

The Silent Voices of Gifted, Black Males

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Abstract

This qualitative study used social capital theory, label theory, and institutional theory as the interpretive lens to examine the achievement attitudes, gifted identification, racial identity development, beliefs, and behaviors of gifted, Black male high school students in select high schools at a large, urban school district in the Midwest. The primary objectives of the study were to: (a) understand the school experiences of gifted, Black male students in today's urban public schools; (b) expand the theoretical and scientific knowledge on the social, cultural, and racial implications on the achievement of gifted, Black male high school students; (c) pinpoint the factors that most positively and negatively shape the academic success of gifted, Black students who attend urban schools; and (d) contribute to current research to advance teachers, administrators, and school counselors understanding of gifted, Black students who attend urban schools. The sample comprised sixteen gifted, Black male students, from grades 10th to 12th. Five themes emerged from the larger study with academic achievement being the focus of this paper. Recommendations for school personnel, parents, and students are discussed.

Introduction

Even though the education of minority students has steadily progressed, there are still some educational domains that remain elusive for minority populations. One such domain is gifted education (Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005a). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2006) as cited in Ford (2011), “In 2006, Black students were underrepresented by 47% in gifted education; Black females were underrepresented by 35% and Black males by 55%” (p. 13). Although the federal government recognizes gifted education and has offered a workable definition, there are still no federal mandates that exist for gifted education to be executed at the state and local levels. Many states have similar yet varying definitions of gifted education and offer varying funding formulas and service plans. All program and service decisions are made at the state and local levels. According to the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC), in the absence of federal minimum standards, “there is wide variability between states, and in many cases, an even wider unevenness between districts in the same state” (n.d.). Because of this disconnect, school districts are able to interpret codes and laws differently which profoundly impacts student access to gifted programs and services. Further, since there is no minimum standard for gifted education for students, there is also limited teacher preparation at the undergraduate level (Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005b), and because states often only require identification and not service, institutional agents do not know how to recruit, teach, counsel, and retain gifted students in their programs (Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005a).

Since gifted students are not a homogenous group, teachers often do not understand their behaviors, especially if the student comes from a different racial group than the teacher. For instance, “Black students are socially oriented, expressive and more extroverted than White students. These students may not master social codes that are tacit in school settings and may use

Black vernacular” (Ford, 1996, p. 87-88). These different social orientations can lead to misconceptions about children of other cultures and can lead to underrepresentation in gifted education and overrepresentation in special education. Ford (2011) posits that “Black students are consistently overrepresented in special education, in the lowest ability groups and tracks, and among high school and college dropouts” (p. 15). In Ogbu’s 1997 study conducted in Shaker Heights, Ohio, he reported that “most students in the ‘academic enrichment’ or gifted classes were White, whereas most students in ‘remedial’ or ‘skills’ classes were mostly Black” (2003, p. 7). African American males are underrepresented more than their female counterparts in gifted programs. According to Ford (1996), “Black females outnumber Black males in gifted programs by a ratio of 2:1” (p. 127). She further posits that gifted Black males are more likely to underachieve than their gifted, Black female counterparts.

In one of the few groundbreaking studies conducted on Black males in gifted education nationally, Moore and Flowers (2012) examined the representation of gifted, African American males in 20 of the nation’s largest school districts. Data was collected from the U. S. Department of Education’s Civil Rights Data Collection. The study examined the total number of African Americans in the districts and the total number enrolled in gifted programs. The results showed that “African American males comprised less than 10% of the gifted and talented enrollment with ample evidence suggesting that African American males are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs. African American males represent a considerable percentage of the student enrollment in urban school districts; however, they reflect a small percentage of the enrollment in gifted and talented programs” (p. 67-68).

Review of the literature

Researchers have been asking what factors help or hinder gifted minority students in the classroom (i.e., racial, cultural, psychological, social, familial). Some argue that racial and ethnic identity (Ford, 1996, Ford-Harris & Harris, 1992; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1988, 2004, 2008; Cross, 1971, 1995; Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005a; Lindstrom & Van Sant, 1986) play significant roles in the achievement or underachievement of minority students. Clark (1983, 1992) argues that a strong familial foundation impacts the achievement of student. The family structure itself does not have as much an impact as does the relationships within the structure. Steele and Aronson (1995) believe that the psychological history of race in the United States impacts students and their ability to perform to their potential. Socially, Kunjufu, (1988) and Majors and Billson (1992) believe that societal and peer factors influence student success.

The psychological ramifications of racial discrimination cannot be overlooked as a reason for low academic achievement in these students as well as social and cultural implications. The fears of success and failure along with social pressures may answer why some African American students do not achieve given the same academic opportunities as their peers. Thus, labeling these students as lazy is not an accurate nor fair assessment of this fragile and special population. Claude Steele (2003) surmises that something is keeping capable African American students from academic success. However, unlike the aforementioned scholars, Steele posits that stereotype threat is the cause of low academic achievement and underachievement among African American students. "Stereotype threat is the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype" (p. 111). Steele and Aronson (1995) conducted four studies using the same hypothesis but with different groups of students, still African American and White, using the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and another assessment that measured lexical access processing

and higher verbal reasoning. In all of the studies, they used a diagnostic, nondiagnostic, and control conditions. Half of each group was told that their intelligence was being measured, while the other half didn't know what the test was measuring. The White students performed almost equally in the two conditions of the experiment. In contrast, the African American students performed far worse than they otherwise would have when they were told their intelligence was being measured. Steele and Aronson concluded two very important factors in that “underperformance appears to be rooted less in self-doubt than in social mistrust” (p. 124) “and that the most achievement-oriented students, who were also the most skilled, motivated, and confident, were the most impaired by stereotype threat” (p. 120).

A student's family life can greatly influence his/her academic achievement. Reginald Clark (1983) conducted an ethnographic case study of 10 Black families. Clark looked at high achievers in two-parent households and one-parent households and low achievers in two-parent and one-parent households. He posits that the overall quality of the family's life-style, not the composition, or status, or family dynamics, determines whether children are prepared for academically competent performance in the classroom. Clark (1983) argues that “there is a substantial body of evidence that children's chances of school success throughout their educational career are significantly increased by a supportive home environment, and conversely are significantly decreased by a ‘neutral’ or nonsupportive family context” (p. 5).

Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) conducted a study of forty-seven young men along with twenty-nine fathers and thirty-eight mothers. The students were chosen from the Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. The study explored the relationship between academic achievement and parental influence on African American male children. The authors wanted to “focus on the highest-achieving young African American males

and their parents to identify attitudes, habits, behaviors, perspectives, and strategies that may shed light on what society needs to do, and what parents need to do to reverse the downward trends involving Black male behavior and academic performance” (p. 6). The major purpose of the study was to identify strategies that educators and parents could use to understand the academic success of young African American males. The researchers noted these factors were key in the academic success of these young men: child-focused love; strong limit setting and discipline; continually high expectations; open, consistent and strong communication; positive racial identity and positive male identity; and full use of community resources.

In addition to environmental and social barriers, gifted, Black students contend with barriers within the school walls from school personnel. Clark (1983) suggests that teacher expectations and student learning experiences are intimately entwined. “Inaccurate teacher assessments of student abilities tend to nurture student failure by reinforcing prejudicial, stereotypic attitudes and perceptions about the learning capability of the children and ultimately about their humanity” (pg.14). This thinking goes back to Ford, Harris, Tyson and Trotman’s (2002) concept of deficit ideology. If teachers have low academic expectations of students based on socioeconomics, class, and/or race then this type of deficit thinking will ultimately be reflected in the teacher’s relationships with the students.

Weinstein, Soulé, Collins, Cone, Mehlhorn, and Simontacchi (1991) in their study of expectations and change in high school state that “the dynamics of teacher expectations and how they can become self-fulfilling prophecies have been well illustrated within classrooms and between classrooms” (1991, p. 3). Students often know if a teacher believes in his/her ability to succeed in school. Low teacher expectations which can be attributed to deficit orientation thinking can contribute to a students’ underachievement. Valencia (2010) contends that deficit

thinking “blames the victim” for school failure rather than examining how schools are structured to prevent poor students and students of color from learning” (p. xv). According to Ford, Harris, Tyson, and Trotman (2002), “A deficit perspective exists when students of color who are culturally different from their White counterparts are viewed as culturally deprived or disadvantaged” (p. 52).

According to Ford, Whiting, and Moore (2009), there are four factors that contribute to deficit thinking: (a) IQ based definitions and theories; (b) testing and assessment issues; (c) inadequate policies and practices; and (d) inadequate teacher preparations in diversity and gifted education. Ford (1995) suggests that cultural differences in learning styles as well as parental involvement are also factors in the underrepresentation of gifted minority students. In a study examining the effect of deficit thinking on African American students as well as educators, Ford, Harris, Tyson, and Frazier Trotman (2002) believe that the underrepresentation of Black students in gifted education extends beyond identification instruments and assessment processes, and that a “deficit perspective” exists whereby students of color who are culturally different from their White counterparts are viewed as culturally deprived or disadvantaged. This deficit perspective then hinders educators’ ability to properly assess and refer students for gifted referrals. Williams (1972) explicates that Blacks and other minorities are culturally different and not culturally deficient. To this end, he states that “Blacks and whites come from different cultural backgrounds which emphasize different learning experiences necessary for survival...one can be unique without being inferior” (p. 82).

Theoretical Framework

This research study sought to understand the convergence of social capital theory, institutional theory, and label theory on the academic achievement of gifted, Black male high school students. Alone, any one of these theories could profoundly impact students and their achievement; however, when all three were examined simultaneously with students whose vulnerabilities are highlighted by race, gender, and a gifted identification label, the impact was substantial.

According to Stanton-Salazar (2011), “Social capital consists of resources and key forms of social support embedded in one’s network or associations” (p. 1067). He also contends that social capital consists of three fundamental components: key resources, support, and institutional agents. In terms of schools and educational settings, “Social capital is fundamentally constituted in terms of resources or forms of ‘institutional support’ accessible by ego (e.g., a student) through direct or indirect social ties to other actors who assume the role of institutional agents (e.g., school counselor or teacher). In short, people are able to accomplish meaningful goals through their access to resources not their own” (p. 1086). Institutional (i.e., school personnel) agents have the capacity to steer students toward services, resources, and organizations. Counselors and teachers can help students navigate the “complex institutional processes that can either facilitate or inhibit the trust necessary for help giving and help seeking – two forms of agency associated with social capital” (p. 69). Social capital is critical to minority students in schools because if these relationships are strained or underdeveloped then students can miss out on valuable opportunities. In the school, social capital impacts what types of information are shared with students from adults (i.e., institutional agents). By connecting or not connecting students to resources inside or outside of the school structure, institutional agents wield great power in the educational trajectory of some students. “Social capital is primarily a mechanism of

privilege and domination, precisely because it is embedded in hierarchical, integrated, and reproductive social structures” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 1085).

Because schools are considered institutions of learning, the importance of institutional theory cannot be overlooked when discussing the diversity of educational outcomes and opportunity structures. According to institutional theorists Rowan and Miskel (1999), “Schools are organized to socialize students into a particular type of knowledge, and participation in the institution of schooling has real effects on the patterns of knowledge that students acquire. In addition, patterns of ethnic group formation in society, deeply institutionalized ideologies about the role of pupils in society, linkages among institutional sectors in society, and the distinctive institutional characteristics of schooling combine to affect student motivation and engagement in schooling, and through such processes, indirectly affect student achievement” (p. 378). A plethora of factors can impact student motivation and achievement in school and the unwritten social infrastructure of school culture. One central premise to institutional theory is “the idea that organizational conformity to institutionalized rules shapes the structure of organizations” (Rowan & Miskel, 1999, p. 366). When the discussion of organizational conformity is addressed, student interaction with institutional agents becomes key when looking at the social capital of students inside of the school organization.

Because this study focused on gifted, Black male students, there was power both positive and negative in the labels associated with these male students. For children from disenfranchised populations, these labels can carry negative connotations and can ultimately alienate and disempower these students. In the K-12 environment, label theory has been linked to teacher expectations and the seminal study and publication of *Pygmalion in the Classroom* by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968). In the broader picture, label theory can greatly impact entire groups of

students in that the institution of education “a major emphasis has been placed upon the role of institutions in sorting, labeling, tracking, and channeling persons along various routes depending upon the assessment the institution has made of the individual” (Rist, 1977, p. 300). For African American students, the internal struggle of having multiple labels can cause confusion if the labels conflict with one another as well as with the expectations of those labels from parents, institutional agents, and peers (Ford, 1996).

Methods

For African American students, education is just but one aspect of a complex life. The daily cultural, psychological, and social pressures that minority students face must not be underestimated especially how these factors connect with and impact their educational achievement. “Many young minority males find themselves responding to a daunting array of school, social, and community pressures that encourage misguided decisions that fly in the face of academic achievement” (College Board, 2010, p. 10). To be clear, not all minority students underperform; schools across the country are replete with academically achieving minority students; however, not many studies have been published with positive findings about the educational achievements of minority students. African Americans constantly look at themselves through a racial and/or cultural lens. For this reason, a qualitative research design was chosen using grounded theory in order to gain a thorough understanding of the students using interviews and documents to share their stories.

The researcher used the constructivist approach to this study which is consistent with the interpretive tradition. According to Charmaz (2006), “A constructive approach places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and

relationships with participants and other sources of data” (p. 130). This interpretive lens allows the researcher to reflect on his or her own “interpretations as well as those of their research participants” (p. 131). According to Creswell (2007), grounded theory research is the process of developing a theory, not testing a theory. An inductive model of theory development grounded in views from participants in the field. Strauss & Corbin (1990) explain that the researcher generates a theory that explains some action, interaction, or process. Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that “the researcher prefers to have the guiding substantive theory emerge from the data because no a priori theory could possibly encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered” (p. 41).

Recruitment and Participants

The district being studied, located in the Midwest, had nearly 50,000 students, and 77% of the student population were comprised of students of color. The researcher recruited 16 students from six different high schools. Three parents were included in the sample and one school counselor and one school administrator. The students were selected based on their gifted identification using state approved tests (i.e., TerraNova, InView, NNAT, MAP, CogAT, and Woodcock Johnson). In the theoretical and scientific literature, the terms gifted and high achieving are used interchangeably/synonymously. Thus, the difference between the two terms needs to be addressed. Some would argue the terms are one in the same. A gifted child can be high achieving, but a high achieving student is not necessarily identified as gifted. For the purpose of this study, the researcher only sampled those students identified as gifted, using the aforementioned, state approved gifted identification instruments. Hence, only those students who were academically gifted were used for this study.

All of the participants were gifted, Black male high school students. The participants ranged in age from 15-18 years old. There were three sophomores, four juniors, and nine seniors. Over 50% of the participants were seniors. Fifty-percent of the students earned above a 3.5 grade point average and 50% earned below a 3.5 grade point average. When asked about free and reduced lunch price status, eight participants reported they qualified for free/reduced lunch. Six reported they did not qualify for free/reduced lunch status, and two chose not to answer the question. Although this is a public school district, 75% of the participants attended lottery schools within the district. This district defined a lottery school as one where the student applies for admittance to a school with a specialized program and/or curriculum and is offered a seat in that school; additionally, a lottery school was considered a school not in the student's attendance area that a student had to apply to for admittance. Of the 16 participants, six attended a lottery school that was predominantly African American. Six attended a lottery school that was racially diverse. One attended his home school in his attendance boundary area. One attended a career academy with a strong academic focus. Of the sixteen participants, over 50% of their parents/guardians completed some type of post-secondary degree.

Data Collection and Analysis

Letters were sent to perspective tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders who were identified as gifted, Black, and male. Once assent and parental consent were obtained for each participant, the researcher reviewed the student's gifted identification assessments and reviewed the student's high school transcript which provided "a rich source of information, contextually relevant and grounded in the contexts they represent" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 277). The researcher conducted semi-structured, face-to-face interviews lasting from 45 minutes to 1 hour

in length. The face-to-face interview process included the administration of a biographical questionnaire and a face-to-face individual interview, based on a pre-established, open-ended interviewing protocol. Field notes were also taken during the interview process. The students chose pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. The face-to-face individual interviews were digitally audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the purposes of doing an interview include, among other things, obtaining here-and-now constructions of a persons, events, activities, organizations, feelings, motivations, claims, concerns, and other entities.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using open coding and comparing each incident in the transcript to the next to “separate data into categories and to see processes” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 51). After the initial coding, axial coding was used to “bring the data back together again and provide a frame for researcher to apply” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60-61). From the coding, six major themes emerged: (a) educational opportunity structures, (b) achievement attitudes, (c) academic expectations, (d) academic isolation and loneliness, (e) support of significant individuals versus non-supportive significant individuals, and (f) teacher nexus.

Findings

This section presents findings that address the factors that had the most influence on gifted, Black male students’ academic achievement in high school, by examining their perceptions about the value of education and the role that race, gender, and gifted identification had on their academic success. Four subthemes emerged from academic achievement: The first subtheme to emerge from the students was goal-setting. Young students learn to control their behavior, follow directions, set goals, and persist towards those goals. As students matriculate

through school, these skills are practiced and reinforced regularly. According to Bronson (2000), “Self-regulating behaviors include goal-setting, strategic planning, strategy implementation, and monitoring. Motivation is at the center of self-regulation and must be considered in relation to the development of all forms of voluntary control” (p. 5). The students in the study set goals to achieve for various reasons. John, senior, 3.8 GPA, also acknowledged his parents expectations but ultimately felt that he has to do well for himself. “I definitely have pressure from my parents to do well. But I guess other people, they’re used to getting like C’s and stuff and 2.0’s, and I could never do that. I would not feel comfortable with myself if I got that.” Deante, senior, 3.20 GPA, wants to major in athletic training and was offered a partial scholarship offer from a local university. He stated, “Just that I know I can, and I have a goal. I know what I want to be and what I’ve got to do to get there. It’s just that.”

Perseverance and resolve emerged at the second subtheme in the study. The students exhibited resolve even if their grades did not reflect their academic ability. Tony persevered through a painful year-long AP Chemistry class in order to take Major British Writers during the same class period AP Biology was offered. Tony, senior, 3.06 GPA, understood that either AP course would prepare him for college even though he was not required to take a fourth science course for graduation. Some of the students attended high schools with rigorous college preparatory programs. Rico, a HS senior and college sophomore, 3.30 GPA, persevered through a challenging curriculum but felt prepared by his high school experience for college:

High school was kind of the opposite of my K-8 experience. It was a very shocking moment. You get there and you are a number. You are a general statistic that a lot of the teachers – I don’t want to say they take for granted, but they overlook you and your needs. So that’s why I think a lot of the kids either got kicked out or dropped out of Payne, or just left to transfer because it was difficult. The teachers would go very fast. If you weren’t prepared to keep the standard, you were left behind. So it was a very big shock in terms of the learning curve at Payne. But the standard I feel like for me, as my sophomore year rolled around, as a standard was set higher and higher. It gave me that

room to grow, grow into the model that they were setting up for us. If you weren't keen to challenge, you were left behind.

Some of the participants in the study persevered in the face of being stereotyped by those in the larger society. Although the students could have responded negatively, several participants used the experience to educate or inform and to dispel the stereotype. Cranston, senior, 3.31 GPA, felt that as an African American male in today's society, a person just has to be true to themselves:

People don't expect it because of the way I act and talk – I'm normal. I remember when I went to the shooting range because my cousin is a police officer, and we got certified at this gun range and this dude – some white dude – was talking about school and asked me what my favorite subject was and before I even said anything, he said I bet you don't even have a favorite subject and I just looked at him like, what? I was like twelve or something and I said no, my favorite subject is math and he was surprised because a lot of people don't like math and I enjoy it. He made an assumption based on a stereotype and probably the way I look. I don't really carry myself like, "Ah, I'm the most prestigious thing and you are below me. I'm just normal." I'm just me.

Procrastination emerged as the third subtheme in the study. Many of the students expressed frustration that they procrastinated on assignments and studying which ultimately impacted their academic performance. In some cases, the impact had a nominal effect within one class or one subject area. For other students, the impact was felt across the span of the school year or their entire high school career. Daniel, junior, 2.70 GPA, noted that he has not achieved to his highest ability because of procrastinating. "I've formed a habit of procrastinating. If I didn't procrastinate, then I would definitely have achieved a higher grade point average and also higher overall marks." Students also acknowledged that they did not procrastinate in other areas of their life where they found enjoyment or had a passion for particular topics. Will, a HS senior and college freshman, 4.4 GPA, explicated, "In other parts of my life, I don't procrastinate. With my passion for fitness, I'm always trying to learn new things every single day. That is my

passion, and I don't procrastinate with that. If I could turn it off and on, I would, but I can't. It's just – I'm not really interested in what I'm learning right now. So, it's kind of hard for me to get engaged in that kind of thing. I'll still do it because I have to." Some students noted that they loved learning for learning sake and that school did not always address that thirst for knowledge. "I like learning why things happen or why something is the way it is. Like just to know the 'what' doesn't really interest me that much. It's like how did it get there and also why are we still doing it like that?" (PK, senior, 2.57 GPA).

The last subtheme that emerged from the data was motivation. Motivation and effort mirrored engagement and interest and were significant topics with the participants. Some students identified their lack of motivation as laziness while others discussed their boredom in their classes. John, senior, 3.8 GPA, admitted that he could have performed better in school had he applied himself. "Sometimes I get lazy, and I really don't feel like doing work. I've done good, but I could have done better." Fourteen of the 16 students said they could have performed better academically. Joey, junior, 3.42 GPA, explained his lack of motivation as a lack of challenge from his classes:

I haven't put my best effort into everything school-wise. My dad always says – cause I'm real competitive athletically too, and my dad always tells me to look at school like track or basketball and how hard I work in those sports I need to work that hard, or twice as hard academically. I've just got to work harder. I think I'm busy, but I'm really not. I can always put forth more effort. In terms of studying, I probably study about 5 hours (a week) maybe. It's not a lot. That's one thing I've got to work on, my study habits. I'm not a very good studier. I could have a 4.0 every quarter. School is not hard to me. Sometimes I just don't feel like doing it. It's not hard. Some stuff might be challenging, but I don't think it's anything I can't do and I have plenty of resources to help me.

Kevin, sophomore, 3.85 GPA, shared he was motivated by being the best of the best. In more than one class, he sought out points he missed/lost on tests and homework assignments to raise his overall grade. He believed he knew the material more thoroughly than what he actually

knew and skimmed over new concepts, but then saw the material again on quizzes and tests. Leonardo, senior, 4.58 GPA, shared Kevin's sentiment about being the best. He also labeled himself a perfectionist. "I want to strive to be the best I can be. I've been labeled a perfectionist by some. I'm very competitive. I just have great expectations of me." Although these students persevered in spite of their lack of enjoyment and fulfillment at school, they were not achieving to their potential. Although 14 of the 16 participants had grade point averages above 3.0, that same number of students underachieved. There was a gap between their potential and their academic performance. They cited poor time management, a lack of effort, and not committing enough time to studying. Rimm (1995) believes most gifted and talented youth profit from explicit training in time management, study, goal setting skills, and prioritizing to prevent them from becoming underachievers.

Discussion

The participants gave numerous accounts of their unique experiences of being gifted and receiving opportunities to participate in engaging and special activities that opened their minds to educational and career possibilities. The enriching opportunities activated and increased their academic engagement. One of the premises of social capital theory is that people are able to accomplish meaningful goals through their access to resources not their own (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Social capital in schools is based on the mindset of the institutional agent (i.e., teacher, counselor, and/or school administrator) about gifted and talented students. Often mired in myths, institutional agents can believe that gifted education is elitist and not necessary because gifted students do not need help because they should be smart enough to learn content on their own (OAGC, n.d.). Mistakenly, they may believe that resources are better served towards less able

students. If an institutional agent does not value the contributions of the gifted child, then the child will not reap the resources the agent possesses. These students are conflicted because their gifted label tells them they have potential; yet, some of their academic and social experiences tell them otherwise. Underachievement among most of the participants was a prevalent theme. Many of the students reflected that they were not achieving to their potential even though half were earning A's. Students at all grade point levels struggled with inconsistent study habits, poor time management, and procrastination. All but two of the participants admitted that they did not spend enough time studying. Students were asked if they felt pressure as a Black student. Leonardo, senior, 4.0 GPA, delineated between academic and social pressure. He said they all have pressures as African American males. He did not feel that academic pressure was significant to him because he pushed himself to achieve at high levels and enjoyed the academic pressure.

Implications

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several suggestions are provided for teachers, building principals, school districts, and other school personnel to support the needs of Black and culturally diverse gifted students as well as recommendations for parents, and students. These recommendations are not exhaustive but offered to improve the experiences of gifted and potentially gifted, Black and other minority students. It is important for teachers to help students develop and maintain self-regulating behaviors and encourage students to challenge themselves and take academic risks. Teachers can also help students utilize the positive rapport to foster and nurture intrinsic motivation; thereby, having an influence on their study skills, time management, and awareness of their capabilities. School districts can continue to support current and future gifted education programs in the district and eliminate any policies

or practices that might prevent Black males from participating in gifted and talented programs (e.g., admissions fees, attendance requirements, and parent contracts/agreements). Districts need to ensure that gifted and talented programs are racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse while employing a multicultural curriculum to show students a wide range of cultures, ethnicities, and races in their everyday learning. Parents can advocate on behalf of their gifted student by articulating the importance of school why education is important for their post-secondary lives. Parents can also have realistic expectations for their students. Finally students can advocate for themselves by taking academic risks and advanced courses that are challenging and good preparation for post-secondary endeavors. Students can articulate their academic and social-emotional needs to parents, teachers, school counselors, and administrators.

Future Research

There are several topics of interest for future research. Since most if not all of the students will be in college in four years, the researcher would like to conduct a follow-up study to glean information from their collegiate/military/life experiences and the foundation that was laid in their K-12 education. The study would examine their achievement attitudes during their post-secondary experiences. Many of the participants enjoyed their enriching academic experiences, and it would be beneficial to see if they sought similar types of enriching experiences in college or the military (i.e., study abroad programs or graduate school outside of their home state, or special military duties). Many of the participants did not practice good study habits because they could succeed in high school without studying. It would be interesting to talk with them to discuss when and how they began to study. Since many of the seniors and some of

the juniors lacked motivation, it would be interesting to find out if college and/or the military provided more motivating and interesting experiences for these students.

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