Academic Honors programs and from Black students outside the program.

In a similar study of high achieving Black students, Henfield, Moore, and Wood (2008) used questionnaires, individual interviews, and document collection to gather research data on the experiences of 12 African-American students in a gifted program. The purpose of this study was to provide teachers, school counselors, principals, and parents with valuable information that can be used to improve the recruitment and retention of gifted Black students. Using a Critical Race Theory framework, the authors suggested that if stakeholders in Black education have a better understanding of the experiences of Black students in gifted programs, the potential to develop more comprehensive initiatives is greater. According to the authors, gifted Black students have

garnered very little research attention. Their research served to provide Black students in gifted programs an avenue to express their thoughts and feelings related to their education. The driving question behind Henfield, Moore, and Wood's (2008) work was "What educational context, processes, interactions, and experiences shape African-American students' perceptions and attitudes towards gifted education programming?" (p. 435).

In Henfield, Moore, and Wood's (2008) review of literature, critical issues facing Black students were highlighted. These issues included peer influence, a deficit ideology, acting White and acting Black. Study participants identified strategies they used to cope with the difficulties they face in gifted education. These strategies included a healthy racial identity, academic disengagement (working independently), and gifted identity distancing (the denial or distancing themselves from gifted identities). Additionally, study participants identified five major benefits to gifted education. These included academic rigor, skilled teachers, equally skilled peers, increased options, and increased opportunities for the future. Based on these results, Henfield, Moore, and Wood (2008) were able to recommend specific actions to help teachers, school counselors, principals, and parents improve standard educational practices and policies. Some of their suggestions included collaborative working, professional development seminars, monitoring representation in gifted education programs, parent advocacy, and active recruitment.

Race and Ethnicity

In American society, many Black persons believe that racism is still at the heart of the American macro culture (Irving & Hudley, 2005). As a result, it might be difficult to

ignore the impact of race and the influence race has on societal and institutional obstacles Black males might encounter (Harrison, Harrison & Moore, 2002). Some of these obstacles include increased incarceration, elevated high school dropout rate, high military enrollment, a lack of familiarity with the college environment and the Black male's inferior perception of himself and his aspirations (Cuyjet, 1997).

It is important to conceptualize the process of racial identity development since race might play a role in academic success (Cokely & Williams, 2005). The first step is to understand that racial and ethnic identity is different. Racial identity, as a social construct, refers to the support and approval given to individuals of a group because of shared physical characteristics (Marks, Settles, Cooke, Morgan, & Sellers, 2004). Whereas ethnic identity indicates a commitment to a set of customs, practices, behaviors, or beliefs that define a group of people often with shared ancestry or location (Phinney, 1992).

Cross's (1971) Nigrescence Theory is considered one of the seminal Black racial identity theories. By name alone, this model suggests that there is a process of becoming Black. According to Helms (1990), Cross's theory, in total or in part, has been the primary means of investigating racial identity in counseling and psychotherapy. For decades, this theory has been used and cited empirically. It was developed on the premise that racial preference was believed to be a part of a person's personal identity and an influential factor in the individual's mental health functioning. This theory assumed that if Black people accepted the fact that they were Black, they would have a healthier psychological well-being and self-esteem. Conversely if Black persons accepted values of the dominant White society, they would dislike themselves and have a low self-

esteem. Cross's model is based on race salience, the extent to which a person's race is relevant.

Cross' Nigrescence (the process of becoming Black) Theory has five stages: (a) pre-encounter; (b) encounter; (c) immersion/emersion; (d) internalization; and (e) internalization – commitment. These stages are not discrete and a person can move through them at various rates and return to a previous stage several times throughout his or her lifetime.

During the *pre-encounter stage*, the Black person has adopted the values and beliefs of the dominant White culture. He or she believes that Black is wrong and White is right. The Black individual at the pre-encounter stage often seeks to assimilate him or herself with and be accepted by Whites. Conversely, he or she attempts to distance himself or herself from other Black people. This person internalizes negative Black stereotypes. These internalizations can be a part of the individual's conscious awareness or it can occur unconsciously. The individual at the pre-encounter stage typically moves to the *encounter stage* based on his or her experience with racism and an acknowledgment of the impact racism has on his or her life. This transformative experience can be a series of events or one single event. The individual at this stage might feel very angry towards the dominant group (out group anger).

Individuals in the *immersion/emersion stage* actively surround himself or herself with visible symbols of his or her racial group and actively avoid symbols of Whiteness. This individual makes a concerted effort to seek opportunities to explore his or her own history and culture and will actively seek occasions to support peers with shared backgrounds and experiences. According to Thomas Parham (1988), "at this stage,

everything of value in life must be Black or relevant to Blackness. This stage is characterized by a tendency to denigrate White people, simultaneously glorifying Black people” (p. 190). At this stage, anger the individual felt during the encounter stage dissipates because so much of his or her energy is expended on group and self-exploration. As a result of group and self-exploration, the individual begins to feel a sense of security in his or her own group identification and self.

During the *internalization stage*, the individual remains connected with Black peers. He or she is willing to establish relationships with White people who acknowledge his or her identification and is respectful of it. At this point, the individual is also ready to build alliances with other oppressed groups.

The *internalization commitment stage* is characterized by individuals who have a general sense of commitment to the concerns of Blacks as a group. According to Cross (1991), this commitment is sustained over time. During the fourth stage, internalization, or the fifth stage, internalization commitment, the individual has a positive sense of racial identity.

A healthy racial identity development can assist persons in comprehending experiences of racism. Black persons with a healthy racial identity may view the salience of race related events differently from a person who does not have a heightened racial identity. Further, this racial identity might help the individual find appropriate coping responses that can promote his or health and well-being (Quintana, 2007). A healthy racial identity can assist individuals in distinguishing between actions directed towards him or her as a person as opposed to his racial or ethnic group (Cross, 2005). It can be beneficial to the self-esteem of the individual if one was able to recognize that negative

events might be acts of the discrimination as opposed to direct personal attacks. With this new lens the individual with high racial identity can expeditiously implement coping strategies.

Empirical data linking racial identity and academic achievement has been somewhat inconsistent (Irving & Hudley, 2008). According to the conclusions drawn by Wright (2009) in his review of racial identity development literature, there is an ongoing debate regarding whether or not a strong or weak racial identification is beneficial in buffering the impact of racism. Researchers such as Fordham (1996), Ogbu (1997), and Willie (2003) suggest that deemphasizing race can enhance Black male academic success. Conversely, Chavous et al. (2003) and Wright (2009) suggest that a high racial identity can mitigate the effects of racism and improve the academic outcomes of Black males.

Wright (2011) used a mixed methods approach to explore racial ethnic identity and its impact on academic achievement on Black males. Wright proposed to shift the focus of research relating to Black male achievement from a negative discourse about "oppositional behavior" and low achievement to high achievement coupled with healthy racial ethnic identity. Wright (2011) briefly discussed the significance of the problem by addressing the inconsistencies among researchers regarding whether or not a healthy racial ethnic identity is beneficial to Black male academic success. Wright, a proponent in this argument, suggested that a healthy racial ethnic identity is beneficial to Black academic success.

In his literature review, Wright (2011) began by discussing the opposing view, which suggested that being *raceless* (low or no racial identity) is better for the Black

male. He then discussed the idea that a very healthy racial and ethnic identity is beneficial to their academic success. He proposed that it helps Black males cope with numerous challenges faced in education. Wright indicated that a healthy racial and ethnic identity promotes high self-esteem which helps Black males mitigate the impact of the dominant perception in schools that Black males are oppositional to the acquisition of education. In order to collect data, Wright selected five successful Black males from a pilot project he anecdotally named Success Academy (SA). SA served a predominantly African American and Latino population with 61% of the student body on free or reduced lunch. He used a six item criteria to identify what success means. These participants had to (a) be identified by school administration as successful; (b) have a GPA of 3.0 or higher; (c) have their guidance counselors confirm they have positive relationships with their teachers and peers; (d) have active participation in extracurricular activities; (e) have grandparents who were born in the United States; and (f) have the academic standing of either a junior or senior, at 17 or 18 years old. Wright (2011) used semi structured interviews, focus groups, and self-administered questionnaires. Each young man was interviewed four times individually and once as a group. The researcher used semi structured questions in both the interviews and focus groups to allow the young man to speak freely and openly. This method is effective and indicative of qualitative research. Wright used the Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure as his questionnaire. After conducting all of the interviews and focus group himself, Wright had follow-up conversations with the young men to clarify any problems he had incurred.

Wright (2011) found that Black males in his sample developed complex notions regarding the meaning of success. This complexity was evidenced by mixed results about

what it means to "act White" and be successful and "act Black" and not be academically successful. His results indicated that both were necessary for success. For example, the young men indicated that the use of standard American English was just as important as using African American English to their academic and social success. Additionally, Wright found that to be both *cool* and successful was important. Based on his research findings, Wright concluded that a healthy racial ethnic identity was important to the academic success of Black males.

Family Factors

Racial socialization. Racial socialization is the process by which Black families discuss issues related to culture and race so that their children are sensitized to the plight of the Black family (Murray & Mandara, 2003). Research suggested four prototypes of racial socialization messages used by Black parents. These messages are of cultural heritage and pride; preparation for future discrimination; promotion of out-group mistrust; or messages that emphasize "racelessness" or similarity among groups (Hughes & Chen, 1999).

Mandara and Murray (2003) described four prototypes of the Black racial socialization messages. Messages are *proactive* and emphasize cultural heritage and overcoming barriers through self-development; *active*, emphasizing cultural heritage and bias in American society; *reactive*, emphasizing a mistrust of both African and European Americans; and *passive*, which emphasizes "racelessness" and devalues the effects and persistence of racism and the need for cultural identity (Murray & Mandara, 2003). Further, Mandara (2003) suggested that these four styles can be distinguished in a two

dimensional framework. That is, Black family's racial socialization can focus on racial awareness and pride or personal power and locus of control.

The existing research is inconsistent in investigating the correlation between racial socialization and academic achievement of Black males (Mandara, 2002).

Randolph and Nickerson (2002) concluded that there is a positive relationship between racial socialization and cognitive development. Conversely, earlier research (Miller & McIntosh, 1999) indicated that racial socialization is actually associated with lower academic grades. These conflicting results indicate that there needs to be further analysis of the impact of racial socialization on Black male achievement.

Mandara (2006) noted that the problem with the inconsistent results of racial socialization may be related to the conceptualization and instruments employed to measure racial socialization. Therefore, for more consistent results need to be obtained, a standardized, reliable instrument needs to be utilized.

Parental support. Early research suggests that the level of social support parents receive plays a role in the childrearing practices of that parent. If a parent has strong social support, positive relationships will ensue and therefore the likelihood of a productive learning environment is increased (Watson, Brown, & Swick, 1983). Further, research suggests that adults—particularly those with low income—who receive positive social support are more effective parents (Simons, Lin, Gordon, Brody, Murray, & Conger, 1993). During hard times, a strong social support can be beneficial to parents. (Coleman, 1996). As a result of strong social support, children in the home might be more supported by the parents during their educational process.

Early literature suggests that parental involvement can increase the academic achievement of the Black student (Reynolds & Gill, 1994). Marcon (1999) also reported that parental involvement can lead to greater academic achievement in Black boys in particular. However, many of these studies have gathered their information through the lens of the teacher. So, if the teacher thought parental involvement was necessary to the Black male child's achievement, their results would reflect that. Another consideration is that if a child does well, the teacher might attribute their success to parental involvement when other contributing factors such as teacher effectiveness and the individual child's ability can be plausible explanations (Mandara, 2006). Similarly, Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, and Liddle (2006) indicated that perceived parental expectations, support, and positive messages regarding the importance of education is important future academic success. Similarly, in a study of 374 Black students, Kerpelman, Eryigit, and Stephens (2007) found that maternal support was an important indicator of future academic success.

Parenting style. Research regarding parenting style as a family function has been consistent in suggesting that a child's development is contingent on the warmth, support, love, firm guidance, and the discipline he or she might receive from parents. Macoby and Martin (1993) identified four qualitative parenting styles: (a) authoritative, (b) authoritarian, (c) permissive, and (d) neglectful. The *authoritative* style is represented by a high level of warmth and control, whereas the *authoritarian* parenting style is described as being firm disciplinarians but lacking warmth. *Permissive* or indulgent parents are described as very warm but lacking discipline, while the *neglectful* parent shows little of no signs of warmth or discipline.

Early research assumptions regarding parenting styles suggested that parents of Black males were probably not using the authoritative parenting styles because Black boys had the lowest level of achievement of all major American groups (Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1992). This assumption was based on the premise that White kids were doing well and the basic parenting style for this population was authoritative (Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1992). Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, and Dornbusch, (1992) found a correlation between authoritative parenting styles and increasing high school grade point average for Black males across socioeconomic and family structure. Additionally, their 1994 follow up study found that authoritative parenting style was a major indicator of academic achievement for Black males.

There have been conflicting views on whether or not authoritative parenting style has an impact on the achievement of Black males. Mandara (2006) suggested that much of the confusion is due to the fact that many studies did not measure Black parenting styles separately from other racial groups. Consequently, the Black population in many samples was very small. Mandara and Murray (2002) have reported that later research have used samples that were predominantly Black (Mandara & Murray, 2002). These studies reported that in the Black population, boys raised in an authoritative household had higher grades than those Black males who were in an authoritarian or permissive household. Consequently, it may be said that parenting styles do play a role in the achievement of Black males.

Parental monitoring. Research suggests that a major responsibility of parents is to monitor and supervise their child's community and school as parental monitoring is

strongly related to academic achievement (Spencer, Dupree, Swanson, & Cunningham, 1998; Linver & Silverberg, 1997). In Wilson's (2009) study of 60 Black students, parental monitoring was positively related to academic achievement ($r = .28, p < .05$). That is, the more monitoring Black students felt they received, the better they did in school. There should be a delicate balance in parental monitoring during the vulnerable adolescent developmental stage. It is at this stage that many decisions such as career choice and college attendance are made. This is pivotal because these decisions could impact the adolescent's future. From the lens of the adolescent, though, the idea of parental monitoring may be perceived negatively. In fact, Spencer and Cunningham (2000) suggested that adolescents, despite race, may view parental monitoring as harassment. Parents should monitor their adolescent enough to know what is going on with him/her, but not so much that it impedes individuality.

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status (SES) has been linked with low academic achievement in Black males. Researchers have suggested that SES is one of the more important factors when assessing the academic achievement of Black males (Berliner, 2006; Coleman et al., 1966; Entwisle & Alexander, 1992; Entwisle & Hayduk, 1982; McLoyd, 1998; Reynolds, 1984). Lower SES has reportedly related to the Black male's lower academic success (McLoyd, 1998; Walsh, 1986).

Measuring the relationship between SES and academic achievement has been researched for many years with varying conclusions (Bornstein & Bradley, 2003; Coleman, 1998). For example, Sutton and Saderstrom (1999) found a strong negative relationship between academic achievement and SES in third and tenth graders.

Conversely, Ripple and Luthar (2002) reported no significant relationship. It has been suggested that these varying conclusions are related to the conceptualization of SES as well as the particular measure of achievement used by the researcher (Siren, 2005).

In early research on SES, Featherman and Duncan (1972) developed a conceptual framework for researching the relationship between SES and academic achievement. They indicated that SES has three related dimensions: (a) parental income, (b) education, and (c) occupation. It was further suggested that though these measures of SES are linked, they should be considered separately (Bollen, Glanville, & Stecklov, 2001; Hauser & Haung, 1997). Parental income as a measure of SES addresses the ability of the family to provide the necessary resources for the child (student). Parental education refers to the level of academic attainment of parents. Parental education is included in SES research because academic attainment is highly correlated with income levels. Similarly, the parental occupation component is considered on the basis of the parent's ability to obtain a specific occupational status and financial rewards.

It is with this conceptualization of SES that additional researchers have assessed the relationship between academic achievement and SES. A meta-analysis conducted by Lipsey and Wilson (1993) of over 300 studies revealed a strong relationship between SES and student academic achievement. Additionally, this result correlated with a more recent meta-analysis conducted by Siren (2005) of 58 journal articles which also reported that academic achievement is related to SES (Cohen's $d = .56$).

School Characteristics, Policies, and Practices

Many African American students attend school in low income, urban communities (Center for Educational Statistics, 2006). These schools often face a myriad

of challenges, including lack of materials (Xu, 2006), large class sizes (Kiger, 2000), poor teacher quality (Hill, 2005), and inequitable and culturally incompetent school policies (Chambers, 2009). These challenges often hinder the success of African American male students.

Urban Schools educating Black males are often economically challenged and burdened by the lack of educational material (Archibald, 2006; Condrón & Roscigno, 2003). Research involving 29 urban schools reported that adding necessary materials such as books, instructional material, computers, and afterschool programs greatly improved teaching and learning in an educational environment (Xu, 2006).

Urban schools are often characterized by high student enrollment and large class sizes. According to the research, larger class sizes have its disadvantages. Robinson (2000) discussed the benefits of smaller class sizes in elementary schools. He reported that reading and math scores are improved with smaller classes in elementary aged students. Kiger (2000) also provides additional support for smaller class sizes. His research suggests that student success is improved when classes are smaller. He also asserts that students can be more successful if small class sizes are coupled with other reform initiatives in urban schools. For example, small class sizes in schools with excellent financial resources are a recipe success. If a school has the financial resources to provide the necessary educational equipment to students in a small classroom setting, the prognosis for success is improved.

According to Hill (2005), urban schools with licensed or certified teachers have higher rates of academic success. For African American males to succeed, schools must employ competent teachers who understand the need to “break down” instructions into

simple, culturally relevant parts (McDougal, 2009). In his study, McDougal sought to find the social, cognitive, and cultural learning preferences of African American males. He interviewed 29 African American males in a single sex, single race high school. In the interview, the young men discussed the importance of teachers ensuring that academic information is broken into small parts and punctuated with real life examples. One interviewee related an example of his science teacher's discussion of how the brain works. He indicated that she talked about a real life experience of being programmed to be afraid of spiders because her mom was afraid of them.

The impact of poor teacher quality is also evidenced in teacher expectations of the African American male students' ability to succeed. In many urban schools, teacher expectation of success for African Americans is low (Bacon, Yotten, & Bridges, 2010). Bacon, Yotten, and Bridges (2010) examined teacher beliefs of African American male students in low performing schools. They sought to answer the following questions: 1) How does a low performing high school in a low performing district cope with the consistent problem of African American male underachievement? 2) How do teachers and administrators understand the problem? and 3) How might this impact their ability to work with African American male students? Over a period of 18 months, the African American male researchers conducted a series of observations, focus groups, and formal and informal interviews with teachers, counselors, and administrators. They found what they termed a "crisis of faith". Their results indicated that school personnel had little faith in the ability of African American males to academically achieve. Results further indicated that administrators, teachers, and counselors overwhelmingly blamed African American students, their environment, and their communities for the achievement gap.

The patterns of communication within the African American culture are often not familiar to school officials. Consequently, they misinterpret the culture related verbiage and movement styles of the Black males as aggressive and often consider them as low achievers (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003). This misinterpretation of Black students as low achievers frequently results in elevated placement of Black males in special programs. This serves to further widen the achievement gap and deepen the level of mistrust the Black male student feels (Irvin & Hudley, 2005).

Irvin and Hudley (2005) underscore the importance of cultural awareness in closing the achievement gap. They suggest that the academic outcomes for Black males who do not trust their school system and school personnel to understand their unique cultural characteristics will achieve a level of success that is not commensurate with their ability level. In their research, the 48 item Cultural Mistrust Inventory and the 20 item American Career Outcome Inventory were administered to 75 Black male high school students in grades nine through 12 in a lower middle class, urban high school. Their research results indicated that students with higher levels of cultural mistrust also had lower expectations of academic success.

Lack of cultural competence in school officials is another factor that has the potential to adversely impact that academic outcome of Black male students.

Exclusionary discipline practices such as suspensions and expulsions are often heightened in culturally inept school environments. Fenning and Rose (2007) suggested that Black students, particularly males, are overrepresented in exclusionary discipline practices in many American schools. According to these researchers, teacher's perceptions of losing classroom control often leads to suspensions and expulsions as

punishment. Additionally, Fenning and Rose (2007) assert that teachers often over identify students of color as threats to classroom control and refer them for disciplinary action. According to the authors, school discipline policies are often too punitive and allow little room for alternate forms of interventions to address the perceived threat culturally deficient teachers might perceive in their classroom environment. Moreover, they suggest that policies that are aimed at standardizing discipline practices in schools have only exacerbated the problem. *No Student Left Behind* is an example of a well-intended attempt to standardize discipline policies that only served to subject Black males to exclusionary discipline practices. Fenning and Rose (2007) suggested a revision of discipline policies that include the collection and analysis of discipline data for efficacy, the formation of a diverse discipline team, development of cultural competence in school administrators and teachers, and the development of proactive written discipline policies. The results of these strategies can yield more equitable discipline strategies in American schools.

There is also a need to provide culturally sensitive curricula and programming in addition to culturally competent school personnel in order to improve the academic outcome for Black males. Day-Vines and Day-Hairston (2005) suggest that culturally congruent strategies for addressing the behavioral concerns of Black, school aged students can have a positive impact on their educational outcomes. They specifically address the role of the school counselors and school counseling programs can play in bolstering academic success in Black males. According to Day-Vines and Day Hairston, school counselors can increase the effectiveness of their programs if they understood the Black male student's complex subculture, communication styles, and conflicts between

their collectivist Black culture and the individualistic mainstream American culture. Equipped with this knowledge, school counselors can develop culturally congruent programs that specifically address the needs of their Black male students. Culturally specific individual and group counseling, mentoring programs that include the development of social skills, code switching skills, and democratic values can have the benefit of improving Black male adolescents, discipline outcome. Wyatt (2009) used a mixed methods approach to assess the effectiveness of her 30-week, voluntary, after school mentoring program, the “Brotherhood”. Wyatt (2009) posits mentoring as an effective method to increase academic and social outcomes of Black males. Wyatt’s mentoring program was open to Black male students in the eighth through twelfth grades. It was grounded on the Empowerment Theory and the Nguzo Saba’s principles of unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. She compared the individual grade point averages of 307 fifth year participants at the beginning and end of the “Brotherhood” program. At the end of their experience in the “Brotherhood”, Black male participants improved their grade point averages more than Black and Hispanic males and females who did not participate in the program. Wyatt also reported the quality of the “Brotherhood” program through the voices of 36 graduates. One graduate said;

I think I speak for all the Brotherhood members when saying that the organization, as a whole, has brought us to see the importance of taking the initiative, assuming the responsibility- being a man about things that require strength, physically, mentally, emotionally. (Wyatt, 2009, p. 465)

It is important to note that not all suspensions and expulsions that Black males receive are due to cultural misunderstanding. There are legitimate discipline problems in the Black male student population that need to be addressed as they often lead to lower graduation rates. Black students are recorded as having higher rates of suspensions and expulsions than their White counterparts (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Schott Educational Index, 2006). Florida schools can provide evidence of this. According to the Pinellas County Out of School Suspension reports, Black males accounted for approximately two thirds of the single occurrence and multiple offences suspension in the 2008 – 2009 and 2009 – 2010 school years.

Martin, Martin, Gibson, and Wilkins (2007) address strategies to contest Black male's behavioral issues. These authors suggest that comprehensive programs focusing on the pro-social development of this population will help to improve their behavioral and academic achievement. Martin, Martin, Gibson, and Wilkins (2007) used the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test and the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement to assess the academic improvement of the 33 Black male participants who were new entrants in an alternative institution. They found that after two years of comprehensive after school programming, participants' academic outcome improved. Participants also improved their behavioral outcomes by increasing school attendance, decreasing discipline referrals, and acquiring no suspensions or expulsions.

A Strength Based Approach to Assessing Black Male Achievement

Research often attempts to explain the achievement gap from a deficit perspective. This perspective often places sole responsibility on the Black male. Noguera (2008) faults this position and suggests that it fails to recognize the dynamics that occur

between Black students and the culture of schools. He suggests that, while Black males might exhibit behaviors that contribute to their underachievement, they are more likely to be channeled into marginal roles and are not expected to perform well academically.

Bacon, Yotten, and Bridges's (2010) article "Examining Teacher's Beliefs about African American Male students in Low Performing High Schools in an African American School District" assessed the impact of teachers' beliefs about low performing Black males. As a framework, the authors used the Critical Race Theory to answer their research questions: (1) How does a low performing high school in a low performing district cope with the consistent problem of African American male underachievement? (2) In particular, how do teachers and administrators understand the problem? and (3) How might this impact their ability to work with African American male students? The African American male researchers conducted a series of observations, focus groups, and formal and informal interviews with teachers, counselors, and administrators over an 18 month period. The researchers called the attitude they found in school personnel as a "crisis of faith". They indicated that school administrators and teachers had very little faith in the African American male student's ability to be academically successful. Bacon, Yotten, and Bridges's (2010) likened some of the school personnel's comments to racist hate speech. According to the researchers, school personnel overwhelmingly blamed the African American student, his environment and community for the achievement gap.

Many Black males successfully overcome the educational barriers they faced. Noguera (2005) asserts that a critical key to understanding how to provide sustained support for Black males lies in understanding how successful Black males have been able

to traverse the educational system. Berry (2005) used a strength-based approach that focused on the experiences of successful, middle school math students. By using this approach, Berry intended to uncover the limitations these Black male students faced and identify strategies these they used to overcome their challenges. Berry successfully achieved his purpose and was able to identify two broad categories that addressed the barriers these young men faced. The categorical barriers identified were the aggregated impact of individual discrimination experienced by the Black males and the negative influence of their early childhood education. Berry found that in order to mitigate the impact of these experiences, the successful Black male students drew on strong support of many of their social systems including parents, teachers, and persons in the community. He was also able to identify self-improvement as another strategy employed by these young men to succeed.

Berry's work is significant to the study of Black male achievement. As indicated earlier, there is a plethora of research that suggests that Black males are not achieving academic success, or at least not at the rate of their White counterparts. Berry's approach to this is to highlight successful Black males. Therefore, he provides evidence that challenges the dominant discourse regarding Black male underachievement in the United States.

Resilience. A focus on resilience in Black children and adolescents has become a focus of many researchers. Conner and Davidson (2003) suggest that resilience embodies personality qualities that help an individual to flourish in the face of adversity. According to the American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black children and adolescents (2008), models of resilience have begun to have an

ecological focus that reflects an understanding that youth development is based on a complex interaction of the individual with his or her context. While these models consider individual, socio-historical, and environmental influences, the APA task force suggests that they do not explicitly incorporate racial, cultural, and ethnic experiences Black children face. The task force suggested a resilience model that considers four themes to guide the discourse on resilience and suggest further direction for research.

Table 1 provides a description of themes.

Table 1
Portrait of Resilience: APA task force on resilience and strength in Black adolescents and children (APA, 2008).

Theme	Description
Critical mindedness	Helps to protect against experiences of discrimination and facilitates a critique of existing social conditions.
Active engagement	Includes agentic behavior in school, at home and with peers, such that children and adolescents proactively and positively impact their environment. Impact on setting, however, must be executed effectively, and flexibility becomes essential.
Flexibility	Promotes adaptation to cognitive, emotional, social, and physical situational demands and can include bio-cultural competence or fluency across multiple cultural connects that youth traverse.
Communalism	Includes the importance of social bonds and social duties, reflects a fundamental sense of interdependence and primacy of collective well-being for connection and promotion within and across diverse groups.

According to this task force, resilient Black youth will have a healthy identity, will be emotionally stable and able to cope with destructive emotions due to marginalization, will no longer be looked at as ‘at risk’ but as “at promise”, will have developed academic self-efficacy, and will be physically healthy. In order to nurture

resilient Black males, protective factors in Black males who are resilient need to be identified and developed through school counseling programs.

Berry (2005) uses a Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a phenomenological framework in his research to tell the stories of two successful African American, middle school mathematics students. He asserts that CRT allows the researcher to hear the individual voices and tell the experiences of study participants. In this case, the researcher used the individual voices of two successful math students, their parents, and teachers. Data were collected through mathematical autobiographies authored by the two participants; interviews with the Black male subjects, their parents and teachers; questionnaires; and analysis of academic records.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory focuses on the context and quality of the individual's environment. It suggests that as an individual develops physically and cognitively, the interactions within his or her environment become more complex. Considering this complexity, this theory is concerned with the extent to which the individual's surroundings might help or hinder continuous development.

Bronfenbrenner was also concerned with the deficit model that is often used to determine the level of support that struggling families receive. Parents and guardians must declare themselves deficient in some way in order to receive help in solving family problem. The more deficient parents are, the more help they receive. As a result, there is a presumed helplessness.

According to this theory, there are five layers of external environments that affect an individual's development. Presumably, the individual's biology is also a primary

environment for development. In essence, this theory suggests that there are interacting systems of relationships that include the individual's biology, immediate family, community, and society that impact his or her development. The five environmental systems range from intimate, direct interaction to a broader cultural impact. They include the (a) microsystem, (b) mesosystem, (c) exosystem, (d) macrosystem, and (e) chronosystem. Figure 2, a google image, provides a pictorial representation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model.

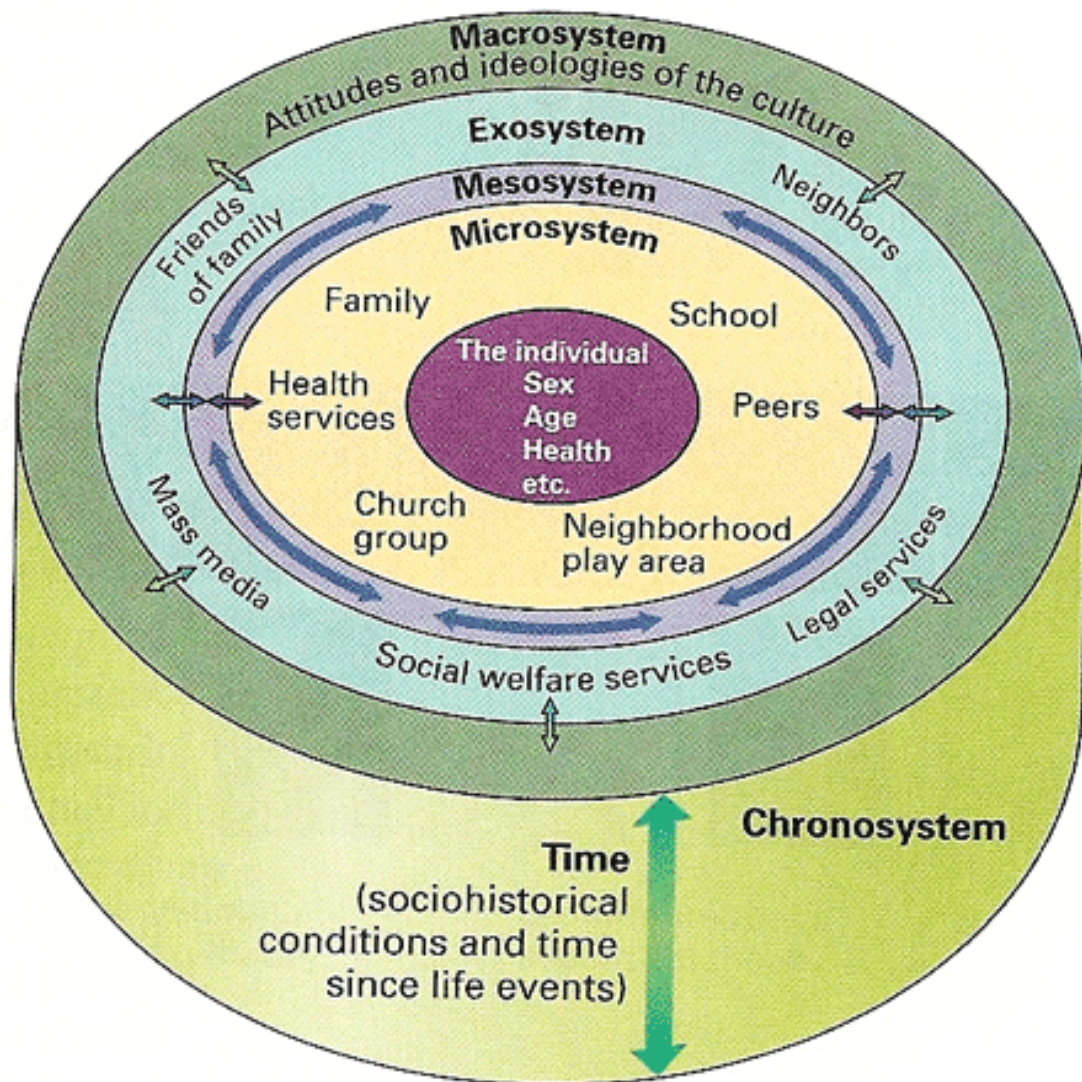


Figure 2. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model

Microsystem. This layer of the Ecological Systems Theory contains the child's most intimate relationships. The individual has the most direct contact in this layer. The microsystem environments include family, peers, school, and the neighborhood. Within the microsystem, the individual is not a passive player, but helps to construct the setting. According to Bronfenbrenner, they are bidirectional influences within the microsystem. Systems are impacted by the individual and the individual also impacts the system. For example, a Black male in the school setting is consistently suspended because of his "acting out behavior" due to his frustration with being misunderstood by school personnel. As a result of the high number of suspensions the Black male has amassed, the school system develops a no tolerance rule. Notably, it is within this layer that most research is focused. However, the Ecological Systems Theory suggests interactions within and between layers.

Mesosystem. This second layer of the Ecological Systems Theory speaks to the connection between the relationships in an individual's microsystem. Research completed on mesosystemic level addresses relationships such as family and school experiences or the connection between an individual's church and neighborhood. For example, a Black male who experiences rejection and isolation at home might have a difficult time connecting in school. Similarly, a Black male student might be academically successful because of the support provided by successful Black males in his neighborhood through a church mentoring program.

Exosystem. This layer encompasses the social systems in which the individual does not directly play an active role. Despite the fact that the individual does not play an active role, he or she is still impacted by its influences. A young Black male might not be

directly involved in the demands of his single mother's job, but experiences the impact of his single mother not being present in the home to assist him because she has to work long hours.

Macrosystem. This is the outermost layer of the Ecological Systems Theory. This layer does not have a specific framework, but involves cultural values, customs, attitudes, ideologies, and laws (Beck, 2000). The effects of the systems within this layer can be experienced throughout all layers. For example, if parents are believed to bear the sole responsibility of providing healthcare for a child, the general society might be less inclined to assist with the child's healthcare needs. This will impact many of the individual's systems. It can impact the parent's functioning at home and at work. Similarly, it can impact a child's functioning within the home and his or her level of success at school.

Chronosystem. The chronosystem consists of patterns of environmental events, changes, and transitions over an individual's lifetime. The elements of this system could be both internal and external. External events such as the parent's death can significantly impact the development and well-being of a child. Internal events such as psychological changes within an individual as he or she matures can also impact one's development. For example, as an African American male age, responses to acts of racism might be different as he is better able to process and understand the implications of racist acts.

Use of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Andre Grogan-Kaylor and Michael Woolley (2010) used an Ecological Systems approach to examine the impact of economic, school, and family factors on avoidance of problem behavior, sense of school coherence, and academic achievement in a national

sample of middle and high school students. They presented a thorough literature review on the importance of successful school achievement for African American and Latino youth. The researchers provided a historical picture of the education of minorities in America. They discussed the 1954 desegregation of American schools and its suggested re-segregation by assigning students to neighborhood schools. According to the authors, these neighborhood schools are often riddled with challenges that include poorly paid staff, high student-teacher ratios, old books, fewer extracurricular activities, poorly maintained infrastructural facilities and grounds, and less access to critical services such as nurses and social workers.

Grogan-Kaylor and Michael (2010) used Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory of development and Fraser, Kirby and Smokowski's (2004) Resilience Perspective to frame their research. Micro- and mesosystem-level influences such as the integrated relationship of economic, neighborhood, social, school, and family factors were investigated. The results indicated that family and neighborhood social factors contribute to school outcomes. However, family and neighborhood economic factors had the largest potential to explain academic outcomes and the impact of race and ethnicity on the achievement gap.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is strong in the depth of integration it provides. Because of this multi-systemic approach, it has the potential to integrate knowledge on a variety of levels. For example, Black male achievement can be studied as a microsystem that investigates intrapersonal characteristics impacting academic outcomes, or from a macrosystem investigation of the role systemic racism plays in achievement outcomes. These two perspectives can be integrated to discuss how a Black

male's intra- and interpersonal characteristics impacts his understanding of systemic racism in education and the role it plays in his academic outcome. Additionally, this theory allows for the identification of multiple stakeholders in the education of Black males.

The final and most influential strength of an Ecological Systems approach is that it can provide a holistic view of the Black male experience in education. This holistic view allows for more detailed research to glean a deeper understanding of factors that contribute to Black male academic success. This global perspective can inspire expansive thinking. As a result, it allows one to view Black male achievement from many points rather than an agitation of one point. As a result, school counselors can use innovative ideas to address the Black male achievement on a number of levels ranging from intrapersonal characteristics to cultural, community, and societal influences.

Role of School Counseling

The United States. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has the mission to prepare today's student to become tomorrow's adult (ASCA, 2004). The ASCA national standards were formulated to identify and prioritize attitudes, knowledge, and skills students should be able to model as a result of participating in school counseling programs. The following is a brief description the ASCA academic, career, and personal social development standards.

Academic development:

Standard A: Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the lifespan.

Standard B: Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial post-secondary options, including college.

Standard C: Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home and in the community.

Career development:

Standard A: Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.

Standard B: Students will employ strategies to achieve future career goals with success and satisfaction.

Standard C: Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training, and the world of work.

Personal/Social development:

Standard A: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

Standard B: Students will make decisions, set goals and take necessary action to achieve goals.

Standard C: Students will understand safety and survival skills.

The Bahamas. In the Bahamas, the draft Guidance and Counseling curriculum (2007) mission is to provide academic, personal, social, emotional, and behavioral support to the students within the Ministry of Education public schools to empower them to realize and attain their full potential as they prepare for the future. Their national standards are described below.

Pre-school and primary national standard:

Social Development: Students will develop interpersonal skills which will assist them to understand and respect self, others' safety, and survival skills.

Academic Development: Students will acquire valuable skills, knowledge, and attitudes that contribute to lifelong learning.

Career Development: Students will be exposed to the world of work.

Junior high school national standard:

Social Development: Students will develop interpersonal skills which will assist them to understand and respect self, others' safety, and survival skills.

Academic Development: Students will acquire valuable skills, knowledge, and attitudes that contribute to lifelong learning.

Career Development: Students will explore the world of work and the inter-relatedness of course selection in making wise choices.

Senior high school national standard:

Social Development: Students will gain the knowledge, interpersonal skills, attitudes, and safety and survival skills that will assist them in respecting self and others.

Academic Development: Students will be completely prepared with the knowledge and skills to matriculate to post-secondary options.

Career Development: Students will identify the relationship/correlation between personal qualities, education, and training and employ strategies to achieve future career goals.

In an analysis of the standards described above, school counselors in the Bahamas and the United States are dedicated to the total development of the student. In order to achieve their standards, it is important for counselors to be aware of their students' needs. According to Young and Kaffenberger (2011), school counseling strategies that are developed as a result of collecting and analyzing data can contribute to effective programming and can assist in closing the achievement gap. Young and Kaffenberger also indicated that the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) (2008) and the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (2009) both acknowledge the power of data to inform school counseling programs. According to their study of 180 school counselors, school counselors from award winning school counseling programs understood the importance of using data to inform school counseling services and programming.

The proposed study will address the perspectives of Black college males who are presently enrolled in a college or university. In an attempt to address the under achievement of Black males, it will address the questions:

1. What factors contribute to academic success in Black high school males?
2. How resilient are Black college males who recently graduated high school?
3. What role do school counselors and school counseling programs play in Black male achievement and resilience?
4. What types of school counseling programs could be implemented to increase academic success and resilience in Black males?

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify and compare factors that contributed to academic success in Black male high school students in the Bahamas and the United States and suggest a framework for effective school counseling programs that are responsive to their needs. A mixed method, exploratory analysis utilizing a grounded approach as the research design was conducted. Qualitative data was collected to explore factors that helped Black college males successfully navigate high school and the role their school counselor played in the process. This study assumes that in order to be successful, Black males must have an elevated level of resilience. To account for this, the Conner Davidson Resilience Scale, a quantitative assessment, was administered to Black male college students. This chapter will discuss the research design, setting, selection of participants, procedures, data collection, and methods of establishing validity and trustworthiness.

Research Design

This mixed methods approach was used to identify and compare factors contributing to academic success in Black male high school students in the Bahamas and the United States. A quantitative resilience survey was used to compare the level of resilience in Black college males in the Bahamas, the United States and a general population of adults in America. Qualitative data were used to uncover factors contributing to academic success in Black college males presently enrolled in a college or University in the Bahamas and the United States.

Qualitative Research. Qualitative research guides the researcher in an inquiry process of understanding based on methodological traditions of inquiry that explores a social or human problem (Creswell, 1998). According to Creswell (2007) phenomenology “describes the meaning for several individuals of their learned experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 57). It allows for the creation of a description of multiple individual’s experiences. The researcher accomplishes this by developing an understanding of the meanings people construct in order to make sense of their world. A qualitative design also allows the researcher the ability to explore a phenomenon with a flexibility to modify the study protocol in order to explore topics that were not initially anticipated.

The phenomenological approach of this study was based on the unique perceptions of Black males. The phenomenology in this study was aimed at highlighting the distinct, individual, personal experiences that illuminates the experiential understanding of study participants. Qualitative interviews allowed the researcher to delve for deeper meaning by following up on the interviewee’s responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Eaton, (2006), explains phenomenology as the meaning individuals give to their experiences based on their beliefs; what they decide; how they evaluate; what they feel; how they judge; what they perceive; and what they remember. As the researcher, it was my intention to describe rather than explain factors that lead to academic success in Black male college students. It is acknowledged that these descriptions might challenge normative assumptions and theories about the Black male high school experience.

Study Instruments

The researcher. In qualitative work, the researcher/interviewer serves as a research instrument. In this study, the researcher is a doctoral candidate in a Counselor Education program. I am a Black female who has been a school counselor since 1995. I have worked as a community counselor in the Bahamas and during my master's degree internship in the United States.

As a counselor for over 15 years, I have developed a passion for working with Black males. This passion has burned within me for my entire professional life. During my career as a community and school counselor, I have worked with underachieving Black males in the Bahamas and the United States. After years of counseling, this passion has not diminished, but, has been fueled by low levels of achievement Black males in the Bahamas and the United States seem to be attaining. As I look into the eyes of the young men I work with, I am often moved by the fact that many of them seem to harbor feelings of hopelessness. Others are apathetic and have seemingly resigned themselves to a disputable fact that their lot in life is to be a failure. I am of the opinion that there is hope for Black males. They have the potential to do as well as any other population. In fact, there are many untold stories of successful Black males. Unfortunately, they are not often heard. I was recently inspired by a thank you letter I received from a Black Bahamian male college student. The letter states:

Ms. Bethell

I see you are making another journey in your life, which is awesome and you feel it's a move you need to make. One special attribute about you that I so love is your motivational drive towards anything whether it be taming a troublesome child or creating a new scrumptious dish. I don't think I need to say in words that I really appreciate you for the person you are (said that so many times, even when you weren't physically here), but my actions and decisions show a greater appreciation, because if it wasn't for you, I would not have been sitting at my very own desk at Micronet, writing to you. You, as a person, have made the BIGGEST impact on my life, because if it weren't for you, I probably would've been wasting precious talent. I owe you my life right now for giving me another chance, when I was spiraling out of control. One time I remember so much was when Mr. R was publically punishing me and T during assembly. I refused the punishment and it resulted in a suspension. I walked away from him to get my bag to walk out of the school gate. You tried to stop me and I rudely brushed you off and left. You could've have easily given up on me, but you didn't. From that lesson there I've learnt to give second chances and allow people to redeem themselves. You were the only person who truly understood what I was going through, from my father throwing my graduation invitation back into your face to me feeling your presence and my family's presence at my graduation. Honestly, we have had a lot of humorous and precious events. We have laughed until our chests started to ache. You are a very strong person and you definitely hands down earned your way to where you are right now. I am grateful I met a person of your caliber as my guidance counselor because you definitely released me from my weighted chains and trust me, until I take my last breath, I will

appreciate you and continue to make you proud because I am shaping to become one of your greatest accomplishments from Harbour Island. I am no longer a regular man.

From your loving student, Lambier R. Young.

While I do not feel responsible for this young man's accomplishments, as his high school counselor, I know I played a role. I am of the firm conviction that school counselors can and have played an integral role in the success of their students; particularly Black males. The question now becomes, how do we do this with consistency? In my opinion, it is time to find out from the experts, the Black males themselves.

As a Black female, I am aware of the biases I might possess. As a result, I heeded Milner (2007) recommendations for research. He suggested a lens of inquiry that included researching the self, researching the self in relation to others, engaged self-reflection and representation, and shifting from self to others. In researching the self, I continuously reflected on factors that contributed to my racial, cultural and professional development. As Milner (2007) intimated, this reflection made me aware of issues, perspectives, epistemologies, and positions that are consciously known (seen). Further, it helped me to assess and comprehend the unknown (unseen), and unanticipated (unforeseen) in my data. In researching the self in relation to others, Milner (2007) suggested that the researcher reflect on him or herself in relation to the participants and the multiple roles and identities he or she might possess. In doing this, I was able to acknowledge some of the realities of my truths which serve to shape and guide my systems of knowing. During my data collection, I acknowledged participants' truths and used them as a backdrop to hear their stories. I then reflected on those truths as I shifted

my thinking from my personal inflections to consider policy, institutional and systemic issues.

Establishing trustworthiness. In addition to mentally preparing myself for research, I also incorporated seven validation strategies identified by Creswell (2007) to maintain the study's trustworthiness. The first method was triangulation, the substantiation of research from different sources. This was accomplished by using various research methods including peer reviewed journals, magazines, television and the internet and, consulting with my committee chairperson, the interview participants and Black college males at the University of South Florida who were not a part of the study.

The second method was peer review. I discussed the study's methods, meaning and interpretations with my committee members and fellow doctoral students in the Counselor Education and Educational Leadership departments at the University of South Florida. This ensured honest, unbiased results.

The third measure of trustworthiness was employed to clarifying any biases I might have. I described my experiences as a school counselors and my interest in this topic. This allows the reader to understand my experiences, biases and orientations which have the potential to impact my interpretation of study findings.

After completing the initial data analysis, I employed member checking to increase my trustworthiness. Three of the eight interview participants reviewed the results to ensure the accuracy of my analysis. Rich, thick descriptions of the participants and the setting of the study are also provided. I examined study methodology and results for accuracy and had three Black males and two colleagues from The University of South Florida review the data. Lastly, I had permission to contact research participants if I

needed clarification. This prolonged engagement allowed me to assess the data for accuracy.

CD-RISC. The Conner-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) survey was used to assess the level of resilience in Black males (see Appendix B). The CD-RISC is comprised of 25 items rated on a 5 point scale. Resilience scales have existed for decades. However, these scales have not been used in the area of clinical practice. The CD-RISC has proven successful in this area. As a result, it has the added benefit of being a resource that can be used when mental health is brought into the schools. According to Martin and Marsh (2006), resilience data as framework is rare in educational research. Additionally, as school counselors address the intrapersonal needs of Black males, resilience data from the CD-RISC can be a beneficial resource. Another benefit of using the CD-RISC is that it has demonstrated strong psychometric properties in a variety of cultures and nationalities including Chinese, South African, Iranian, Italian, Japanese, Turkish and African American cultures.

In an attempt to validate the assessment, the authors (2003) administered the scale to five groups of participants: (a) a community sample, (b) primary care outpatients, (c) general psychiatric outpatients, (d) clinical trials of generalized anxiety disorders, and (e) two clinical trials of PTSD. The resilience scale scores by group are represented in Table 2.

Connor and Davidson (2003) showed acceptable test-retest reliability for the full CD-RISC ($r=0.87$). Ito (2009) found good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$ and 0.90 for two samples) and good test-retest reliability of 0.94 and 0.83 in Japanese students. Similarly, an Iranian study conducted by Khoshouei (2009) showed good

Table 2

Conner Davidson Resilience Scale Scores by study group characteristic

Study Group	Group Number	N	Mean (<i>sd</i>)
General Population	1	577	80.4 (12.8)
Primary Care	2	139	71.8 (18.4)
Psychiatric outpatients	3	43	68.0 (15.3)
Generalized Anxiety Disorder patients	4	24	62.4 (10.7)
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder patients (Trial 1)	5	22	47.8 (19.5)
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder patients (Trial 2)	6	22	52.8 (20.4)

internal consistency for the CD-RISC (alpha coefficients ranging from 0.78-0.91) and good test-retest reliability ($r=0.78-0.88$).

Convergent validity, which is measured by correlates with like measures, has been assessed in a number of studies. According to the assessment manual, the CD-RISC correlated with the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale ($r=0.49$, $p<0.01$); Kodasa Hardiness Scale ($r=0.36$, $p<0.0001$); and the Brief Resilience Scale ($r=0.59$, $p<0.01$). The predictive validity was established by Conner and Davidson (2003). Their original study revealed a significant relationship between the CD-RISC and the degree of improvement on the Clinical Global Improvement scale ($F=3.42$ *df*2, $p<0.05$). Finally, the construct validity of the CD-RISC was evidenced by Simon et al. (2009) whose study results indicated that the CD-RISC was able to predict suicide attempts when the Beck Depression Inventory was not.

The use of Google Documents helped to standardize the administration of the CD-RISC to participants in the United States. The students from the Bahamas used the paper and pencil assessment format. Each copy was numbered to ensure that all survey instruments were returned. The assessments were administered during structured college

classes and took no longer than 15 minutes to complete. This eliminated boredom and potentially minimized the risk of being distracted. To minimize risk to external validity, the survey was open to all Black male college freshmen and sophomore at the Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Florida and Black males at the College of the Bahamas.

Setting and Participants

The purpose of this study was to identify and compare factors that contributed to academic success in Black male high school students in the Bahamas and the United States and suggest a framework for effective school counseling programs that are responsive to their needs. It was conducted from a strength based perspective and required successful Black male college students to participate. For the purpose of this study, success was described by admission, current enrollment and a cumulative grade point average of 2.50 or above at a Historically Black College or University in Florida or the College of the Bahamas. Using purposive sampling methodology to solicit study participants, the offices of Research, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs and Student Involvement/Activities at Bethune-Cookman University, Edward Waters College, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), Florida Memorial University (FMU) and the College of the Bahamas were contacted. Bethune-Cookman University, Edward Waters College, Florida A & M University and Florida Memorial University are Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Florida. Most historically Black Colleges and Universities were established after the American Civil war to educate Black Americans. Similarly, the College of the Bahamas was established in 1974 as a two year institution to serve the needs of the Bahamas, a majority Black Country. This research

commenced with the participation of Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University (FAMU), Florida Memorial University (FMU) and the College of the Bahamas as the three responding institutions. The similar traditions and enrollment between the HBCUs in the United States and the College of the Bahamas increased the parity of comparison between respondents in the two countries.

Setting. Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University began with 15 “colored” students in 1887. FAMU presently has a population of more than 13,000 students with approximately 5,000 (39%) males in the 2011 – 2012 academic year. 92% of the almost 1,500 enrolled freshmen in Fall 2012 were Black and approximately 5% of the almost 1,500 freshmen enrolled in 2011 were White (2.4%) or, Hispanic, Asian or Native Americans. Located in Tallahassee Florida, FAMU is a land-grant institution dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, resolution of complex issues and the empowerment of citizens and communities (Retrieved from <http://www.famu.edu/>)

Florida Memorial University was established in 1941 as a merger between Florida Baptist Institute founded by the Black Baptists of Florida in Live Oak in 1879 and the Florida Baptist Academy founded in Jacksonville, Florida in 1892. In 1963, the institution changed its name to Florida Memorial College. In March 2006, it became Florida International University. To date, FMU offers 41 undergraduate and four master’s degree programs. It has a population of more than 6,000 males and females from the United States and around the world. IT’s freshman enrollment in Fall 2012 was 650 students, 260 (40%) were males. FMU is the only HBCU in South Florida and is dedicated to “instilling in students the importance of becoming global citizens through

life-long learning, leadership, character, and service which will enhance their lives and the lives of others.” (Retrieved from <http://www.fmuniv.edu/academics/>)

The College of the Bahamas is located in Nassau Bahamas with a satellite campus in Freeport, Grand Bahama Bahamas. It began as a two year college in 1974 with the amalgamation of The Bahamas Teachers' College, San Salvador Teachers' College, C. R. Walker Technical College and the sixth form program of The Government High School in the Bahamas. COB offers more than 20 associates degree programs and almost 40 bachelor degree programs. In fall 2012, COB had a total enrollment of 4,384 students. Of this number, 830 (17%) are males (Retrieved from <http://www.cob.edu.bs>).

Participants. There were 156 survey participants, 92 from the College of the Bahamas and 64 from the United States in this study. They were all Black male, freshmen or sophomores with a grade point average above a 2.49 on a 4.0 point scale. Survey participants ranged in age from 17 to 34 and represented a variety of majors.

There were 8 interview participants. Four participants were from the Bahamas and four from United States. They were freshmen and sophomores with grade point averages that ranged from 2.50 – 3.59 on a four point scale and an age range of 18 -22. Individual portraits with pseudo-names can be found in the results. Interviews were conducted at a small coffee shop, a church classroom and a classroom at the College of the Bahamas depending on the interviewee’s choice.

Procedures

This study focused on the perspectives of Black male college students on the achievement gap. It sought to identify factors that helped them successfully navigate high school. This research also focused on resilience as a factor of success. Permission was

obtained from the authors of the Conner Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) to use in this research. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of South Florida (USF). USF's IRB required approval from the College of the Bahamas because it is an international location. It did not require IRB approval from the HBCs in Florida with the explanation that the researcher would not physically be on the university campus to administer the surveys or conduct interviews.

An email communication was sent to the representative colleges and universities and briefly described the purpose of the study. It also requested that representatives forward the CD-RISC survey link to enrolled Black freshmen and sophomores with grade point averages of 2.50 or above. The requests were forwarded to the Office of Research on each campus. The Offices of Research at FAMU and the College of the Bahamas required their institutional board's approval. Each office identified a faculty member to serve as the principal investigator for the study. All study related forms and documents were sent to the respective review boards through the identified principal investigator. After receiving IRB approval, the principal investigator distributed the survey to FAMU and COB students. Florida Memorial University identified a faculty member to act as the study liaison. This faculty member was also responsible for distributing the survey link to Black males enrolled as freshmen or sophomores on the university campus.

Based on previous resilience research, the target number of respondents was 150. Survey respondents were asked to complete the 25 item CD-RISC survey. Each survey participant was also asked to complete demographic information including year of high school graduation, grade point average, and present enrollment status. The demographic data form can be found in Appendix A. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked

to provide their email address if they had an interest in participating in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Respondents were also asked to access an external survey link to submit their email address and contact information so their name could be placed in the pool for a chance to win a \$100 gift certificate through a raffle.

The survey respondents who provided their email addresses as an indicator that they were interested in being interviewed were screened. Participants scoring the lowest on the question “On a scale of 1 -5 with 5 being the highest, how much did you enjoy high school?” were selected for the interviews.

A total of eight persons were selected as they represented the lowest scores of all respondents. Emails of congratulation and information regarding interview dates were initially sent to the eight selected participants. After all interviews were arranged, thank you emails were sent to the additional respondent who were not selected for the interview. Interview participants were eligible to win a \$200 gift certificate via a raffle.

Data Collection

There was an extended waiting period after contacting the offices of Research, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs and Student Involvement/Activities at Bethune-Cookman University, Edward Waters College, Florida A & M University, Florida Memorial College and the College of the Bahamas. In the end, only Florida A & M University, Florida Memorial University and College the Bahamas responded.

After the appropriate permissions was received to conduct the study, the principal investigators at FAMU and COB and the liaison person at the FMU were only responsible for the mass distribution of the survey link to students on their respective

campuses. After being granted approval, the researcher also assisted in the distribution of the survey link via email to potential study participants.

The representative from The College of the Bahamas requested that the survey be administered by lecturers at the College in a paper, pencil format. This request was granted and the survey was distributed to Black male students in the introductory psychology and student development seminar courses. Two college counselors and a professor of education administered the surveys to Black males on COB campus.

The survey introduction in both the online and paper, pencil formats described the purpose of the study. The email included the consent forms for those persons completing the survey via the internet. Additionally, the email and the introduction within the link indicated that by accessing the online survey, they were providing their consent to participate. At COB, students were given the consent forms as a part of their packets. Participants were assured anonymity as no names or other identifying information was required in the online or paper pencil version of the assessment. A total of 156 Black males, 92 from the Bahamas and 64 for the United States, completed the survey.

At the end of the survey, participants were asked to provide their name and contact information if they were willing to be interviewed. Nine persons responded. Participants rating their high school experience as a 1 or 2 of 5 on the question “On a scale or 1 – 5 (with 1 being the lowest,), how much did you enjoy high school?” were selected to participate in the interviews. One respondent that rated his high school experience as a 2.5 was eliminated. Interview participants were contacted via email and interviews were arranged. Qualitative data was collected by semi structured interviews. A total of 8 interviews were conducted. Four interviews in the Bahamas were conducted at

the College of the Bahamas. The remaining four interviews were conducted at a small coffee shop and a church classroom. Follow-ups were conducted via email and telephone contact.

The researcher was the sole interviewer. Interviews lasted from 35 minutes to an hour and five minutes. The interviews began with the signing of consent forms. Before commencing, the participants were reminded that the session was being audio recorded as per the consent form. A semi structured interview guide was used to structure the interview. The informal questions were as follows:

1. Tell me a little about yourself.
2. What are some of the highlights of your high school experience?
3. What are some of the more difficult experiences you have had?
 - a. How did you survive those experiences?
 - b. What made you continue to strive when things got difficult?
4. What is your definition of success?
 - a. How successful would you consider yourself?
 - b. What and who contributed to the success you have achieved thus far?
5. What role did your school counselor play during your high school years?
 - a. What school counseling programs were most beneficial to you?
 - b. What school counseling programs were least beneficial?
 - c. What kinds of programs do you think you could have benefited from most?
6. What words of encouragement do you have for other striving Black males?
7. What questions do you have for me?

8. What do you wish I had asked you about but I didn't?
9. What else would you like to add?

The interview guide addressed the research questions:

1. What factors contribute to academic success in Black high school males?
2. How resilient are Black college males who recently graduated high school?
3. What role do school counselors and school counseling programs play in Black male achievement and resilience?
4. What types of school counseling programs could be implemented to increase academic success and resilience in Black males?

At the end of each interview, participants were asked if they had questions or additional comments. Before leaving, each participant was asked if he might be contacted for follow up questions or further clarifications. All participants agreed. Participants were informed that they would be contacted via email to arrange a Skype or telephone interview for follow-ups if necessary. Three follow-up interviews were conducted in which interview participants were briefed and asked for their views on the preliminary findings.

All research material, audio records, transcripts, consent forms, survey data were locked in the room in the researcher's home. Additionally, computerized data analysis was stored on a computer that was password protected.

The next section will describe the analysis of data and report study findings.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of this study was to identify and compare factors that contributed to academic success in Black, male, high school students in the Bahamas and the United States and suggest a framework for effective school counseling programs that are responsive to their needs. Study results was intended to address the questions:

- (1) What factors contribute to academic success in Black high school males?
- (2) How resilient are Black college males who recently graduated high school?
- (3) What role do school counselors and school counseling programs play in Black male achievement and resilience?
- (4) What types of school counseling programs could be implemented to increase academic success and resilience in Black males?

This section will describe the process used to analyze study data. It will then present a portrait of the interview participants and describe emerging themes resilience scores, and the impact of school counselors and school counseling programs on the Black male interviewees.

Data Analysis

Interview data analysis and emerging themes. The iterative interview data analysis commenced at the beginning of the data collection process. The audio recorded sessions were transcribed by the researcher. The researcher then coded the transcripts using apriori codes originating from the Black male achievement literature. Apriori codes included familial support, mentoring programs, and cultural sensitivity. Emergent codes

were applied as new meanings and relationships were revealed in the data. Notes about relationships, possible themes, discrepancies, and theoretical questions were also made.

As a product of the rigorous analysis process, open, axial and selective coding were used. Open coding resulted from the initial reading of the data. Axial codes were the result of making links between raw data and emergent themes. Axial codes were intensely analyzed and relationships postulated. Selective codes were established as specific relationships were identified and validated by matching those codes with corresponding passages. Codes, themes and relationships were compared between the eight interviews. This was done in an attempt to identify both common and different themes.

Glaser and Stauss' constant comparative method (1967) was employed to compare codes with the corresponding text to ensure that codes describe the identified text. During the constant comparisons, the researcher ensured that there were no overlapping codes and that all were mutually exclusive. Codes were shared with the major professor to ensure there was no redundancy and to identify discrepancies in the coding process. None were found. The researcher read the summary statements and supporting quotes to ensure no other alternate conclusions can be made. At the end of the interview data analysis, 12 themes emerged.

Survey data analysis. Survey data were loaded into SAS to obtain descriptive statistics from the resilience scores of study participants. T-tests were conducted to compare the study sample to the population mean reported by the CD-RISC developers. They were also used to compare the Bahamian and American sample. The means and variances were also assessed between The Bahamas and students from the United States.

Results

Study participants were asked to rate their high school experience on a scale of 1 – 5. One hundred fifty five of the 156 study participants responded. Eight participants who rated their high school experience as a one or two were selected to participate in the interviews. Table 3 provides descriptive statistics of the responses. As reflected in the table, only one survey participant did not respond. Additionally, most (94%) survey respondents reported that they enjoyed high school.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of CD-RISC scores for each level of response to the question “On a scale of 1 – 5, how much did you enjoy high school ?”

Level of Response	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
1	4	82.75	9.74	79	97
2	5	85.80	9.26	85	92
3	64	73.10	13.50	38	99
4	69	75.50	11.00	48	97
5	13	77.48	12.73	44	90

Interview Participants Portraits. Torres is a 19 year old sophomore at an Historically Black College (HBCU) in Florida. He reports a grade point average of 3.80. Torres is actively involved in campus life. His involvement includes Greek life, sports, academic and social clubs. Torres attended a large urban high school with more than 4,000 students. During high school, Torres lived with both parents and his little brother. He indicated that he had strong parental and familial support throughout high school.

Torres was excited to attend FAMU where he has decided to pursue a degree in mathematics. When asked about his score of a two on the question “On a scale of 1 – 5, how much did you enjoy high school” he indicated that he rated it a two because high school did not pose a challenge for him. Torres said that he just could not wait to graduate high school so that he could “get on with his life.” Torres was actively involved and willing to share openly throughout the interview.

Dontae is a 20 year old freshman at the College of the Bahamas (COB). He attended one of the oldest public high schools in the Bahamas. His school enrollment was over 1,200 students with a senior class of about 300. He worked for a year before deciding to pursue a tertiary degree. Upon entering COB, Dontae was enrolled in college preparatory classes which he successfully completed the previous semester. He plans to enroll in the teacher education program with the hope of becoming a high school physical education teacher. Dontae indicated that he is not involved in any organizations on campus or in the community. His time is spent going to school, studying and working to pay his tuition. According to Dontae, high school was really hard. His score of one on the question related to high school enjoyment was a result of not having time to enjoy high school life because he was focused on helping his hard-working mother take care of his three siblings. Dontae’s father had died in a horrific construction accident when he was 12 years old. Since that time, he was elevated to the position of “man of the house”, a role he took seriously. Dontae spent much of his time after school helping his little brothers with their homework and preparing meals. As a result, he had very little time for homework. Despite these circumstances, Dontae graduated high school with a 2.80 grade point average (GPA) and has a 3.50 average at COB. During the interview, he was very

open and candid about his struggles and shared his determination to do well in life in so that he is able to help his mother and brothers, whom he loves dearly.

Bijzhad is an 18 year old freshman at Florida Memorial University where he hopes to pursue a business degree. BJ presently has a 3.00 grade point average. He graduated high school with a 2.90 GPA on a four point scale. BJ attended a large inner city high school with limited funding. While in high school, he lived with his grandmother and two uncles. BJ does not know his father but was aware that his mother lived two blocks away with a current boyfriend and his younger brother and sister when he was in high school. He currently lives with his mother and siblings while on college breaks. During the interview, BJ shared that he was “lucky to get out and come to college.” For BJ, high school was difficult. Most of his struggle was because he felt as if he was just not good enough. He was not good enough to be in the International Baccalaureate program at his school and he was not good enough to “hang with the guys on the blocks.” BJ rated his high school experience as a one mainly because he felt out of place and invisible. He shared that he often felt that if he disappeared for a week, no one would recognize that he was gone. BJ was not the stand out academic student nor was he a “bad boy.”

Davian is a sophomore at FAMU. His cumulative college grade point average was 2.54. In 2011, Davian graduated high school with a final grade point average of a 3.10. During the interview, Davian openly shared that even though he was in honors classes in high school, he did not think that he was prepared for college. He indicated that he rated his experience in high school a two because he feels cheated as high school did not prepare him for college. Davian admitted that he would probably have responded

differently if he had been asked the same question the summer after graduating from his magnet school in Florida. Davian revealed that there were counselors specifically assigned to assist his colleagues and him throughout high school. However, he did not take advantage of the opportunity. He also noted that no counselor sought him out either. Despite this, he reported that high school was fun socially, and he was able to establish many beneficial relationships with teachers and peers. Davian is an English major interested in working in Japan after graduating college. When on breaks, Davian lives with his parents and two younger sisters. He is presently involved in a minority outreach program at his school.

Dave is a 19 year old freshman who is actively involved on FAMU's campus. He is pursuing an education degree and wants to eventually become a high school teacher. He appears to be very outgoing and willing to share his experiences "for the good of all." Dave is pledging a fraternity and is excited to be "a part of a brotherhood." He openly talks about how he has been able to find his identity and is now willing to share who he is with others. As a high school student, Dave was the only African American in his International Baccalaureate (IB) classes. In the interview, Dave spoke of his high school experience with mixed emotions. He indicated that while he rated the experience a one, he did so because he felt as if he had no identity. While in his IB classes, he was expected to be the spokesperson for all Black people. He said that both teachers and his peers in the IB classes deferred to him when discussing issues of race. This made him uncomfortable because he did not feel capable of answering for all Black people. In fact, he revealed that he had difficulty answering for himself. Dave talked about being even more confused within his low income community when his peers and friends "accused"

him of “acting white.” He spoke of being frustrated in his classes when he was expected to have the “Black” answers and frustrated outside class when he was expected to not “speak intelligently” when he “hang out” with persons from his neighborhood. Dave indicated that as an only child, he survived because he had relentless parents who refused to let him give up. He has now grown to appreciate their persistence though he resented it, and them, while in high school.

As a sophomore at COB, Fidel is actively involved in campus life. Fidel is a student leader who has worked with, and mentored, a number of young men on and off campus. At 22 years old, Fidel reports a current GPA of 3.59 in his computer information systems program at COB. He indicated that after graduating from a small public high school of less than 300 students in Eleuthera, Bahamas, he entered college but had to take preparatory classes. During this time, he began to heal from the hurt he experienced in his hometown and in high school. Fidel rated his high school experience a one. He said that for a long time he was caught up in being a part of the crowd and was involved in a gang. For him, it was important to “fit in.” Fidel revealed that it was not until his tenth grade year that he began the difficult process of “settling down” and focusing on “bettering himself.” According to Fidel, the “negative people” within his community and school kept trying to hold him back. He spoke of a principal and administrative staff who would not forget his past behavior. He lamented on the fact that despite his hard work, good grades and good behavior, he was not allowed to be the “head boy”, the male student leader, on his campus. In fact, his principal had told him that the reason he was not given the position was because of his behavior in ninth grade. Fidel was badly hurt by his principal’s decision. He shared that his hurt was deepened by the fact that his

principal left the position vacant because, in his opinion, there was no one qualified for it. With a small smile, Fidel shared that he had his day in the end. He spoke proudly about his graduation ceremony where he received a number of academic awards. He shared that the most gratifying award he received, was the Principal's Award. Fidel saw this as his principal's apology and acknowledgement of the hard work he had done. Fidel also spoke of being proud to pass his father on the streets knowing that his delinquent father was aware of his success as salutatorian and top male graduate. He shared that his father was not supportive of him and actually refused to attend his graduation. Fidel spoke fondly of his supportive mom. He attributed his success to her, a mentor in school and his own will to "strive for excellence."

J.R. is a 19 old sophomore at COB with a current GPA of 2.50. J.R. lives with his mother, stepfather and two siblings. He attended a private high school in Nassau, Bahamas and graduated with a 2.50 GPA. J.R. shared that he found high school very boring with lunch being the best time. When asked about rating his high school experience a two, J.R. shared that he felt as if high school had nothing to offer him. Classes were not stimulating, teachers were not very responsive and the subjects he was forced to take had no relevance for him. J.R. admitted to simply "coasting through high school" as he waited to move on. When asked about the similarity in GPA between high school and college, J.R. indicated that though the numbers looked the same, they did not have the same implications. The 2.50 GPA in high school was a result of his lack of effort and interest in school. His 2.50 GPA in the College of the Bahamas is reflective of the challenging computer information systems program he is enrolled in.

Ben, a 20 year old sophomore at COB, was extremely animated in his interview. He was eager to talk about the difficulties he had experienced during his high school life. Ben said that he often felt as if everyone was against him. According to Ben, this was an all too common experience in the public high school he attended in Nassau, Bahamas. He presently lives with his mother and younger siblings. He talks about having a terrible relationship with his mother who wants him to stop college and work full time to help her support the family. Ben says that his compromise is to work part-time and attend COB. He indicated that at one point, he had moved out of his mother's home because she was very angry and spiteful ever since his father left the home more than 10 years prior. Ben shared that he too had left the home to live with his grandmother. He returned to his mother's house because she had become ill and the physical space at his grandmother's house was limited. Ben also shared his displeasure with high school experience, giving it a rating of one. He candidly spoke of his teachers' and administrators' refusal to acknowledge him because he did not look or act as they expected him to. Ben shared that he was told that he would never "go anywhere in life." He also lamented that despite the fact that he graduated as one of the top five students in his class of over 300 students, he did not receive any academic awards. This was particularly difficult for him because, according to him, he had consistently received the highest score in a certain subject area. Ben boasted of the fact that he received a scholarship to pursue his tertiary education. He reveals that he often heard persons say that he "got lucky." Ben vehemently denied that and pronounces that he did not get lucky, he quiet simply worked hard.

Research Question 1 - What factors contribute to academic success in Black high school males? All interviewees (both American and Bahamian participants) agreed

that success is individually determined. Table 4 describes interview participants' definition of success and how successful they thought they were in their lives thus far.

Table 4

Interview participant's individual description of success and a self- rating of success on a 1 – 10 scale.

Participant	What is success?	Success thus far
Torres	Setting one goal, accomplishing it, and setting another to strive for.	8
Dontae	Having what I want or at least have the ability to get what I want.	8
Bijzhad	Going into the office in an Armani suit, carrying a briefcase and calling the shots.	7
Davian	Getting a good job.	7
Dave	Being able to rise above all the negative things people say and do	8
Fidel	Making good grades	8
JR	Being okay with who I am	7
Ben	Graduating from COB	8

All of the young men also agreed that they had not reached a 10 because there is always room for improvement. They shared that they do not think that it possible to reach a 10. Nine is their goal.

Ben

I can't see perfect as long as I am living.

Torres

If I am a 10 then there is nothing to strive for.

Factors contributing to Academic Success.

Theme I – School socialization. To establish a context for their high school experience, participants were asked to share highlights from their high school years. The young men talked about the friendships they were able to develop and the times spent with their friends. A common theme in all interview participants was the significance of the social component of school. For them, it was important to be able to sit and share their school, family and community experiences with their friends. They were also able to test boundaries and explore socially acceptable standards of behavior.

Fidel

The best part of school was of course lunch time. I got to hang out with my boys. We spent a lot of time clowning around and chillin, talking about the girls and talking about the crappy principal and teachers who would not get off our back. Bey them teachers did not like us. (smiling) We used to crack all kinds of jokes about them.

Dave

I would say the highlight of high school was the friends I made. Those dudes was crazy. I spend so much time laughing. The best part is I always knew they had my back. We could go anywhere and know that we had protection.

Ben

The highlight for me was not actually in school. It was through school I became a part of Junior Achievement. That was great. I became friends with people from other schools who shared the same interests as me. Besides that, we had a lot of fun working and playing.

J.R.

Seriously, the best part of high school was hanging out. The classes were okay but the best times I had was just chillin' with my friends. We never used to let

nothing bother us too long. (smiling) We spent plenty time chattin' up with the girls and planning to go out.

When asked about academic highlights of high school, all participants indicated that they did not have any. However, two interviewees from the Bahamas and one from the United States reflected that the only academic highlight they had was the day they graduated. Walking across the stage was the best day of their lives.

Fidel

The day I graduated. It felt so good to be able to say goodbye to all them teachers who thought I could not do it. I remember throwing my principal a look to say I did it, no thanks to you. (smiling) This was before I found out that I had gotten the principal's award though. Anyway, it felt good to show them all.

Ben

Bey graduation was the best day. I got to show to all them haters my backside. When I walked across the stage I really wanted to tell some teachers, that principal and that counselor to kiss..... sorry miss, but you know what I mean. All I did was keep looking straight cause my grammy was there watching.

Torres

The day I graduated was the best day ever. I could now get on with my life. High school was only holding me back from doing what I wanted to do. I was ready to move on and say goodbye. High school was such a big joke.

Theme II – Need to be liked. Interviewees from the Bahamas and the United States reported that they often felt as if they were not liked because they did not conform to certain standards. For American participants, this standard was determined by race and class. American participants were torn between feeling as if they had to be the voice of

Black people in their advanced classes and pretending as if they were not smart while in their communities. Living in the ghetto and being smart were mutually exclusive.

For Bahamians, the need to be liked was based on class. Teachers, counselors and school administrators expected them to change their style of dress, the way they spoke and the kind of music they liked because those behaviors were thought to be indicative of a “ghetto mentality.”

Torres

One time I went to the homecoming dance with my girlfriend. We had fun dancing and talking with the crew. I was feeling good all weekend. When I got to school, one of the assistant principal’s stopped me in the hall and said he wanted to talk to me about homecoming. I was told that I do not wear clothes that reflect how smart I am. This meant that I did not dress like a rich, white man. I was so mad.

Ben

Because I dressed like my boys who I grew up with, and live in the ghetto, teachers did not like me. I did not conform to the standard of what they thought a good young man should be. Even though I got good grades, they did not like me. The same thing happened to my brother. The teachers and the guidance counselor did not like him because he did not dress or talk like those boys who kiss up to those teachers to be their pets

B.J.

The administration and teachers were always bothering me about fixing my clothes. They did not like me because my pants was baggy and hang low. I even had one of my teachers tell me that they hated my hair and I would never get a good job because of the way I dress and my hair.

Black American male interviewees indicated that they were also disliked by their peers. Two American respondents were in either the IB program or honors classes at their

respective schools. They shared that peers who were not in IB classes often disliked them. They also felt as if their peers and teachers in the IB program only pretended to like them.

Dave

While I was in class, I often felt like I was under a microscope and was not liked because I was the only Black male in my classes. Then, when I went home, other Black boys did not like me because they said I ‘acted white’. I just could not win. Everywhere I turned, no one liked me.

One distinction emerging from the interviews with Bahamian males was that they often felt as if their teachers simply focused more on the girls. This was not evident in American interview participants.

Dontae

Our teachers just liked the girls and pushed them to work hard and forgot about us. We were left to do whatever we wanted. I noticed that when the boys got a bad grade, the teachers did not say anything. But if the whole class, or the girls did bad, we would go over that test over and over again.

J.R.

The girls got all the attention. The teacher just cared what they did. The girls were pushed to go to JA and Precious Pearls or whatever it was and we were not pushed to do anything. If we did it, that was fine, but no one pushed us to do nothing.

Theme III - Need to be appreciated. Another theme that emerged from American and Bahamian interviewees was that they often felt unappreciated and their efforts went unnoticed. They wanted school officials and family members to tell them that they were doing a good job at whatever the task.

Ben

I could try as hard as I can but no ever said ‘good job’, ‘I am proud of you’. I never heard this from my teachers nor my mother. It was always, ‘you can do better’. They never stopped to think that I tried my best.

B.J.

Well I don’t play sports so no one appreciate me. I am a great artist and get good grades but it does not seem to be good enough. My teacher might say that my work was good, but, he never tells other people for them to know how good I am the way they do for the jocks. It would have been good to hear my name called loud for being a good artist.

Theme IV – Low teacher expectation. Both population of interviewees indicated that teachers just simply did not expect them to do well.

B.J.

I had a teacher tell me to my face that he understands that I cannot do the work so he will give me something a little easier. He said that he knew things were tough with my grammy and that I probably needed to work after school to help with stuff for the house. I think he thought he was being nice to me, but, he was only pissing me off.

Fidel

This teacher told me on the first day of class that I should take another class because this one is too hard for me. I was only in grade 10 and she still thought I would be a trouble maker. By that time, I decided I would do my best at school. The thing is... she did not know how smart I was because of my past I guess. Well I showed her. One of the awards I got was for Accounting at graduation. That was the class she taught.

Theme V – Irrelevant class content. In addressing academic difficulties, both Bahamian and American males said that many of their classes had content that was irrelevant and would not be beneficial to their future.

J.R.

I would not say that I had academic difficulties; I was just not interested because I did not need to know what they were talking about. Now that I am in my second year of college, I still do not see the relevance because I have not used more than 90% of what they were trying to teach me. That's why I just did enough to get by so my parents did not make noise.

B.J.

Those classes in high school did not make sense to me. It was tough to think about plate tectonics when grammy was struggling to put food on the table. They did not teach us real life. I studied it because I had to and not because I was interested.

None of the young men reported feeling as if they had reached their pinnacle of success. However, they all felt as if they were doing well. When asked “What and who contributed to the success you have achieved thus far?” interview participants attributed their success to self-reliance, perseverance and a feeling of hope, support from others, proving naysayers wrong, and having a sense of purpose. The young men from the Bahamas and the United States also shared that their belief in God, or at least a higher power, has been a contributing factor in their present level of success.

Theme VI – Self-reliance. Self-reliance was identified as one of the most important contributing factors to their academic success. All interview participants shared that they relied on themselves and their inner strength when things got difficult.

Ben

I can only depend on me. I am all I have. You know what it is to go through life being alone? But you know what, I got use to it real quick. From my daddy left, I was alone. Now mommy was there in the house with me, but she was not really there for me. Only me one pushed me to be where I am today. When I lost my scholarship, now one was there to push me to keep trying. I had to do that myself.

B.J.

I cannot lie; there are people who are there for me. The problem is that no one is here for me like I am for myself. I have depended on people but people fail me. To be honest, I fail me too. The thing is that when I do, I only have me to blame and I do not want to be mad with me.

Fidel

I am the only one that can make my dreams come true. That is why I had to depend on me when all the haters were saying that I could not do it.

Theme VII – Perseverance. Perseverance was another emerging theme. The young men all shared a desire to continue to work towards their goals even when the situation seemed impossible.

Fidel

No matter what stuff they put in front of me, I found a way to get around it. To be real, there was a lot of stuff. I just had to stay focused on my goals.

B.J.

Look, I have to get up out of the ghetto. Not that anything wrong with the people, but I want more and I know that I have to work hard in order to get more. And when I move up, I will be taking my peeps with me.

Dontae

I am determined to make life better for me and my family. My family has been hit hard with a lot of stuff. Sometimes I feel like they never stop coming. But I have

keep looking up. I try to tell my little brother that all the time. I just keep saying to him, that we have to just keep trying. When I say that to him, I is be saying it to myself too.

Theme VIII – Sense of hope. Having a sense of hope was also a factor identified as one of the major contributors to their success. Interview participants spoke of often feeling discouraged and unmotivated. According to them however, there was always something that renewed their hope even when things in school, at home or in their neighborhood got difficult.

Dontae

There were many times I felt hopeless. I remember one time this man in my neighborhood told me that he knew I would soon put down my books because I will realize that it will not take me anywhere because the system is set up for me to fail. I walked to school that day feeling defeated. When I got home that night, I decided to shoot some hoops with my little brother and his friends. I overheard my little brother say that he wanted to be just like me. The next day, a teacher told me that I had a bright future. Those two things made me feel like things will be better in the future and that I had to make sure it did because my little brother was looking up to me.

B.J.

I remember my grammy telling me ‘Where there is life, there is hope.’ I believe her more than I believe those people who do not support me. She has been through a lot and she keep telling me things will be better. You know what, I believe her. I have to believe her because if I don’t I don’t have anything to look forward to.

Theme IX - Support. Having support was also identified as a factor contributing to the success of Black college males from the Bahamas and the United State. All interviewees indicated that support was a pivotal factor in their success thus far. For some, the most difficult part of high school was feeling unsupported. For others, the support they received from various persons was fundamental to their development and propelled them to succeed. The young men in the IB and honors classes indicated that they always felt supported because they had teachers who pushed them to be the best.

Dontae

There were many times that I did not want to say it but I really needed someone to give me a push. It was hard trying to be there for everyone in the house. Sometimes I felt like no one was there for me. A lot of times I felt like no one was there for me.

Ben

Sometimes I just wanted someone to talk to. Someone to understand me and let me be me. I never had this in school. Thank God for grammy. If it was not for her I don't know what I would do. Those people in (school name) don't care

Each young man shared that there was at least one person who supported him. Though the source of support varied, the fact that they received some level of support was evident in their stories. Sources of support included family, friends, basketball coaches, teachers, counselors, church leaders and people in their communities.

Torres

High school was easier because I had a group of friends who had the same goals that I did. We were there for each other. It just made it easier knowing that someone was there for me and I was there for them.

Fidel

Boy, my counselor used to make me so mad when she first came to my school. She would always be on me to work hard; apply for this; do that. There were times that I would see her coming and would try to go the other way. But, I knew she would eventually catch up with me so it was much easier for me to face her. I got to the point where I realized that she had my back. One time, I got in trouble with my friends and she stood up for me. She knew I was telling the truth when I said I didn't know what was going on. The principal did not believe me but I think he trusted her. He told her that it would be on her if I messed up. That day, I knew that she would support me. Don't get me wrong now, when I did something wrong, she never let me get away with it. She always said that I would have to 'pay the piper'. My basketball coach was awesome. He died while I was in grade 12. I will never forget him. He was a joker. He was always there to support me and the guys. Even when we did something wrong, he was there in the office with us. He made us take whatever punishment we got but was there for us while we were being punished. He was hard and even added additional punishment, like not letting us play when we were in trouble. He always told us that we were doing stupid things but he would be there when we come out our stupid stage.

J.R.

I was lucky to have the support of my stepdad. He raised me like I was his own child. He was with my mommy from I was young. He taught me how to work hard and strive for what I want. He worked hard with his hands. He made a good

life for all of us. He even supported me through private school. I also have a mentor who supports me too. He was the other side. He really pushed the academics. He really smart and keep pushing me to do well in COB. Ilucky to have both sides. My dad to show me how hard work with my hand and learning a trade is important and my mentor who showing me the importance of academics.

Davian

My math teacher played a big role in helping me. She found out what college I wanted to go to and she just kept pushing me. She went here too. She would help me through algebra and other things too. She would call sometimes just to see how I am doing.

Theme X - Overcoming negativity. Both Bahamian and American interviewees indicated that they drew courage from the negative persons around them. The negativity they experienced through the words or actions of others served to push them to try even harder. The personal gratification the interview participants experienced when persons looked shocked that they had accomplished a goal was motivation to do well.

Ben

I remember when the vice principal found out I got a scholarship. She was so shocked. The look on her face was priceless. I will do almost anything to see that look again.

B.J.

Whenever people tell me that I can't, I always say to myself 'I can and I will show you'. I cannot let them win.

Theme XI - Sense of purpose. Another identified theme was the need to feel as if there was a purpose for their lives. Positive engagement with people and activities often helped them to connect a reason to their being; a purpose for their lives. It made interview participants feel good about who they are. The young men all indicated that having a group of people to do things with was great.

Ben

I feel good giving back. Me and my team were mentors for these boys who lived in a group home. I felt good to be there to help the little boys and I felt good to be there with my brothers. The thing is, I would never have gone alone. I was also motivated to do my best because the boys in the home were looking up to me. We volunteered for Habitat for Humanity. I felt good about myself. I do not have much but I gave what I had; my time and strength. Seeing that house finished and knowing that I helped was a good feeling.

Theme XII – Spirituality. The last identified theme was the belief in God, or, at least, a higher power. Interview participants from the Bahamas and the United States indicated that faith and a belief in God have sustained them. They also indicated that this belief in God was not only their personal relationship with God but the relationship their loved ones had with God.

Davian

My relationship with God has seen me through a lot of tough times. I know this is bad but I always run to him in hard times. I do not pray as much when things are good but I know he knows my heart.

B.J.

My grammy is a praying woman. There were many mornings I woke up as she prayed around the house. I hear her call my name too. With the faith she has, I know God has to answer her prayers.

Ben

I know there is a purpose for my life. When I close my eyes I can see me in my Armani business suit, briefcase and nice car. That's how God reveals my purpose and my future to me; when I close eyes. Shoot, I know that God cannot be putting me through all of this if he does not have a plan for me. He has a plan for me and everyone. You have to believe in God, if you do not believe in God, you have to believe in a higher power.

Research Question 2: How resilient are Black college males who recently graduated high school?

Resilience. A t-test was run to compare the sample mean with the population mean ($\mu = 80.4$, $\sigma = 12.8$) reported by the authors of the CD-RISC. The results indicated a significantly lower sample mean of 76.55 ($SD = 12.67$). This represents a statistically significant difference, $t(127) = -3.08$, $p = .002$ with a small effect size ($d=0.30$) This suggests that the Black males in this sample are less resilient than the general population. Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for this analysis. Figures 3 and 4 are pictorial representations of the distributions of scores and the Q-Q Plot to establish normality.

The second one tail t-test compared the sample means of the US participants ($M = 78.02$, $SD = 14.20$) with the general population mean ($\mu = 80.4$, $\sigma = 12.8$). The t-test results indicated no statistically significant difference, $t(54) = -1.03$, $p = 0.31$ between the US sample and the general population. However, the mean scores indicate a practical difference that reflects a lower level of resilience in the US sample than the overall general population. Descriptive statistics for this analysis can be found in Table 2. Figures 5 and 6 provide visuals representing the distribution of scores.

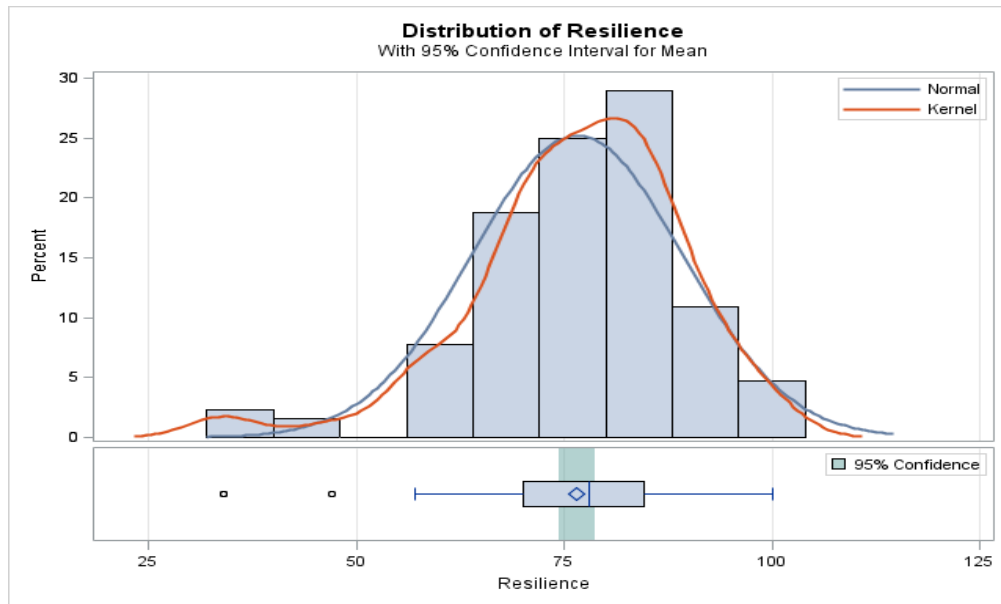


Figure 3. Black male college students' resilience scores with a 95% confidence interval for mean.

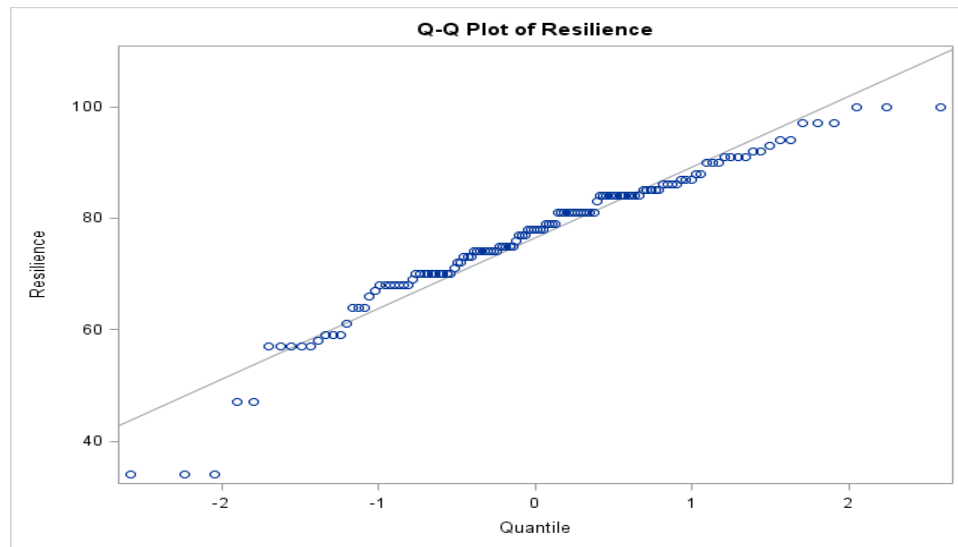


Figure 4. Distribution of resilience scores represented by a Q-Q Plot.

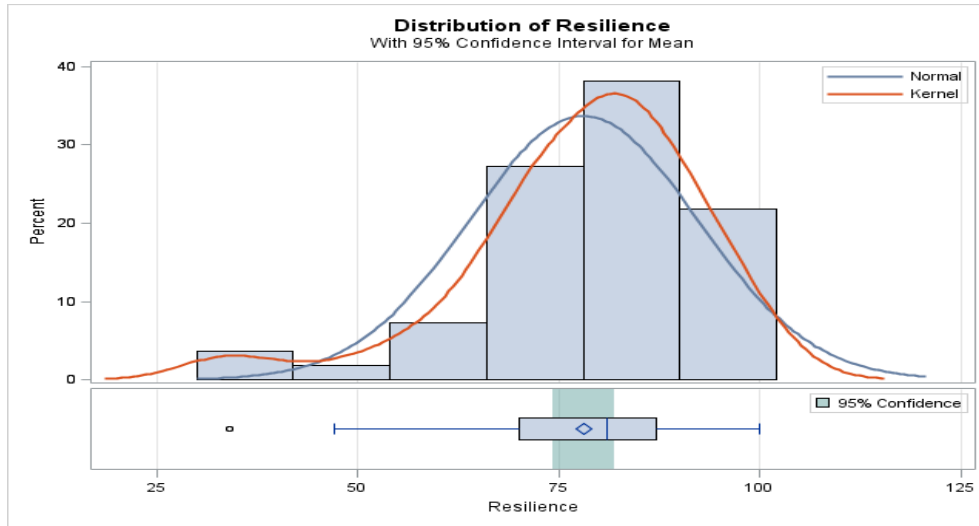


Figure 5. Black male college students' in the United States resilience scores with a 95% confidence interval for mean.



Figure 6. Distribution of resilience scores of US Black male college students represented by a Q-Q Plot.

A comparison between the Bahamian sample and the general population means represented the third T-test performed. This analysis showed a statistically significant difference, $t(72) = -3.44$, $P = 0.001$ indicating that Bahamian college students ($M = 75.44$,

$SD = 11.35$) were less resilient than the norm reference mean ($\mu = 80.4$, $\delta = 12.8$).

Descriptive statistics for this analysis can be found in Table 2. Distribution of scores is represented below in Figures 7 and 8.

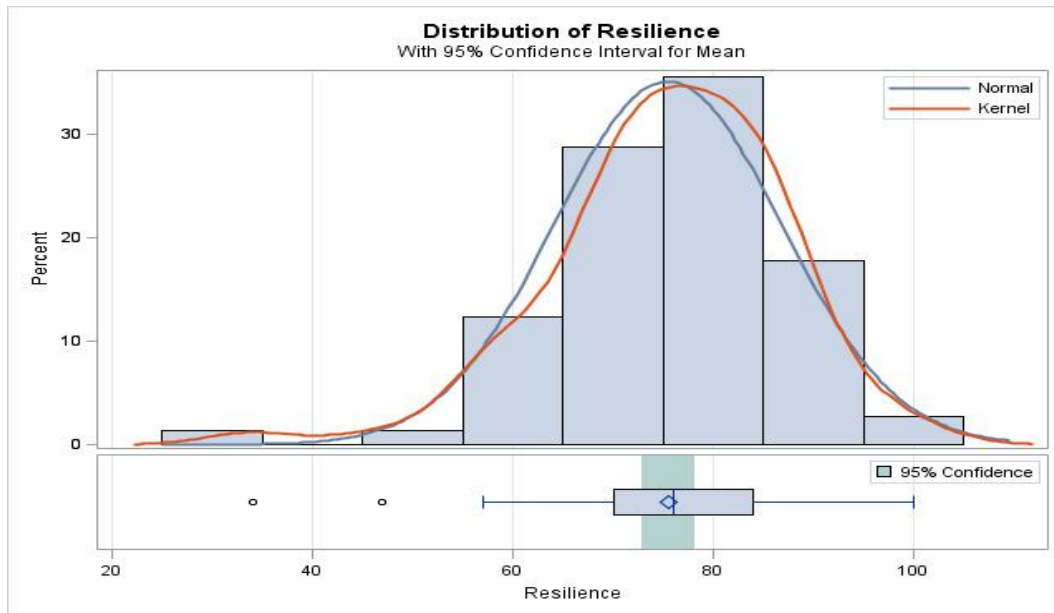


Figure 7. Black male college students' in the Bahamas resilience scores with a 95% confidence interval for mean.

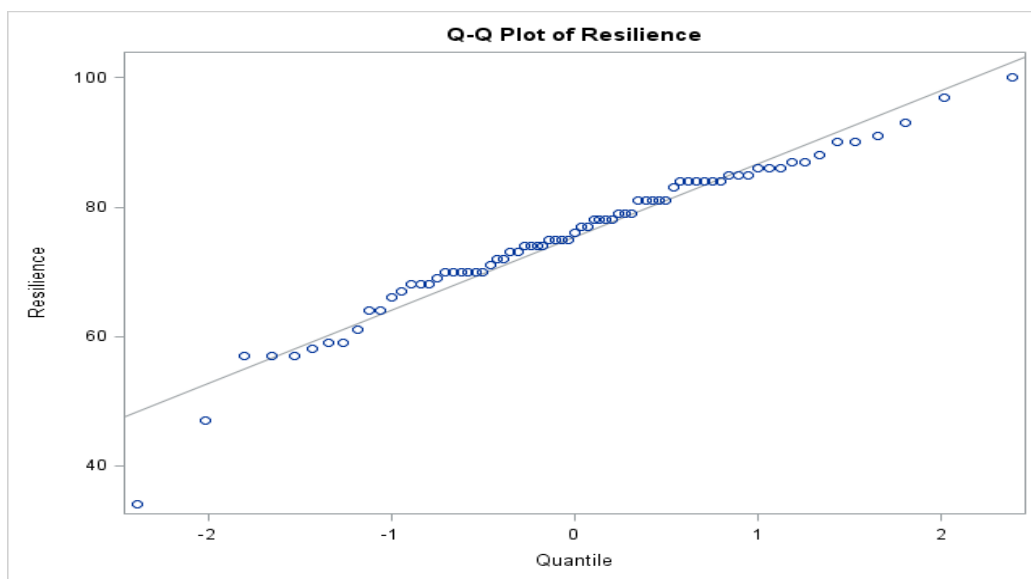


Figure 8. Distribution of resilience scores of Bahamian Black male college students represented by a Q-Q Plot.

Table 5

Descriptive statistics for t-tests.

	N	Mean	SD	Error	Min.	Max.
Comparisons						
Sample vs. General	128	76.55	12.67	1.12	34	100
US vs. General	55	78.02	14.20	1.92	34	100
BAH vs. General	73	75.44	11.35	1.33	34	100

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the means of the US sample to the Bahamian sample. These independent t-tests assumed that there was a normal distribution of scores in each sample, they had approximately equal variances and each observation was independent of the other. Figures 9 and 10 represent the dispersion and relative normality of scores. The Levene's test for equality of variance yielded no statistically significant difference in variance between the US and Bahamian survey participants, $f(1,126) = 1.57, p = 0.75$. The variables are independent of each other as all respondents took the survey individually and all Bahamian students took the survey in the Bahamas and the US students in the United States. Additionally, the CD-RISC was used a 0 – 4 interval ratio and is approximately normally distributed in the population (see figures 1, 3, & 5). The data did not indicate that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated $F(1,126) = 1.57, p = 0.75$) representing a homogeneity of variance. Descriptive statistics for this analysis is represented in Table 5.

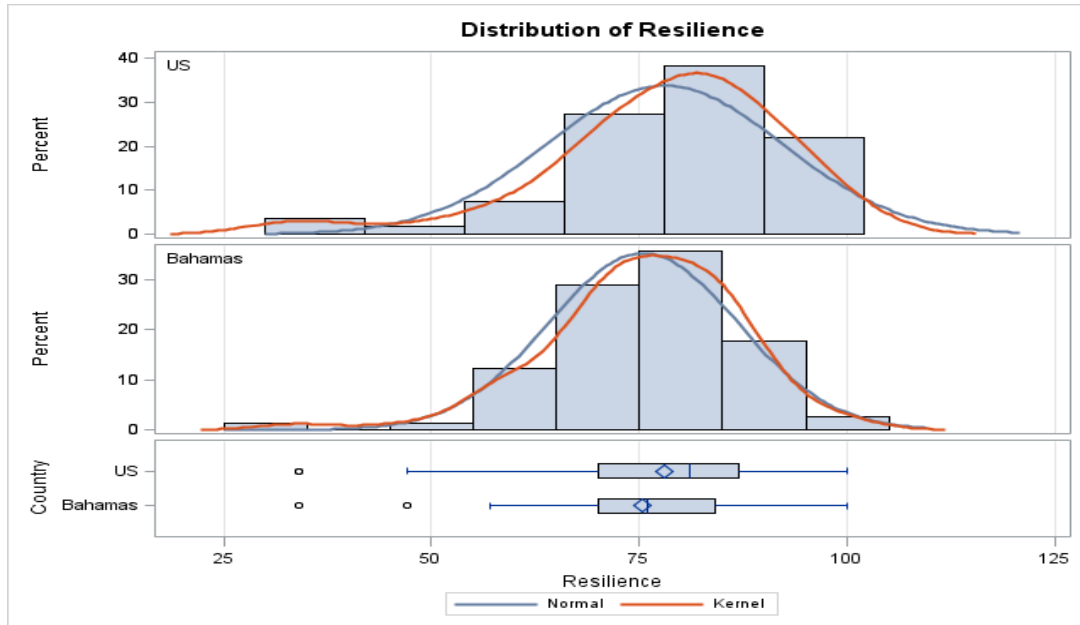


Figure 9. US versus Bahamian Black male college students' resilience scores with a 95% confidence interval for mean.

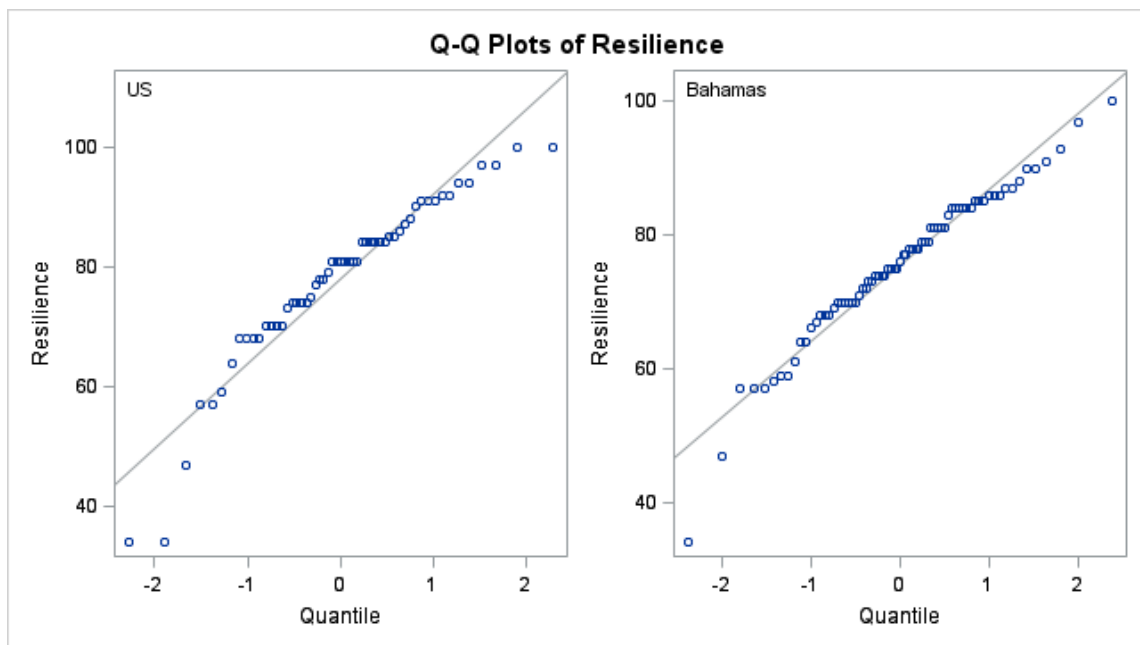


Figure 10. Comparative Distribution of scores for US and Bahamian study participants represented by a Q-Q Plot.

Table 6

Descriptive statistics of the 8 interview participants for the one tail t-test.

	N	Mean	SD	Error	Min.	Max.
Interview participants	8	87.13	6.53	2.31	79	97

Independent sample t tests we conducted on each individual item in the CD-RISC. The results are reported in Table 7. Statistically significant differences were found between the US and Bahamian population on only two items. On item 10, I give my best effort no matter what the outcome may be, the US participants reported a higher mean score ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.83$) which represents a statistically significant difference $t(8) = 2.05$, $p = 0.04$. There was also a statistically significant difference, $t(8) = 2.28$, $p = 0.02$, found between the US ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.09$) and Bahamian population on item 23, I like challenges.

A t-test was conducted to compare the mean score of the interview participants ($M = 87.13$, $SD = 6.53$) with the general population mean ($\mu = 80.4$, $\sigma = 12.8$). The results reported a statistically significant difference, $t(8) = 2.91$, $p = 0.02$, indicating that the Black college males interviewed were more resilient than the general population. The dispersion and relative normality of scores are represented in Figures 11 and 12.

Table 7

Mean scores, differences and effect sizes between the Bahamian and American Survey participants.

CD-RISC	US	BAH	Difference	T Value	P Value	Effect size Cohen's d
	M(SD)	M(SD)				
I am able to adapt when changes occur.	3.28 (0.83)	3.09 (0.83)	0.19	1.44	0.15	0.23
I have at least one close and secure relationship that helps me when I am stressed.	3.02 (1.03)	2.89 (1.12)	0.12	0.70	0.48	0.12
When there are no clear solutions to my problems, sometimes fate or God can help.	3.30 (0.95)	3.22 (1.07)	0.08	0.48	0.63	0.08
I can deal with whatever comes my way	2.89 (0.79)	2.82 (0.81)	0.06	0.49	0.62	0.09
Past successes give me confidence in dealing with new challenges and difficulties.	3.30 (0.85)	3.14 (0.95)	0.16	1.05	0.29	0.18
I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems.	3.45 (0.67)	3.26 (0.87)	0.19	1.47	0.14	0.24
Having to cope with stress can make me stronger.	3.09 (0.77)	2.90 (0.86)	0.20	1.51	0.13	0.23
I tend to bounce back after illness, injury, or other hardships.	3.27 (0.80)	3.26 (0.78)	0.00	0.04	0.97	0.01
Good or bad, I believe that most things happen for a reason.	3.19 (1.03)	3.15 (1.10)	0.04	0.21	0.84	0.04
I give my best effort no matter what the outcome may be.	3.13 (0.83)	2.84 (0.85)	0.28	2.05	0.04*	0.35
I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles.	3.25 (0.73)	3.23 (0.72)	0.01	0.09	0.93	0.03
Even when things look hopeless, I don't give up.	3.19 (0.85)	3.02 (0.89)	0.17	1.16	0.25	0.20
During times of stress/crisis, I know where to turn for help.	2.83 (1.22)	2.78 (1.06)	0.05	0.28	0.78	0.04
Under pressure, I stay focused and think clearly.	2.86 (1.02)	2.63 (0.91)	0.23	1.47	0.14	0.24
I prefer to take the lead in solving problems rather than letting others make all the decisions	3.09 (0.92)	2.85 (0.93)	0.25	1.64	0.10	0.26
I am not easily discouraged by failure.	2.86 (1.04)	2.67 (1.12)	0.19	1.07	0.29	0.18
I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties.	3.02 (1.03)	3.07 (0.88)	-0.05	-0.33	0.74	-0.05
I can make unpopular or difficult decisions that affect other people, if it is necessary.	2.92 (0.83)	2.81 (0.90)	0.11	0.77	0.44	0.13
I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear, and anger.	2.79 (1.07)	2.78 (1.04)	0.01	0.06	0.96	0.01
In dealing with life's problems, sometimes you have to act on a hunch without knowing why.	2.81 (1.01)	2.51 (1.03)	0.30	1.81	0.07	0.29
I have a strong sense of purpose in life.	3.29 (0.87)	3.17 (0.94)	0.12	0.80	0.43	0.12
I feel in control of my life.	3.10 (1.07)	2.98 (1.07)	0.12	0.67	0.51	0.11
I like challenges	2.98 (1.09)	2.58 (1.07)	0.40	2.28	0.02*	0.37
I work to attain my goals no matter what roadblocks I encounter along the way.	3.22 (0.93)	3.11 (0.91)	0.11	0.72	0.47	0.12
I take pride in my achievements.	3.52 (1.00)	3.43 (0.94)	0.08	0.51	0.61	0.09

* Significance $p < 0.05$

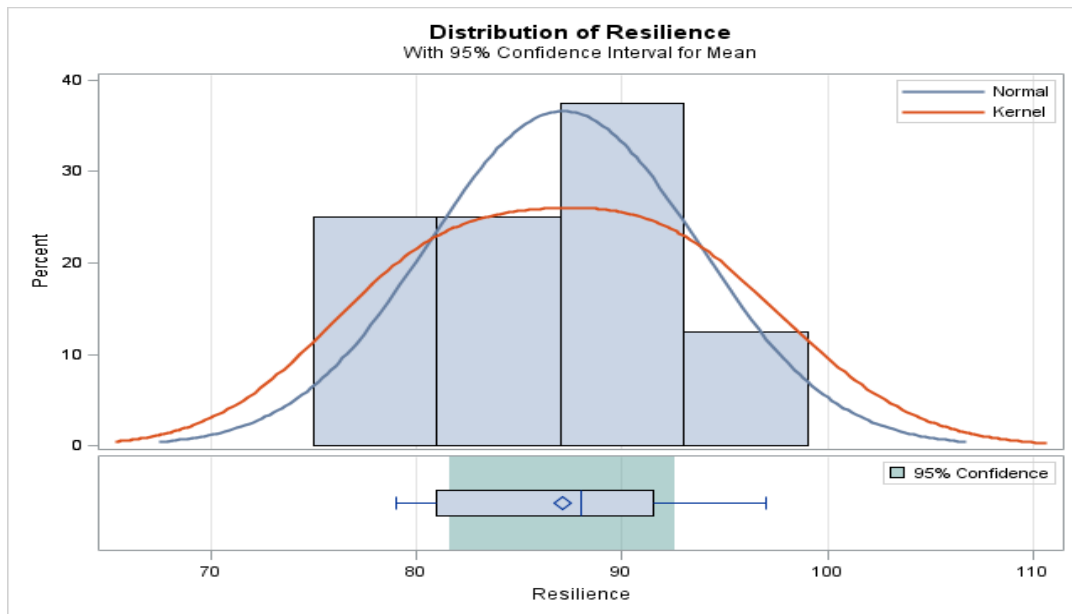


Figure 11. Interview participants' resilience scores compared to the overall population sample.

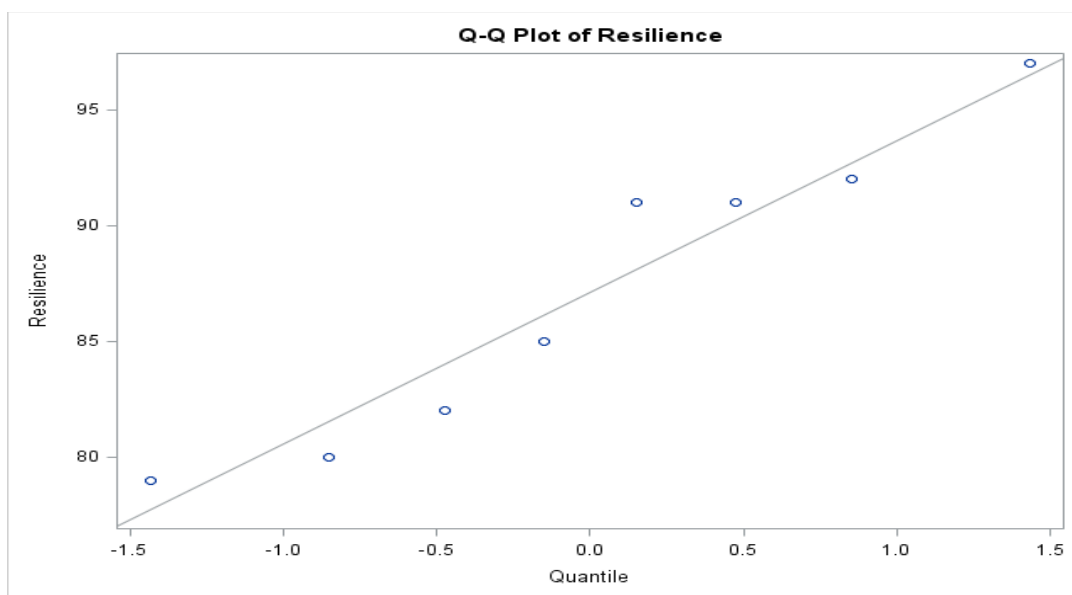


Figure 12. Comparative Distribution of resilience scores of interview participants compared to the overall population mean represented by a Q-Q Plot.

Research Question 3: What role do school counselors and school counseling programs play in Black male achievement and resilience? In seeking to understand the connection between school counselors, school counseling programs and academic success in Black males, interviewees were asked to discuss their experiences with their school counselors. The study results indicated that school counselors and school counseling programs had very little impact on the success of the Black male students interviewed. Research discussions also revealed the need for schools counselors to develop trusting relationships with their Black male students.

Little Impact of School Counselors. School counselors appeared to have very little impact on this group of young men. Only one male from the Bahamas indicated that his counselor played a significant role in his success thus far. In asking the question, “what role did your school counselor play in your success so far?” The responses were;

Davian

Nothing. I never saw her at all. She only focused on the problem kids. I was okay with that cause I didn’t need her.

Dontae

No role. I know we had three of them but I never really had to say anything to them and they did not say much to me either. I guess cause I didn’t get in trouble.

J.R.

I never went to see her. We had a guidance class and I would go to class but that was like a free period for us. I mean she would do stuff. I can’t remember what stuff we did but when we finished we chilled.

Fidel

She played a significant role. She was always telling me about opportunities and she never let me give up. We are still in contact now. She was here with me through COB; her family too.

B.J.

I took counseling class but that was free time.

Ben

Nothing; there was one counselor I hated. She made my life hell. You know what? She did play a role. Her negativity made me work harder.

Dave

I was in IB classes and my schedule was set so I never needed her. Or classes were set so he did not have to say anything to us and we did not need to ask her anything either.

Torres

I did not trust them. There was three of four of them but I am not sure they really cared. Anyway I did not need them because I had my parents.

Need to trust School Counselors. A need for counselors to build a trusting environment was also identified by interview participants. They indicated that they were often not comfortable seeking support from their school counselors.

Ben

I did not trust my counselor enough to tell her what was going on with me. She was always against me.

B. J.

The counselor was cool but she could not understand my life. When school ended she got in the car and went home to her safe neighborhood. I do not think she could do any programs that relate to me and my situation.

Research Question 4: What types of school counseling programs could be implemented to increase academic success and resilience in Black males? Many of

the interview participants indicated that they were not sure of what kinds of counseling programs would have been beneficial to them because they had been exposed to so little. According to them, the programs they were exposed to were often monotonous and redundant. They added that they did not know the role of the school counselor so they had difficulty commenting on what programs the school counselor was responsible for implementing.

Lack of programs. Interview participants had a difficult time identifying school counseling programs that were beneficial to them. Bahamian and American participants indicated that their counselors only worked with the “problem” kids. They felt as if they were often overlooked. Bahamian participants reported more contact with their counselor than American students. They talked about being a part of a number of seminars and workshops related to gang violence, sex and AIDS. They felt that these sessions were not very effective because they were too large and the structure and content were repeated every year. Interview respondents from the United States indicated that they only saw their counselor if they needed a schedule change.

Dave

I only found out about scholarships and aid by going out in the community and going to workshops. My counselor never helped with this.

Torres

I knew the problem kids got to leave class and go to their group counseling but I never did because I did not get in trouble

Davian

I was involved in a program to get college experience. I am not sure of the counselor helped with this but I know my social studies teacher ran this program

Ben

We did go to a college and career fairs. This was a little bit helpful. I think they made all the 12th graders go there.

Lack of awareness of the role of the School Counselor. The need for school counselors to ensure that students know the role of the counselor also emerged as a prevailing theme in both the Bahamian and American students.

Davian

I did not know what counselor did. I know they are responsible for college stuff and classes.

J.R.

What are they supposed to do? Like I said, we used to have counseling class but I can't even remember what we did.

Summary

According to the results of this study, there are a number of factors that contribute to academic success in Black males. These factors include; supportive teachers, friends, parents and community mentors; socialization in school; being liked, accepted and appreciated; high teacher expectations; self-reliance; perseverance; possessing a sense of hope and a purpose; and spirituality. The results also revealed that Black males in the Bahamas and the United States were less resilient than a norm referenced, American population. However, those academically successful Black males who had a difficult time in high school were more resilient than the norm reference.

School counselors are in a position to design programs that address these needs. However, according to this study's results, school counselors have very little impact on the Black male students' success in particular those Black males that had a difficult time

in high school. Their programming efforts are often ineffective. Moreover, Black males are unfamiliar with the role of the school counselor and often do not trust them

The next section will discuss the study results and implications for school counselors.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications

This study results serves as a significant indicator of the need for a comprehensive, detailed approach to changing the trajectory of Black males in the Bahamas and the United States. Study participants have acquired and maintained a level of success not attained by many other Black males. This presumption was based on the fact that they all graduated high school, are presently enrolled in a college or university and are maintaining grade point averages of 2.50 or above. According to the Schott Foundation on Public Education (2010), only 47% of Black males in America graduated high school in 2009. Similarly, unpublished statistics from the Ministry of Education in the Bahamas indicated that while the vast majority of the Black males in Bahamian public high school participated in their high school graduation ceremony, more than 50% received a leaving certificate reflecting a cumulative grade point average of below a 2.00 on a four point scale. Study results indicated that in order to improve the status of Black males in the Bahamas and the United States, it is important for all stakeholders to make the conscious decision to address the idiosyncratic needs of this population. A comprehensive, multi-level approach is important in developing strategies that work collectively to improve the present status, and projected outcome for Black males in the Bahamas and the United States. This chapter will discuss factors that helped interview participants to achieve success thus far. Themes emerging from the interviews and resilience in academically successful Black college males will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with a

discussion of the school counselor's contribution to the interview participants' present level of success.

Emerging Themes

The need for support emerged as the single most common theme among all eight Black males. While the recognition that individuals need support is not new, Black males often present a tough exterior that is perceived as confidence or at bare minimum, indifference. This bravado is often characterized by a distinct physical posture, demeanor, dress code and speech (Corprew & Cunningham, 2012). It is often adopted by Black males as a means of coping with the hardships they face (Spencer, Fegley, Harpalani & Seaton, 2004). This bravado is frequently misinterpreted and results in Black males not receiving the support they need and want. The Black males interviewed in this study received support from their family, teachers, peers and community mentors.

Mothers, fathers, grandparent, and other family members offered the unconditional, steady support the Black young men needed to encourage them to continue to strive to be the best they can be. This familial support remained constant even when they made mistakes. Black males in the Bahamas and the United States both communicated an appreciation for parents' and other family members' support. One young man from the Bahamas discussed his unwavering love for a grandmother who was always there to support him. He vividly recalled a day in high school when he arrived home with the very best grade point average he had ever received. His mother's response to his good news was that he could do better. Grammy, on the other hand, told him how proud she was of him and made his favorite meal. Smiling, this young man also shared

that Grammy also chastised him with love whenever his behavior warranted it. This kind of support encouraged him to be his best.

Teachers also play a major role in supporting Black male students. Their influences often reach beyond the content of the subject they teach. Corprew and Cunningham (2011) suggest that teacher's psychological influence has the potential to change lives. The support and encouragement they lend to Black male students can motivate them to do their very best. In this study, a participant shared how his teacher consistently pushed him to try harder in calculus. Though he admitted that calculus was his most difficult subject, it was his favorite class because his teacher always encouraged him to do his best. Because of the obvious care and concern this teacher had for him, he became comfortable enough to share his dreams with her. They developed an even deeper connection when he shared his dream of attending a particular college. His dream college was his teacher's alma mater. Their relationship deepened after they realized that they shared an adolescent dream of attending the same university. Together, they worked on helping him achieve his dream. According to this young man, she was the first person he contacted after receiving his university acceptance letter. Together, they made his dream come true.

School friends often provide a unique source of support that is different from the support they receive from family members and other adults. For Black males, many of their friends share similar experiences. As a result, they are able to support each other through a personal connection based on their shared experiences. This kind of support helps Black young men manage difficult times in school. Sitting with "the boys" and

laughing at one situation, or letting off steam about another, was often cathartic for the young men in interviewed.

Another invaluable source of support for Black males came from mentors and persons in their community. An interview participant spoke of a businessman he had met through a school program. This carpenter by trade, took him under his wings and showed him many trade secrets. In addition to being a teacher, he pushed the young man to reach further by asking him challenging questions such as, “How will you grow your business?”, “Who is going to manage your money?” and “How will you select employees?” The interview participant shared that it was those kinds of questions that inspired him to think about the business management side of the construction industry. As a result, he decided to major in Business Studies at college. The support this young man received from his mentor sparked a cord that motivated him to go to college and pursue a tertiary degree.

Black college males interviewed also identified the social components of school as a highlight of their high school experience. Lunch and other less academically oriented periods of school provided the opportunity to “hang” with their friends. It was during these times that relationships started and ended. They were able to test boundaries and determine appropriate and inappropriate behavior. They were also able to use this time to share their struggles with each other. For them, school was as much a social, as it was, an academic institution. It was a place for them to feel connected.

A major focus of school reform research since the 1970s has investigated the impact of social connectedness and the importance for schools to recognize teenagers’ need to belong and desire for connectedness (Juvonen, 2007). According to Walton and

Cohen (2007), this connectedness is important because teenagers who begin to feel as if “people like me do not belong in this school” are less motivated to press towards academic success. According to Juvonen (2007), developing friendships is presumed to enhance connectedness and school engagement. This has the potential to impact a student’s desire to do well in school.

By identifying lunch and other non-academic periods of school as the highlight of high school, Black males are underscoring the importance of social connectedness. While it is understood that social connectedness and a sense of belonging is not the major focus of school, it is important to be aware of its potential to enhance school engagement and possibly improve the academic outcome of Black males.

The need to be liked is another important contributor to a successful high school experience for Black males. As indicated by interview participants, it is important to be liked by their peers and teachers. For African American males enrolled in IB, advanced placement or honors classes, this need is often compounded by the fact that they are often underrepresented in those programs. As a result, they are called upon to be the voice of Black America. Being the spokesperson for an entire race of people puts a burden on the Black male student. This burden is compounded by feeling of not being liked by their other Black males and females not enrolled in IB or honors classes. In fact, they are often accused of “acting white.” For two African American males interviewed, being accused of “acting white” was a rejection of their culture and heritage. For them, being a good student was interpreted by other African American students as “acting white.” As a result, they were caught in a position of having to decide to be a good student and be accused of “acting white” or not do well in school, and be accepted as a part of the Black

student body. These two young men offered a redefinition of the Black school male; one who embraces being Black and being successful. They listened to rap music, excelled in sports, used their colloquial language and did well academically.

It is unfortunate that successful African American males are often placed in such a position. They should not have to feel as if they are the voice of Black people in one arena and an outcast in another. Addressing the notion that being academically successful is not a part of the Black identity is important in helping successful Black males remain focused and not succumb to the pressure of feeling like an outcast. Additionally, reversing this attitude among Black male students can encourage other Black males to work harder to be academically successful. Stinson, (2011) told the stories of four successful African American males in their twenties who were able to survive the burden of “acting white” and renegotiate a discourse that suggests that “acting white” is not their burden at all. The voices of the young African American men in this article strongly stated that being academically successful was also a part of their identity.

I seem to think the opposite kind of way, in that, not that I am necessarily having to carry the banner for my race, but it feels good to me to know that I am accomplishing things, and as an African American male. I don't feel the need to separate the two because it makes me feel good.... So many African Americans, even at the law school, the staff in the law school, the custodial staff to all types of support staff, they all provide so much encouragement, to not only me, but I see it happening to other African American students. There just seems to be a lot of pride that they all take in seeing us do well. So I definitely don't think that it is

necessary to develop a raceless persona to be successful. I view it in a completely opposite light. (p. 52)

The attitude that academic success is a part of a Black mentality should be nurtured among all Black male students. With this new found identity, Black high school males can appreciate the merits of being academically successful.

In addition to being liked, the young Black males spoke of wanting to be appreciated. Many of them spoke of going through school and not being recognized for the good things they did or for the effort they made. For the Black males from the Bahamas and the United States, graduation was the one time they felt as if they mattered.

Mattering in school relates to a healthy school climate often referred to as cohesion. According to MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2009), school cohesion is related to increased academic performance. It is important for the Black male to feel as if he matters to people at school. A conscious effort must be made by school personnel to let Black males know that they are appreciated. Schools commonly focus their student appreciation on academic accomplishments. While it is imperative to do this, efforts should be made to show Black males that they are appreciated not only for their athletic prowess, but other skills and abilities they possess as well. Showing Black males that they matter has the potential to increase their connectedness to school and increase their academic outcome.

In a study by Dixon and Griddine (2010), Black male students' experiences with mattering were explored. Nine African American male students shared their experiences of feeling as if they mattered at their school. They shared that their school counselor made it a point to ask as many of them, as often as she could, how they were doing and

took the time to stop and listen to their responses. Similarly, a Bahamian student in this current study indicated that he too knew that he mattered to his counselor who made it a point to find out about his activities in Junior Achievement. He shared that she was there to support him and congratulated him when he made the semi-finals in the Bahamas' National Junior Achievement speech competition. He indicated that this gesture was extremely important because the boys always felt as if teachers focused more on girls. Simple gestures such as these help Black male students feel as if they matter and their efforts are appreciated.

Linked with the need to feel liked and appreciate is the Black male's need to feel as if they have the ability to succeed. Black male students often feel as if teachers do not expect them to do well. This lack of confidence in their academic ability often leads Black males to underachieve. According to the interview participants, there are many Black males who can be more academically successful but refuse to try for fear of failure. This fear of failure is probably a direct result of being told at an early age that they were not smart enough. A consequence of this is a feeling of hopelessness.

Many Black males begin to feel as if there is no hope for a bright future. During the interviews, many of the young men shared a feeling of sadness as they thought about other Black males in their high schools. The African American young men in IB and honors classes pointed out that though many of the Black males in their high school were not their friends, they often felt saddened because many seemed hopeless. They shared that they would frequently ignore this feeling because it was not really their problem. Bahamian young men shared that it was not "cool" to talk about being smart but they would quietly tell their friends to do their schoolwork. In Black young men, low teacher

expectations can lead to a feeling of hopelessness in less successful Black males and a degree of sadness in more successful Black young men.

Addressing the low academic achievement in Black males is not a simple task. One Bahamian young man shared that he and a few of his low achieving friends were called to the counselor's office one afternoon. He said that they were reluctant to go but had no choice. As they walked down to the office, they wondered what they were being blamed for again. According to the interviewee, he and his friends were far too often blamed for things of which they had no involvement. As they got to the counselor's office, she asked them to have a seat. Shortly after, another young man, who had repeated a grade level, came into the office. They were all confused and could not figure out why they were there. The counselor then proceeded to tell them that a political figure would be visiting the school and that she was responsible for organizing a ceremony to honor him. She informed the young men that she had selected them to lead the ceremony. The young Bahamian interviewee indicated that they were afraid and confused at the same time. Could she really be allowing them to represent the school? Despite many objections from school administration and staff, this counselor did allow them to lead. As it turned out, the ceremony was a great success. The young Bahamian interviewee indicated that this was the point when he decided to turn his life around. He further went on to say that another turning point for him was when he overheard the principal telling the counselor that she needed to use the top students in the school for the ceremony because the students she had chosen were not eloquent and did not have a solid grasp on grammar. The counselor was adamant that she would use them, and, she did. He loved the fact that his counselor had confidence in them and allowed them to lead this

special event. This instilled hope in the young interviewee as he realized that his counselor expected his friends and him to do well. This story is a wonderful example of how a school counselor in the Bahamas was able to instill hope in her three young Black male students. She took a chance on them and reaped great rewards. Hope was restored and a desire to do well was ignited. Unfortunately, stories like this are not heard often enough. What is all too often heard are negative commentaries about Black males. This story could have had a completely different outcome had counselor folded under the pressure and not allow the young men to represent the school. It was quite possible that their hopes could have been dashed or that the expectation for them not to succeed, confirmed. The impact of this negative outcome could have been far reaching. Encouragingly, successful Black males interviewed in this study indicated that they used negative encounters to propel them to achieve more.

According to this study, successful Black males often use negativity that is hurled at them as a motivator to succeed. One young man said that he took great pleasure in seeing the look on his principal's face when he returned to his high school and informed the principal that he had gotten a scholarship. As he walked away, the interviewee heard the principal tell an office staff member that he had gotten lucky. The animated young man shared that he turned and informed the principal that he did not get lucky, it was hard work. This young Black man and many like him, tell the story of hearing school personnel speak negatively about them. For the academically successful Black males in this study, this negativity often fuels their passion to succeed. However, it is all too often the case that even Black males with the potential to be academically successful are not

able to overcome the constant negativity. As a result, Black males need a heightened level of resilience to overcome the challenges they often face.

Resilience

The 25 item, Conner Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) was developed to assess resilience as a psychological measure and for use in clinical practice (Conner & Davidson, 2003). It has been used extensively with diverse populations in America and internationally. It was an appropriate fit to assess resilience in Black males in the Bahamas and the United States.

After analyzing the result of study participants in the Bahamas and in the United States, three significant assumptions were made:

1. Black college males who have successfully graduated high school and are now attending a college or university were less resilient than the general population of Americans;
2. There was no statistically significant difference in the level of resilience between Black, male college students in the Bahamas and the United States;
3. Black male college students that had a more difficult time in high school were more resilient than those who had an easier high school experience.

The first resulting assumption that Black college males are less resilient than the general American population was not expected. Resilience theory suggests that individuals have the ability to prosper in the face of adversity (Seecombe, 2002). Considering the fact that Black male students in the United States, in particular, face a number of challenges including but not limited to low teacher expectation (Bacon, Yotten, & Bridges, 2010), unfair disciplinary practices (Fenning & Rose, 2007) and

cultural deficit school personnel, practices and policies (Irving & Hudley, 2005), it was expected that the study sample would score high on the resilience scale. Study results did not support this assumption. Rather, it suggested that the successful Black college males surveyed scored significantly less than the population. A possible explanation for this finding might lay in the fact that many of the respondents did not have a difficult high school experience. Only nine of the 156 respondents reported a score of one or two, on the question that addressed how much they enjoyed high school. In fact, the modal score was four with more than two thirds of the sample giving the response of two or three. It is difficult to make accurate assumptions regarding this result. However, based on the discussion with interview participants enrolled in high school IB or honors classes, they were not exposed to as many difficult experiences as their friends who were not enrolled in those classes. It is possible that study participants had less difficult experiences due to their participation in more competitive academic classes.

Interview participants scored higher than the general population on the CD-RISC. When directly asked about factors contributing to their success, interview respondents identified self-reliance, perseverance, a sense of hope, mentoring and support, overcoming negativity, a sense of purpose and their spiritual belief as factors that helped them successfully complete high school. These findings are similar to previous research which suggests that resilience is reflected in an individual's sense of self efficacy, self-esteem, self-control, ability to cope with adversity and spirituality (Waller 2001). In light of the lower resilience scores reported in this study and, armed with the knowledge that these factors are important to resilience and academic success in Black males, it is incumbent on school personnel to develop programs to cultivate these qualities in Black

youth. School counselors, in particular, are in a unique position to play a major role in developing resilience and other achievement factors in Black males. Unlike teachers whose content is prescribed, school counselors have the leeway and responsibility to adapt their content to be responsive to the needs of their students. Unfortunately, many school counselors have not had as great of an impact as they have the potential to have.

Impact of School Counselors

According to seven of the eight interview participants, school counselors have had little to no impact on their success thus far. Both Bahamian and American participants indicated they did not know the role of the counselor. For Bahamians, school counselors assumed the roles of administrators, nurses or teacher substitutes. For African American students, the school counselor was the person they went to for scheduling and class changes. Only one Bahamian male indicated that his school counselor delivered and continue to deliver the academic, career development and personal/ social support that school counselors are to provide according to ASCA (2004) framework for school counseling in America and the PAPOS framework in the Bahamas. Far too often, school counseling programs are reactive or remediation oriented (Olatuni, Shure, Garrett, Conwill & Rivera, 2008). According to the American Counseling Association (ACA), school counseling programs should employ data based assessments in order to provide responsive services for their students. This study provides school counselors with pertinent data to guide school counselors programming initiatives.

Implications for School Counselors

Black males are likely to underperform or drop out of school without the intentional efforts to alter underachievement in this population (Noguera, 2001). School

counselors must be deliberate in addressing the needs of their Black male students.

School counseling programs should reflect the four themes of the ASCA National Model (2010) in developing programming for Black males. These themes include leadership, advocacy, systemic changes and collaborative/teaming. Erford (2011) offered the following critical tasks associated with each theme:

Leadership

- Close the achievement gap.
- Ensure that all students have access to challenging academic coursework.
- Enact system-wide changes.

Advocacy

- Assess the needs of the student population.
- Address the needs of all students.
- Remove any barriers to student success.
- Set high expectations for student achievement.

Systemic Change

- Identify areas in need of improvement through data-driven programming;
- Advocate for school-wide changes (e.g., instructional practices, school philosophy, policies, procedures) to help increase student achievement;

Collaboration/Teaming

- Work collaboratively with stakeholders (i.e, parents, teachers, administrators, community organizations) to meet the needs of all students;
- Develop effective working relationships with stakeholders.

If these tasks are addressed in school counseling programs, a healthy school environment and healthy Black male student poised for success will result.

Based on the responses of the Black male students in this study, school counselors should also consider the following when developing programs to address the needs of Black male student:

1. Help Black males build healthy relationships between themselves and all persons involved in their academic and personal lives so that they feel supported;
2. Develop resilience factors such as self-reliance, perseverance, hopefulness, an ability to overcome negativity, a sense of personal value and spirituality;
3. Intentionally address the needs of the Black male student that is not an academic, athletic or behavioral standout. Black males who fall in this “other” category are often underserved;
4. Help Black males, other populations of students, and colleagues understand the three foci of the school counselor;
5. Be intentional about being visible and available;
6. Provide culturally responsive services that include:

- a. Individual counseling
- b. Group counseling
- c. Consultation
- d. Referrals
- e. Crisis response
- f. Peer facilitation
- g. Collaboration

An ecological approach to the development of culturally responsive programming for Black males is fundamental in providing a fertile environment for young Black men to pursue academic excellence. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model can be used as a theoretical underpinning to structure school counseling programs. It provides a multi-level framework that starts with the individual and his intimate relationships and extends to cultural and historical levels of influence. A brief description of each stage of this model is provided in Figure 13. Figure 14 incorporates this study's finding with Bronfenbrenner's theory. Emergent themes are placed into various levels of the model to illustrate how each theme can be addressed through school counseling programming efforts on that level.

As illustrated in Figure 13, school counseling efforts are primarily focused on the microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem levels. School counseling initiatives for Black males should focus on the Black male as an individual, his direct relationships with other people and systems, the bi-directional influences between those relationships and the impact of cultural values, attitudes and history. Examples of school counseling initiatives that have impacted Black male in this study are presented in Table 8.

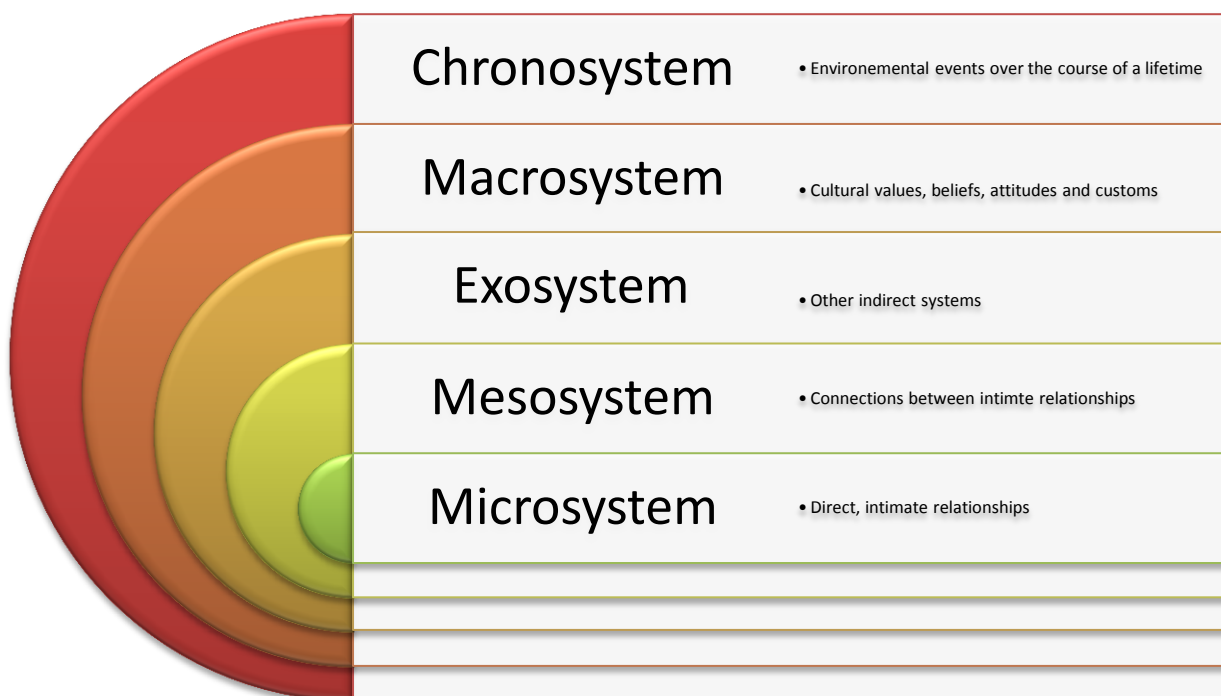


Figure 13. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological model.

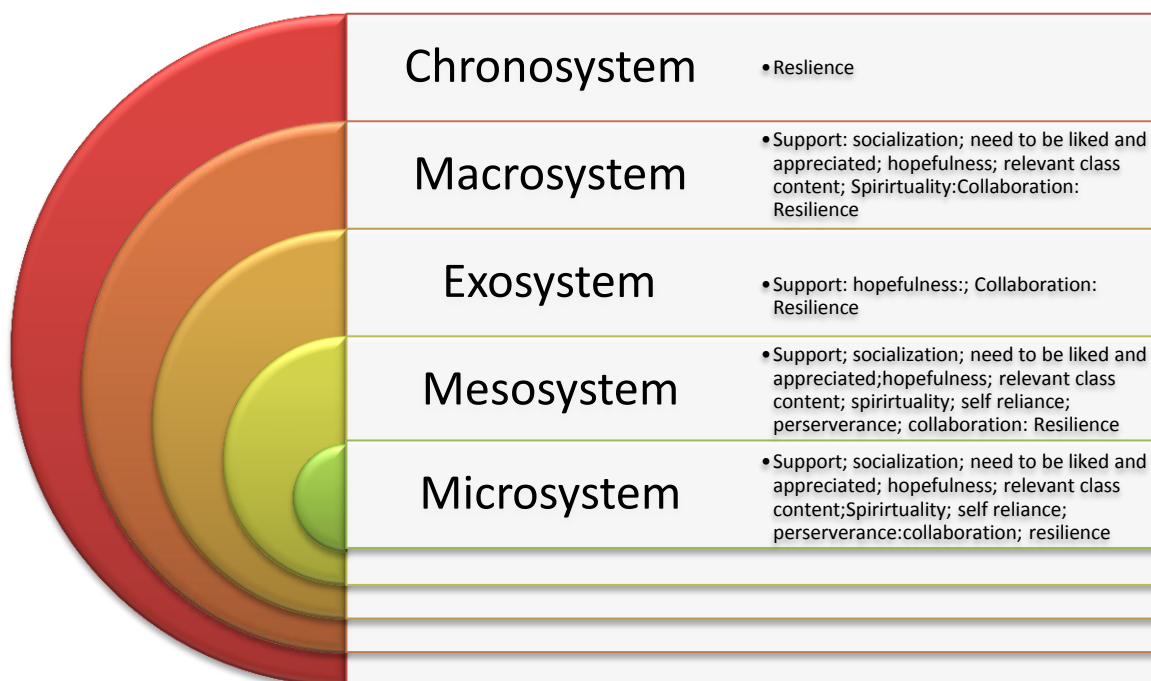


Figure 14. Study themes incorporated in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model.

Table 8

Effective programs for Black males from an ecological perspective

Level	Program	Description	Success factor /s
Microsystem	Brother's keepers – School based group for black males	Black males communicate about the hardships they face. They work together to build relationships, develop leadership skills, self-awareness and identity and self esteem	Support; socialization; need to be liked and appreciated; hopefulness; self- reliance; perseverance; resilience
Mesosystem	Real Men Ministries – a faith based group of Black men	Partners with middle and high school to provide mentoring and support services to Black male students considered “at risk”	Support; socialization; need to be liked and appreciated; hopefulness; spirituality; self-reliance; perseverance; collaboration; resilience
Exosystem	Parent Employment workshop	Parents in an urban school setting were invited to a career connection group where they met business representatives to discuss employment options.	Note that systems on this level do not directly influence the Black male student
Macrosystem	Culturally responsive content training	Teachers were trained in adapting their lessons to create activities to make their content relevant to their culturally diverse students	Support; socialization; need to be liked and appreciated; hopefulness; relevant class content; spirituality; self- reliance; perseverance; resilience
Chronosystem	Growing up and moving on workshop	Black males attended a weekend retreat to help them to address transitional challenges of leaving high school	Support; socialization; hopefulness; self- reliance; perseverance; resilience

Addressing the needs of Black male students is important to improving their academic outcome. School counselors have a responsibility to address the personal/social, career and academic needs of their students. As such, initiatives designed to help black males improve their academic performance are important. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to plan programming that address issues of support, socialization, need to be liked and appreciated, hopefulness, relevant class content, spirituality, self- reliance, perseverance, and resilience can be effective in improving the academic success of Black males.

Figure 14 has the added theme of collaboration which was included based on this researcher's comprehensive interpretation of the data and the expansiveness of an ecological approach. It is important for school counselors to collaborate with administrators, teachers, policy makers, parents, family, career professionals and the community. Additionally school counselors should focus their efforts on one or two levels per semester as opposed to all levels. Efforts to address the needs of Black male students on all systemic levels during one semester have the potential to lead to counselor burnout and low efficacy. Feelings of low efficacy in school counselors can have a more deleterious impact on the prognosis for Black male success than what presently exists. According to Bodenhorn, Wolfe and Airen (2010), school counselors with higher levels of efficacy are more aware of the achievement gap. The greater the school counselor's awareness of the achievement gap, the more intentional the effort to close it.

This intentional effort, coupled with an ecological approach, has great potential for success. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is expansive and allows school counselors to develop programming initiatives that attend to the needs of Black male

students from a multi-dimensional perspective. This multidimensional viewpoint has the potential to inspire expansive thinking. As a result, it allows school counselors to view Black males from varying standpoints as opposed to a tunnel view of a group of individuals who are generally failing academically and socially. Understandably, many might have a negative view of expansive programming. However, if information is gathered from a multidimensional perspective, it can encourage continued research and growth. For example, a school counseling program might decide to address the results presented from a micro-systemic perspective during one semester. The focus of that semester could be "Black males building better relationships". As suggested earlier, a programming initiative could be similar to Brother's keepers. In this group, young Black males learn to develop and sustain relationships with each other. Other micro-systemic initiatives can include programming to help the Black male build relationships with other persons with whom he has a direct, reciprocal relationship. Examples include a "father/son Olympics" month thick with collaborative, competitive activities that require the participation of both father and son; a "mixing with mother" cook-off where mothers and sons prepare a meal to take to a homeless shelter; or "speed dating with my teacher" where Black males and teachers spend an afternoon asking and answering each other's questions for five-minute intervals. During the subsequent semester, school counseling programs might decide to address the results of this study from a macro system perspective. During this semester, school counseling programs can build on the programs of the previous semester while focusing on the role that macro systems play. Programming can focus on helping teachers and administrators understand the role that race, culture, and ethnicity play in the identity development and academic success of

Black males. For example, school counselors can organize an initiative called "Don't sweat this swag" workshop where teachers are exposed to the cultural nuances of Black males including their distinct gait, language, and cool pose. This multidimensional approach will allow school counselors to construct programs for a number of years. Further, the ecological model has the benefit of incorporating all stakeholders in the Black male's life in order to promote his academic success.

The holistic view of the Black male engendered by an ecological perspective fosters a comprehensive, culturally responsive, understanding of the Black male high school student. This knowledge, awareness and developed skills can positively impact the academic success of Black males in the Bahamas and the United States. If Black males are better educated, there is the potential for them to positively affect change in their communities and countries. For example, at a microsystem level, they can become better fathers and at the macro-system level they can become policymakers. Additionally, dropout and incarceration rates could decrease and graduation and employment rates increase.

Limitations

One of the major limitations of this study was the limited research of Black males in the Bahamas. According to the Ministry of Education in the Bahamas and the College of the Bahamas, males are lagging behind females in academic achievement. However, there is little empirical data to substantiate this position. As a result, a comparison of Black males in the Bahamas and the United States was limited to the results of this study.

Additionally, the CD-RISC comparison was norm referenced on an American population. The present study represents the first Bahamian population this assessment

was administered to. As a result, a direct comparison between Black college males in the Bahamas and the general Bahamian population could not be made. Similarly, comparing Black males in the Bahamas to a norm referenced American population can be problematic.

The qualitative component of this research does not lend to an ability to generalize the study results. However, it was the distinct purpose of the author to hear the individual voices of successful Black males in an attempt to identify and compare factors that contribute to academic success in Black male high school students in the Bahamas and the United States and suggest a framework for effective school counseling programs that are responsive to their needs.

There was an inability to compare the number of persons having access to the resilience survey with the number of persons who actually took the survey. After follow-up with the respective principal investigator and study liaison in the United States, it was realized that the survey did not have as wide a distribution as was originally intended. Though initial study numbers were met, the generalizability would have been improved with a greater number of respondents.

Future Research

This study was designed to alter the dominant discourse regarding the failure of Black males in the Bahamas and the United States. Instead, it presents an alternative line of research which applauds the successful Black male and enlists his help and assistance in affecting change in the trajectory of less successful Black males. This strength-based approach not only recognizes the successes of Black males, but it also acknowledges the importance of asking these males about factors that lend to their success. This information from Black men, for Black men, has great potential to impact the academic

success of Black males. As a result, similar strength based studies will be beneficial to closing the achievement gap.

Future comparisons of resilience in Black American males and other populations will also be beneficial in understanding Black males from both a racial and ethnic perspective. Future research efforts can explore resilience in Black males in the Bahamas. This would provide a norm reference for comparative data. This data can then be compared to similar data in the United States. Results for comparisons can eliminate similarities and differences in the needs of Black males from a national, cultural perspective.

Another area of potential research could facilitate a discourse on how best school counselors can address the needs of their Black male population. The results of this study suggest that there is great room for growth in this research area. School counselors arguably have the greatest potential among school personnel to adjust their programs to meet of their Black male students. In order to do this, school counselors must know what Black males need; know how well they are meeting those needs; and develop deficit areas in order to help Black males successfully traverse high school and create a positive trajectory for their success.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify and compare factors that contributed to academic success in Black male high school students in the Bahamas and the United States and suggest a framework for effective school counseling programs that are responsive to their needs. It was intended to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What factors contribute to academic success in Black high school males?

- (2) How resilient are Black college males who recently graduated high school?
- (3) What role do school counselors and school counseling programs play in Black male achievement and resilience?
- (4) What types of school counseling programs could be implemented to increase academic success and resilience in Black males?

This study is important as it has the potential to help close the achievement gap.

In the Bahamas, this achievement gap reflects a difference in academic performance between male and female students. In the United States, the achievement gap typically represents a difference in academic achievement between Black and other minority students and the dominant Euro-American population.

American and Bahamian participants interviewed in this study reported almost identical results. They all indicated that their academic success has been positively impacted by;

- supportive teachers, friends, parents and community mentors;
- school socialization;
- being liked, accepted and appreciated;
- high teacher expectations;
- self-reliance;
- perseverance;
- overcoming negativity;
- having a sense of hope and a purpose;
- Spirituality.

Another shared common factor between the 156 American and Bahamian males in this study is that both groups reported lower mean scores on the resilience scale, CD-RISC, than the general population in America. This is significant because it indicates a need for school counselors to work on resilience factors in Black males to help them navigate and overcome their challenges.

One of the few differences found between Black males in the Bahamas and the United States related to being liked by friends. African American males in IB and honors classes indicated that they were not liked by other Black males not in IB classes. They were accused of “acting white” and selling out their race. Academically successful Bahamian males did not experience this. They were considered not cool. In essence, they were unpopular. The commonality between both scenarios is the fact that Bahamian and American Black males experience negative feedback from their peers if they achieved some measure of academic success. It is critical for school counseling programs to address this by helping to shift the mentality that academic success is not a part of the Black identity.

Another difference between the Bahamian and American students was related to the amount of contact they had with their school counselors. Bahamian interviewees indicated that they participated in a number of large group sessions and workshops organized by their counselors. According to them, the workshops were mundane and the content repeated every year. Contrary to this, African American males had little to no contact with their counselors. Though the amount of contact between Bahamian and American males and their counselors were different, the end result was similar. The academic success of neither group was profoundly impacted by their school counselor.

As the researcher, I was initially alarmed because I found no major differences in factors that impact academic success in Black males in the Bahamas and the United States based on my interviews and survey instrument. Upon later reflection, I became aware of four poignant realizations.

The first is that the Black males interviewed in this study were more resilient than the remainder of the sample and the population norm. These eight academically successful high school graduates reported lower scores on the question of enjoying high school. This suggests that they had some difficult times. During the interviews, the young Black males also reported that they used negativity to inspire them. When assessing these factors together, one can make the assumption that the more negativity the successful Black male student received, the more he worked harder to be successful. A challenge for school counselors is to teach Black males how to channel negativity into positive directions. Based on this research, this might be a difficult task as many counselors are not connecting with the young males as much as needed.

This problem led me to a second realization which is the cold hard fact that the majority of the young Black males interviewed were not impacted by their school counselor or school counseling programs. It is imperative that counselors are aware that they might not be reaching their Black male students. If they are not reaching them, they cannot affect change. As a school counselor myself, this is not an option. Responsive school counseling programs can be tailored to help Black male students effectively channel energy generated from negative experiences and rewrite the narrative that success is not a part of the Black identity.

The third realization is that redefining the trajectory for Black males is a daunting task. Designing an ecologically comprehensive school counseling program to meet the needs of Black males is difficult but necessary. A possible solution to this dilemma is collaboration. Collaboration from a microsystem's perspective might involve getting young Black males together and inviting their input on school counseling programming plans. A mesosystemic plan might involve connecting and collaborating with the social institutions that impact the Black male student. This can be beneficial to understanding the Black male student's need outside the school environment. This is essential because the impact of the world outside school is often felt inside school. These collaborative partnerships have the potential to bring new insight to school counseling programs and provide resources and resource persons to support Black male students.

The final ah-ha moment I had was the realization that international collaborative efforts can be developed. Because of the fact that Black males in the Bahamas and the United States share similar success factors, collaborative efforts between countries can be mutually beneficial. School counseling programming can be collaboratively assessed for effectiveness on different populations with a shared ancestry. For school counselor in America, this can help them meet the needs of their Afro-Caribbean students. School counselors in the Bahamas have the benefit of accessing and using information from a larger resource pool than they would have had available to them without the benefit of collaboration.

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs(CACREP) provides standards to ensure that school counselors acquire knowledge and master the skills necessary to practice effectively and, it suggests that

counselor training programs recruit, employ and retain diverse faculty and students (CACREP, 2009). The knowledge element of CACREP's professional identity standards requires counseling programs to contain a social and cultural diversity course. This proposes that studies should provide an understanding of the cultural context of relationships, issues and trends in a multicultural society (CACREP, 2009). CACREP accredited counseling programs often offer a course in Counseling and Diversity. However, this standard allows for the implementation of a course related to the achievement gap for persons enrolled in school counseling programs. This is supported by ASCA framework (2010) which indicates that school counselors are also responsible for the academic, social and career development of their students. A course on the achievement gap will introduce master's level students to the achievement gap and the idiosyncratic needs of Black males and other diverse groups within the school counseling context. It will help school counselors in training understand and prepare themselves to address the academic under-achievement and social challenges in many urban public schools. A course such as this allows preparatory programs and their students to meet the following CACREP 2009 standards:

1. address multicultural and pluralistic trends including characteristics within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally;
2. develop an understanding of attitudes, beliefs and acculturative experiences including experiential learning activities designed to foster student's understanding of self and culturally diverse clients

3. develop individual, family, group and community strategies for working with and advocating for diverse populations including multicultural competencies
4. develop cultural self-awareness, promote cultural social justice, advocate and help to resolve conflicts and provide other culturally supportive behaviors that promote optimal wellness and growth of the human spirit, mind or body.
5. eliminate biases, prejudices and processes of intentional or unintentional oppression and discrimination.

School counselors should be held accountable for the effectiveness of their programs in meeting programmatic, school and, at minimum, state goals. School counselors should consistently compile data and implement and evaluate programs based on that data. For example, the Florida School counseling framework (2010) evaluates counselors on the following criteria:

- Program organization
- Guidance Curriculum delivered to all students
- Individual planning with students
- Responsive services that provide individual, small groups, consultation and referral services for students
- Systems support for other programs within the school
- School counselors discuss and come in to agreement with administrators regarding department management and program action plan
- Collect and use of data to guide programing initiatives

- Monitor student progress
- Developing a master calendar
- Evaluate programming results
- Conduct yearly program audits
- Establish and convene a school advisory council
- Be a student advocate, leader, collaborator and systems change agent

This evaluation framework specifically addresses the achievement gap and the expectation that school counselors work towards closing the achievement gap. Evaluation criteria 13.4 in the Florida School Counseling Framework, 2010 states “The school counselors understands reform issues and works to close the achievement gap.” On this criteria, school counselors are rated on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) on their effectiveness in closing the achievement gap.

With the adherence to CACREP pre-training standards, consistent in- service evaluations and action items based on evaluative criteria such as those stated in the Florida School Counseling framework, the achievement gap can be minimized if not eliminated. School counselors are in a unique position to help close the achievement gap in the Bahamas and the United States. Using data from this and other empirical studies, school counselors can develop responsive school counseling programs that employ academic success factors identified by Black high school males who are now successfully enrolled in college.

The encouraging voice of the Black male high school graduate

This research espoused the value of hearing the voices of successful Black males and using that information to affect change in the lives of other Black males. This change

has the potential to help to improve the social status of Black males through academic advancement. It seems only fitting to end this dissertation with their voices. Each interview participant shared words of encouragement for other young Black males. Their words centered around the general themes of being true to oneself, doing one's best and being dedicated to a goal.

J.R.

Keep your head up.

Ben

Keep pushing for what you want. People will say negative thing but keep pushing.

Dave

Set your goals and do not let anyone tell you that you cannot do it

Fidel

Do not conform to society but cut your own path. You do not have to be a doctor or lawyer. Just do your best at whatever it is you decide.

Davian

Keep striving for your goals; when you reach one, set another one.

Dontae

Things might get tough but just keeping pushing. Someone is looking up to you.
You would be surprised to know who.

B.J.

Believe in yourself.

Torres

Do you!

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Appendices

Appendix A

University of South Florida IRB Approval Letter



DIVISION OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-5618

May 10, 2012
Detra Bethell
Psychological and Social Foundations

RE: **Expedited Approval** for Initial Review

IRB#: Pro00007734

Title: Perspectives of Black College Males'on the Achievement Gap:Implications for School Counselors

Dear Detra Bethell:

On 5/10/2012 the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above referenced protocol. Please note that your approval for this study will expire on 5/10/2013.

Approved Items:

Protocol Document(s):

[Active - Proposal 3_26.docx](#) 3/27/2012 2:03 PM 0.01

Consent/Assent Documents:

Name Modified Version

Waiver of Informed Consent Doc. granted on the Adult Consent Form

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey,

interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent as outlined in the federal regulations at **45 CFR 46.117 (c)**: An IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds either:

(1) That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or (2) That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context. As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,
John Schinka, PhD, Chairperson ,
USF Institutional Review Board

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Schinka, Ph.D." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cc: Various Menzel, CCRP
USF IRB Professional Staff

Appendix B

Participant Demographic Data

Name: _____

Age: _____

Sex: _____

Present Academic level: _____ Current Grade Point Average: _____

Where do you presently attend school? _____

What year did you leave high school? _____

What was your final high school Grade Point Average? _____

On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest, how much did you enjoy high school? _____

Please list the clubs or organizations you are currently a part of:

a) At your present college/university:

b) Community:

Please list any leadership roles you currently hold or has previously held.

Why are you interested in participating in this study?

Appendix C

CD-RISC

For each item, please mark an “**x**” in the box below that best indicates how much you agree with the following statements as they apply to you over the last **month**. If a particular situation has not occurred recently, answer according to how you think you would have felt.

	Not at all (0)	Rarely true (1)	Sometimes true (2)	Often true (3)	True nearly all the time (4)
I am able to adapt when changes occur.					
I have at least one close and secure relationship that helps me when I am stressed.					
When there are no clear solutions to my problems, sometimes fate or God can help.					
I can deal with whatever comes my way					
Past successes give me confidence in dealing with new challenges and difficulties.					
I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems.					
Having to cope with stress can make me stronger.					
I tend to bounce back after illness, injury, or other hardships.					
Good or bad, I believe that most things happen for a reason.					
I give my best effort no matter what the outcome may be.					
I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles.					
Even when things look hopeless, I don't give up.					
During times of stress/crisis, I know where to turn for help.					
Under pressure, I stay focused and think clearly.					
I prefer to take the lead in solving problems rather than letting others make all the decisions					

I am not easily discouraged by failure.					
I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties.					
I can make unpopular or difficult decisions that affect other people, if it is necessary.					
I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear, and anger.					
In dealing with life's problems, sometimes you have to act on a hunch without knowing why.					
I have a strong sense of purpose in life.					
I feel in control of my life.					
I like challenges					
I work to attain my goals no matter what roadblocks I encounter along the way.					
I take pride in my achievements.					