UTILIZING A TENET OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY AS A TOOL OF ANALYSIS
FOR DESIGNING AN ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR
AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

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Abstract

APRI AGYAPONG: Utilizing a tenet of Critical Race Theory as a Tool of Analysis for
Designing an Alternative Learning Framework for African American Students
(Under the direction of Eileen Parsons)

The purpose of this project is to present an alternative learning approach to
traditional educational practices to aid African American students who significantly have
more difficulty in traditional schools. I posit three contributing factors to the failure of
these students which include: a.) neglecting to pose critical questions and invite
meaningful discussions regarding race, being raced, and racial maneuvering, b.) the
formation of authentic caring relationships, and c.) high expectation from persons of
authority. The three contributing factors will be analyzed from the perspective of a
critical race theorist where the concepts of meaningful discussions regarding race, being
raced, and racial maneuvering, authentic caring relationships, and high expectation are
foundational.

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SECTION 1

UNDERLYING PREMISES

There are problems within traditional schools which compromise the quality of education for minority students, in particular, African Americans. Students of color are more denied than ever before (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1994). There are hidden curricula, different types of educational experiences and curriculum knowledge made available to students with varying cultural and social backgrounds (Anyon, 2006). As a result, students drop out of school or are redirected to alternative schools or programs. Research indicates the success of students attending alternative programs, thus, key questions arise. Why do some students prefer alternative programs as opposed to traditional schools? Why are the same students that are unsuccessful in traditional schools able to excel in alternative programs? Alternative programs attempt to address issues that emerge in traditional schools. Some research shows that certain alternative programs are doing quite well. In this paper, I examine one alternative effort in North Carolina (NC) and then propose ways to further improve alternative programs by using critical race theory (CRT) as the main tool of analysis. In this paper, I do the following:

- Deconstruct methods of traditional schools,

- Highlight the effectiveness of alternative programs, and

- Present an alternative program framework.

Although all the aforementioned foci are important, the primary purpose of this project is to present an alternative approach to traditional educational practices for minority students, in particular, African American students who significantly have more difficulty in traditional schooling environments. There is a hidden curriculum in schools that has direct consequences on everyday activities in the educational process (Anyon, 2006). I contend that three tenets not addressed in the literature comprise this hidden curriculum for African American students. First, critical questions and meaningful discussions regarding race, being raced, and racial maneuvering are not posed or invited (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Second, authentic caring relationships are neither attempted nor formed with African American students (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). Third, persons of authority do not have high expectations for African American students (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995). I contend that the three tenets are contributing factors to the educational difficulties African Americans face in traditional schools. I will analyze the three contributing factors from the perspective of a critical race theorist where the concept of race, being raced, and racial maneuvering, authentic caring relationships, and high expectation are the foundation.

The Problem

The rate at which students drop out of the educational system has great significance to the environment of traditional schools and the experiences had in that environment. In 2006, the national graduation rate was between 68 and 71 percent. The graduation rate for African American, Hispanic and Native American students was about 50 percent, while graduation rates for Whites and Asians hovered around 75 to 77

percent, respectively (National Association A for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 2006). A longitudinal study, *How Many Central City High Schools Have a Severe Drop-out Problem, Where are They Located and Who Attends* (Balfanz & Letgers, 2001), reported on approximately 600 schools in 35 urban school districts. The data showed that 50% or more of the ninth and tenth graders that enroll in over 300 urban schools in those districts did not finish twelfth grade. Further, at least 100 more schools had rates approaching the 50% mark. In 78 of the 603 schools sampled, the enrolled senior class reflected a decrease of more than 70% of the original ninth grade cohort, with greater than 40% due to dropouts (Balfanz & Letgers, 2001). According to the NAACP Education Department's *Call for Action in Education* report (Jackson, 2001), the disparity of students who are enrolled in school, suspended from school, or are enrolled in special education courses among Black and White students are of concern. The percentage among Blacks in each category is statistically represented by 17, 33, and 33 percent, respectively (Jackson, 2001). There is a significant disparity among Black students who are enrolled in school with those who are suspended. There are a higher percentage of students suspended from school in the African American community than there are enrolled.

Recent research shows that most high school dropouts could have graduated from high school, but instead left. Students left because they struggled with personal issues, became disengaged, did not feel a personal connection to their schools, or they experienced academic difficulties (Stallings, 2007). Further, recent estimates suggest that between one-third and one-half of minorities do not earn a high school diploma (Neild, Balfanz, & Herzog, 2007). Research also highlighted in *What About the Other Third?─ A*

Closer Look at High School Dropout (NC New Schools Project, 2007) indicated that high school dropouts place a high value on education and are persistent in their attempts to get their degree. In 2007, nationally, nearly 60 percent of high school dropouts eventually earned a high school diploma or General Education Degree (GED) (NC New Schools Project, 2007). Policymakers and educators viewed dropping out as predictable behavior from certain demographic categories and geographical locations (NC New Schools Project, 2007). However, they also viewed the experiences that lead to a student dropping out as mysterious, difficult to understand or predict, and peculiar (NC New Schools Project, 2007). To the contrary, research suggested that many students who left high school sent "strong signs of distress signals" for many years (Neild, Balfanz, & Herzog, 2007). Metaphorically speaking, it is as if these students are waving their hands asking to be helped. These researchers believed that by paying attention to students, schools and districts abroad can develop interventions and preventions that can help potential dropouts stay on track to high school completion (Neild, Balfanz, & Herzog, 2007). There are millions of students who have given up on their high schools but not on their education (Steinburg, Johnson, & Almeida, 2006), a situation that existed and continues to exist in N.C. In 2003, 58 percent of African American students in North Carolina graduated on time, in comparison to 71 percent of White students (Education Trust, 2006). I contend that these interventions must address the hidden curriculum, especially in the case of African American students.

The hidden curriculum perpetuates differing curricular, pedagogical and evaluation practices that result in differing cognitive and behavioral skills for non majority persons (Anyon, 2006). In Ann Ferguson's (2000) book, *Bad Boys*, she

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conducted an ethnographic study at Rosa Parks Elementary School. She concluded that schools created the bad boy through racial labeling and punishment. The culture of the school made the distinction between "best-behaved" students and "worst-behaved" students, where the better behaved students were typically White and the worst behaved students were Black. In Angela Valenzuela's (1999) book, *Subtractive Schooling*, she suggested schools were organized and structured formally and informally to divorce students from their cultural and ethnic identities, thereby, creating social and cultural divisions among students, and between students and staff. The hidden curriculum in traditional schools has a major impact on African American students. It negatively influences the ability to dialogue about racial barriers, foster caring relationships, and have high expectations.

Overview of Paper

This paper is divided into several parts. The first past discusses a need for alternative learning approaches for African American students in traditional school environments using a critical race theory (CRT) tenet as a lens. Part two highlights the most comprehensive alternative learning program implemented in North Carolina, Communities In Schools (CIS). The final part presents an alternative program framework to expanding the framework of CISNC.

Utilizing a Critical Race Tenet as a Lens

Critical Race Theory (CRT) challenges the notion of meritocracy of the United

States (U.S.) using race and racism as a lens in critiquing issues (DeCuir & Dixson,

2004). There are five tenets critical race theorists use to critique issues in the U.S. I use

one tenet, the permanence of race and racism, as the lens in this paper.

Race continues to be a significant factor for determining inequity in the U.S.

(Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Thinking of race solely as an ideological structure

denies the harsh reality of a racialized and marginalized society and its everyday impact

on "raced" people (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Yet, thinking of race solely as an

objective condition denies the problematic side of race, such as, the decision regarding

who fits into which racial classification (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As cited in

Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995), Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison stated:

> Race has become metaphorical— a way of referring to and disguising forces,
> events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division far more
> threatening to the body politic than biological "race" ever was.
>
> Expensively kept, economically unsound, and spurious and useless political asset
> in election campaigns, racism is as healthy today as it was during the
> Enlightenment. It seems that it has a utility far beyond economy, beyond the
> sequestering of classes from one another, and has assumed a metaphorical life so
> completely embedded in daily discourse that it is perhaps more necessary and
> more on display than ever before.
> (pg.49)

The issue of racial classification, in terms of categorizing individuals based on skin color,

dress, and language is the notion of being raced. If race or being raced were isolated,

unrelated, or individual acts, society would expect to see greater examples of educational

excellence and equity in traditional schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Instead,

being raced is a structural matter in traditional schools. Race impacts what experiences

African American students have in schools through their relationships with school personnel and the perceptions and expectations of such personnel.

Teachers in segregated schools prior to desegregation were consistently remembered for having a mother-like or father-like demeanor, for having high expectations, for motivating students to excel, and for providing resources to address needs (Siddle Walker, 2001). These African American teachers were critical figures who placed the needs of African American students at the center of the school's mission (Siddle Walker, 2001). The authentic caring shown by these teachers does not exist for African American students in today's schools. According to Valenzuela's (1999) *Subtractive Schooling*, few teachers actually knew their students in a personal way. Very few students believe that their teachers know them; hence, many expressed they would not ask for help with a personal problem. Committed teachers who invested time and attention to their students were deemed foolish for their efforts (Valenzuela, 1999). In other words, "working hard is not worth the effort since these kids aren't going anywhere any way" (page number needed, Valenzuela, 1999). In comparison to majority students, African American students are less likely to have positive relationships with their teachers (Walker-Dalhouse, 2005). There is a disconnection among African American students and teachers, making it difficult to foster authentic relationships. African American students are not a main focus in traditional schools because high expectations that pertain to personal connection, cognitive ability and performance with respect to African Americans are virtually nonexistent.

According to Ann Ferguson's (2000) *Bad Boys*, the culture of the school where she conducted her ethnographic study suggested that the "best-behaved" students in

school were also the brightest and most gifted. They scored high on tests, were enrolled in highly accelerated courses, and "fit in" with the overall culture of school activities and events. But most of these students were racially classified as White, lived in nice communities, and came from a home where quiet and secluded places to do homework were readily available. They were considered to be responsible and knew what they came to school to do. They knew what was expected of them; therefore, had a greater expectation of themselves. They had an accepted language for their feelings. Most importantly, they had "self-control" to sit in a classroom and listen and learn. According to school personnel, these students were "best-behaved" because they had parents that cared about them and their education. Their parents were role models for the success they wanted their children to achieve. Parents spent quality time with their children to teach them how to become a good man and a good woman. The parents were involved in school activities, meetings, fund raisers, special programs, and field trips. They respected their children's rights and opinions, but also treated and allowed them to be children at the same time.

On the other hand, Ferguson's (2000) "worst-behaved" students in the school were Black, with an emphasis on Black males. When they took tests, they scored well below their grade level. They fought, instigated trouble, refused to do work, gambled, and skipped school and class. They were considered defiant, disrespectful, a nuisance, and profane. The Black males fondled girls, drew vulgar and lewd pictures, intimidated others, and were disrespectful to authoritative figures. According to school statistics, Black girls misbehaved too, but not at the same rate Black males were documented for misconduct and defiance. Black females were also cited to fight, steal, talk back to

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authoritative figures, cut class, damage school property, and cause trouble. All of the

Black students came from the same neighborhood and walked to school the majority of

the time. The neighborhood they came from was filled with drug dealers and users.

School statistics indicated that the Black students rarely made it into the high level

courses and programs, but were in the remedial or special education classes. Parents did

not care about them or their academic success. Many lived with other relatives such as

grandparents, cousins, aunts or uncles. They had no role models as guides to success and

academic achievement. Thus, they looked to strangers to teach them how to be

prosperous men and women. Their families were unreliable, inconsistent, belligerent,

and always looking to blame someone else for their problems.

The stereotypical perceptions of African American students and their families

noted in Ferguson's (2000) work influence the expectations school personnel have for

African American students. For instance, in the same text, Ferguson's (2000) *Bad Boys*,

an African American student is walking through the hall, not appearing to be disruptive

or troublesome, wearing what has been characterized as "urban" or "hip-hop" attire. The

principal of the school says "this kid has a jail cell with his name on it." The principal's

comment implies that the expectation for this student was disruptive or defiant behavior.

DeCuir and Dixson (2004) described a similar example. Malcolm, a high school senior

from a middle-class Black family who is a six-foot student athlete, attended an elite,

predominately White, independent school where the athletic department thrived.

According to Malcolm, his only asset, in the eyes of school officials, was his athletic

ability and not his cognitive abilities.

These race-based perceptions and race-based expectations translate into different educational experiences for African American students in traditional schools. Efforts to alleviate the dropout rate among African American students must address race. I contend that such efforts must include three components. First, initiatives must create a forum for African Americans to dialogue about race and being raced, and to learn about, what I call, racial maneuvering. Racial maneuvering is the ability to move in and out of dominant and non-dominant worlds. That is, racial maneuvering is the ability of individuals to adjust to the values, norms, and practices in a setting, especially when what occurs in the setting conflicts and contradicts the ones they esteem and hold. For instance, Blacks became bi-cultural during slavery because they lived and worked in two different worlds which expected them to think, act, and react in a particular way, depending on where they found themselves (Ogbu, 2004). Second, because caring relationships are key in forming positive self-identities, self-worth, and self-motivation critical for students to flourish academically and socially (Valenzuela, 1999), I contend that efforts must establish authentic caring relationships. Lastly, I argue that initiatives must have high expectations for African American students.

Race, Being Raced, and Racial Maneuvering

The history of African American education is deeply rooted in struggle, declaration, and resiliency. During slavery, African Americans risked death in order to be educated and after slavery was abolished, teachers in the African American community utilized their own personal resources to help educate freedpeople (Williams, 2006). Following the Civil War, African Americans created schools designed to benefit

the ideas and interests of their community and culture. Within these schools, African Americans were explicitly taught about race and racism in the U.S., what it means to be raced, and how to do racial maneuvering. The benchmarking case, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, was meant to unmistakably unlock the doors to educational opportunity and mobility for African Americans in this country. However, at present, students of color are more segregated and denied than ever before (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), African Americans represent 12 percent of the US population, but they are the majority in twenty-one of twenty-two largest urban school districts. Not only did the *Brown* decision fail to desegregate schools, the desegregation of schools altered the essence of education for African Americans in a variety of ways.

According to Hanley & Noblit (2008), desegregation first separated education from racial uplift and religion. Then, desegregation destroyed the Black teaching force, meaning African American students were now being taught by Whites who inflicted the beliefs of the dominant culture upon them. Thirdly, school desegregation meant that African Americans were now subject to a key historical logic of public education in the U.S. that entails assimilation. Thus, the African American community had no means of formulating a method to deal with the barriers associated with race and being raced. Such a drastic change in environment, for minority groups, greatly heightened the risk of failure. Some form of discussion concerning coping methods to handle the challenges (e.g., poor teacher-student relations, negative perceptions, low expectations) never got established. Unfortunately today, the places where African American students are finding success are not in the confines of school walls (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

One way to help African American students to obtain educational success is to create spaces where they are overtly taught about race and racism in the U.S., where they can critically examine the ways in which they are being raced and their responses to being raced, and where they can learn in explicit ways about racial maneuvering.

Students as well as administrators or authoritative personnel are aware of the inconsistencies in traditional schooling, where minority students are silenced or "othered" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). African American students receive different educational experiences and curriculum knowledge. Classroom behaviors and personality traits are also treated and rewarded differently (Anyon, 2006). For example, included in the literature is that teachers perceive the behavior of African American males as being more "aggressive" and "severe" than that of White males (Walker-Dalhouse, 2005). African American males who misbehave in the same manner as White males are more likely to be punished; resulting in suspensions and expulsions (Walker-Dolhouse, 2005). The covert fear some White Americans have when involved with African Americans aid in the exaggerated, forceful, and insensitive approaches─ especially in traditional environments. Students are aware of the unfair disciplinary approaches that are enforced by some teachers, and this in turn can affect the way students further interact with that teacher, additional teachers, other students, and in other classroom environments. In the space I propose, these racial patterns and others would be discussed with students along with a critical examination of the short-term and long-term consequences of their responses to them. Affording students the opportunity for naming race and dialoguing about being raced is the beginning stages of establishing an environment where various options to respond to race and being raced can be entertained. That is, naming race and

dialoguing about being raced provides the foundation for students to be educated in racial maneuvering.

African American students and their ability to "properly" maneuver race to afford economic and social mobility should be viewed as a critical component in gaining access to opportunities in society. This concept is particularly critical for students who have not developed the "accepted" language to communicate across racial barriers. Students unable to formulate frustrations into the language of dominant society are of greatest concern. These students generally give up, or become rebellious in order to express opposition to schooling which is deemed as mainstream beliefs or practices. Unfortunately there are notable differences between students who have successfully attempted maneuvering race and those who have not especially with regards to assimilation.

Assimilation is the process of consistent integration whereby members of minority groups are "absorbed" into a majority community. Thus, from the beginning of desegregation the concept of becoming part of a structure (i.e., dominant culture) to which one does not belong had become an educational goal for African American students. The true meaning of education, cultural and racial uplift, as viewed through the eyes of African Americans, was divorced from the educational system. After desegregation, much of the educational process had shifted to assimilation in efforts to show intelligence and capability. This shift, I assume, made it difficult for students to cope in order to successfully master social mobility without anger, resistance, or confusion.

The decision to accept or reject the process of assimilation has a direct correlation to school experiences (Ogbu, 2004). Students who experienced schooling as an uncaring, uninviting, and unfair environment are more resistant to assimilation, one method of racial maneuvering that affords social mobility. Factors within the schooling process can perhaps sway one's decision about the benefits of assimilation and to what degree one assimilates. Assimilation has many shades. One version is for people to divorce themselves from their cultural norms and practices and adopt that of the majority. Another form of assimilation is for people to master moving in and out of varying environments adjusting one's language, dress, or demeanor while simultaneously maintaining a positive authentic self-identity. Each shade of assimilation may bring benefits and losses. For example, individuals' attempts to manage assimilation, while maintaining the distinctiveness of their culture, may result in feelings of alienation, anxiety, and loss of identity (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995).

To critically examine such issues is the basis for inviting dialogue about race, being raced, and racial maneuvering. It is important for African American students to critically understand assimilation within the context of social structures in which they live. Becoming aware of various approaches in order to make informed decisions in the face of race and being raced and understanding the consequences for social mobility is important. Facilitating discussions to address the concerns, anger, or confusion students harbor is beneficial for coping purposes; in essence, validating their emotional rollercoaster. Assimilation methods are negatively viewed by students who do not understand or see the value in such tactics, and as a result this lack of understanding or acceptability further perpetuates the divide among students who understand the benefits

of "playing the game" with those who do not. An authentic and honest discussion should be the starting point for deconstructing stances that can be debilitating. Creating a dialogue about race, being raced, and racial maneuvering is a first step in unlocking the door to establishing authentic caring relationships between African American students and their teachers.

Formation of Authentic Caring Relationships

Mainstream ethics of care are considered universal ways of caring, which can be problematic in a traditional school environment where there are different cultures and backgrounds. Mainstream ethics of care promoted by philosophers like C. Gilligan and N. Noddings are derived from White, middle class, and heterosexual conceptions which do not resonate with all students' notions of caring (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). Contrary to mainstream ethics of care, Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) argued that there is a difference in love languages that resonate with students from different cultural backgrounds. For example, a young African American lady spoke of the "love language" between her and her mother. She expressed that her mother showed that she cared and loved her by providing a roof over her head, providing food to eat, checking to make sure she did her homework, and spending quality time with her. She stated that, although unspoken, it was clear her mother loved her through not only the things she did for her but their genuine interactions (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004).

The claim seems simple and concise— the more one is shown to be cared- for the better the response. Research on caring claims that students with different cultural backgrounds are impacted by how teachers display caring. African American students

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are faced with a multitude of barriers by just attending the institution of school. The Radical Schooling Theory assumes that educational institutions are organized around and reflect the interests of dominant groups in society (Ferguson, 2004). Pierre Bourdieu argues that schools are built on the foundation of class interests and ideologies of the dominant class, which has the power to impose its views, standards, and cultural forms as superior (Ferguson, 2004). Entering a system with such a powerful form of domination and control can be very intimidating for students who are not members of the dominant group. With minority students entering this predetermined system of power and control, it is of great importance that those able to effect change should have a moral obligation to do so.

Child-centered caring for African Americans is contrary to what mainstream methods of care represent (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) contended that mainstream child-centered caring fosters children's innocent stances toward the world by not imposing adult knowledge onto them. In Black traditions, children are made aware of the world. In a sense, blinders are removed to help foster cultural and political growth (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). The nature of Black traditions is to inform children of the world in which they live; to guide, direct, and make them aware of the truths about how and why society is structured the way it is; and to share the importance of being aware of systems that are designed to make achievement difficult for people of color. To care for children in Black traditions is to take the blinders off and prepare them for the road ahead. Unlike the minority experience, it is a much less complex world for majority groups to become familiar. The worries, concerns, and barriers of life can be approached from a childlike sense of curiosity, trial and error, and

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minimal caution. Life can easily be a journey of discovery and self-declaration with racial judgment, barriers, stereotypes, and perceptions not being at the root of most, if not all, life decisions. Mainstream tactics are fortunate to allow children to live in a world divorced from harsh realities for as long as it takes to ensure they discover who they are and how they want to fit into the world in which we live.

Caring in present-day schools caters to majority students and generally does not cater to minority students. Inconsistencies are noticed by those paying attention, but actions by those in places of power on an individual or multi-structural level are not taken. Noddings (2003) stated that one role of teachers in caring is to initiate relation and connectivity that pertains to the welfare of students. Teachers' overt sentiments are essential to caring, for it conveys to students either acceptance or rejection. If this initial stage is not positively established, it will continually undercut any additional advances in the student-teacher relationship thereafter. In essence, a genuine trust needs to be fostered within a student-teacher relationship, which the traditional system does not allow to flourish.

For example, foster children who meet their new foster parents for the first time represent a fundamental stage that can determine how receptive the children will be in forming an authentic and trustworthy bond with the parents. Children's abilities to trust someone has to be, in a sense, earned or proven worthy. This simple example parallels the process in traditional schools. At the beginning of the year, children are dropped off at school, unfamiliar with their new teachers, hopefully greeted and then expected to trust and believe their teachers have their best interests at heart. With regard to African American students, practitioners have yet to master relating to them in caring ways. For

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African American children over the course of the school year there are few, if any, genuine advances on behalf of teachers to uncover the layers of the students' "essential self." Students are still left to their own inner devices to succeed in a structure designed to fail them. For some students, this lack of authentic caring relationships in the school environment may not affect their personal growth and ability to function and learn, due to varying reasons such as class, social or cultural capital (e.g., resources, knowledge, and support aiding in a person's ability to flourish), but for others who lack social or cultural capital in the traditional school environment this can be restrictive and debilitating.

Research has shown that authentic caring relationships are key factors in forming positive self-identities, self-worth, and self-motivation critical for students to flourish academically and socially (Valenzuela, 1999). Such a caring relationship is one of several factors that must be addressed in order to change African American students' receptivity of assimilation into a society seemingly unsupportive of and disconnected to them. The other factor is teacher expectation. There seems to be a misconception that African American students have a lower level of cognitive and behavioral ability (Hernstein, & Murray, 1994). Ferguson (2000) describes the making of "bad boys", not as by members of the criminal justice system or by being in other locations associated with criminal or belligerent activity, but in and by schools.

Expectation from Persons of Authority

Expectation is a critical component in growing student interests and self-images in education. Teacher expectation is directly linked to school performance which is most alarming for African American students because teachers' expectations have a more

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powerful impact on them more so than for White students─ African American students tend to value the thoughts, beliefs and expectations of their teachers more than others (Diamond, 2004). The traditional schooling system for African Americans is seemingly at times unequipped to nurture, or even possess positive images about these students. Many negative images and negative labels associated with African Americans are prevalent in traditional schools.

The structure of society is built on labeling practices─ from race, age, gender, class, or sexual orientation to height, attractiveness, ability, or education. This society focuses endless resources, time, and money to determine better ways to categorize and label individuals. Sleeter and Grant (2007) state:

> Groups compete because people are by nature concerned mainly with their own welfare and that of their family, and secondarily about the welfare of others whom they see as being like themselves or believing as they believe. (p. 42)

Individuals label others to group and categorize people for their own personal gain, and to determine whom they view as being like themselves in beliefs and otherwise. Unfortunately, for groups like African Americans who have not been privileged to possess a positive label but instead inherit a label designed to take away from their intellectual or social abilities, it has been a relentless battle to disprove charges. The lyrics of Public Enemy speak to the resistance toward a system that misjudges African Americans:

> *The minute they see me, fear me*
> *I'm the epitome─ a public enemy*
> *Used, abused, without clues*
> *I refused to blow a fuse*

(Public Enemy, "Don't believe the hype"-1988)

Negative labels so commonly associated with the African American community interfere with pedagogical and institutional practices and structures. From body language and attitude to clothes, hair, language, and cultural norms, African American students are restricted by negative labels that have lasting effects for students in traditional environments.

For instance, certain articles of clothing have become identified as signs of rebellion, promiscuity, and gang activity (Ferguson, 2004). African American children are often automatically labeled as problems if they walk in a classroom with attire that has been associated with negativity and low academic performance, although they may be academically bright and motivated. Thus, if students do not possess positive self-images about their academic abilities, teachers with negative perceptions of them have instantly contributed to their failure. It is interesting that certain appearances that are associated with particular cultures can either be deemed acceptable, to say, "kids are just being kids", or threatening and unintelligent just by mere association.

For example, two students can walk into a classroom, each exercising their right to express themselves, one wearing what would be classified as "skateboarder" attire and the other "hip hop". Because "skateboard" attire has been deemed acceptable by the dominant culture, there are no negative consequences that come with dressing as such, but for the student dressed in what is deemed as "hip hop" attire there are many negative consequences that are attached to that image. Further, if middle class White students

wear "hip hop" attire, the receptivity and interpretation of those students would not be deemed the same as Black students of the same economic status wearing the same attire. Teachers will likely label students with the "skateboard" attire as normal kids who like to express themselves through attire; however, Black students with the "hip hop" wear will likely be spending the rest of the year proving to teachers that they are capable of higher order thinking. And unfortunately for African American students, in particular males, this particular label results in a second rate or substandard education in traditional environments.

It is problematic entering an environment where teachers, administrators, and even parents doubt one's academic ability. It is suggested that teachers' low expectations reduce students' academic self-images (Diamond, 2004). Some teachers' sense of academic responsibility is connected to their personal, societal, or institutional beliefs about what is attainable for students of certain backgrounds. In predominantly low-income African American schools, teachers emphasize student shortcomings and have a reduced sense of responsibility for the quality of their students' academic successes (Diamond, 2004). Many African American students are affected by the beliefs their teachers have in regard to their academic ability. African Americans feel continual pressure to prove they are worthy of being a part of the academically competent. They often perceive that they go above and beyond normal practices and expectations in order to demonstrate cognitive ability and drive. However, if African American students fail during this period of evaluation, teachers deemed their negative perceptions confirmed and that African American students are academically inept.

Conclusion

African American students are faced with navigating a complex predetermined institution of learning. Some African American students enter these institutions insufficiently prepared to disprove the misconceptions of those in power. Places where African American students find academic success tend to be outside of traditional public schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). An alternative environment has to seemingly be created that will foster student's self-identity and self-worth to directly impact their academic achievement. The continued issue of African American students failing while disciplinary actions, suspension, expulsion, and dropout rates continue to rise should invite further critique of traditional schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

As previously discussed there are a variety of issues—race, being raced, and racial maneuvering, authentic caring relationships, and expectations— that attribute to the failing of African American students in traditional schools. To positively impact the educative experiences of African American students, traditional schools should address the cultural and bureaucratic structures that enable the gap to continually increase. Sleeter and Grant (2007) stated that if one tries to change an individual, they will quickly return to their old ways if the world they experience remains unchanged. Creating a forum that will guide and encourage African American students in how to be successful in an unbalanced educational system can be achieved with an alternative approach that differs from what typically exists in traditional schools.

SECTION 2

EXAMINATION OF PROGRAM

North Carolina is attempting to address the dropout rate by promoting alternative

programs. Supporting data shows that alternative methods yield positive outcomes for

students who do not perform well academically or behaviorally in traditional schools.

Alternative programs implemented across the state are Communities In Schools (CIS),

Positive Behavior Support, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Early

College High Schools, and Structured Day Programs. Because CIS of NC is the most

comprehensive alternative initiative underway at this time in the state, I examine it in

depth. However, I provide a general overview of the other four active alternative

approachs employed in the state.

The N.C. Positive Behavior Support Initiative and AVID are extension programs.

Students are enrolled in traditional schools while they participate in them. The AVID

Center was established in 1992 as a nonprofit organization to prepare students performing

in the academic middle (e.g., B, C, and D students) for four-year college eligibility

(American Youth Policy Forum, n.d.). These students are capable of completing rigorous

curriculum but fall short of their potential in the traditional school setting (American

Youth Policy Forum, n.d.). Typically, many of the AVID participants are from low-

income or minority families and will be the first in their families to attend college

(American Youth Policy Forum, n.d.). AVID pulls these students out of their

unchallenging courses and puts them on the college track and focuses upon acceleration instead of remediation (American Youth Policy Forum, n.d.) North Carolina Positive Behavior Support Initiative was implemented after AVID. It started as a part of the N.C. Improvement Program in 2000. It uses a systems approach to help educate all students, especially those with challenging behaviors. That is, appropriate social behaviors are systematically taught using effective instructional methodology (Irwin & Algozzine, 2005).

The Structured Day Programs and Learn and Earn Early College High School Initiative are alternative programs. Students enroll in these initiatives in lieu of traditional schools. Structured day programs are designed to offer services for students to continue their education while suspended or expelled. Eight percent of N.C.'s structured day programs began before 1999 and have slowly grown since (Yearwood, Abdum-Muhaymin, & Jordan, 2007). Currently, there are approximately 41 structured day programs in the state. Learn and Earn Early College High School, commonly referred to as Early College High School (ECHS) initiative was launched in 2004 in response to the workforce needs in N.C. (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2007). The initiative is jointly administered by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and the N.C. New Schools Project (NCNSP) (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2007). It is designed to improve high schools, to better prepare students for college and career, to create seamless curriculum between high school and college, and to provide work-based experiences for students (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2007). Thirty-three Learn and Earn Early College High Schools are currently in operation in N.C. (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2007).

The last alternative initiative implemented in NC is CIS. CIS differs from the other efforts in several different ways. I describe CIS and then examine CIS from a critical race theory perspective using the three factors that pertained to race, caring, and expectation I presented earlier in the paper. Following, I will propose an alternative program that extends the practices of CIS such that issues of race are explicitly addressed.

Communities In Schools of North Carolina

Communities In Schools of North Carolina (CISNC) is a part of a larger entity known as Communities In Schools (CIS). Communities In School (CISNC), established in 1989, has become one of the nation's most effective and widely respected community-based organizations helping kids succeed in schools and prepare for life. CISNC assists North Carolina communities in replicating the national CIS process of service, supports the thirty-one local CIS organizations across the state, and advocates for children, youth, and their families. CISNC provides regional and on-site training and technical assistance, builds partnerships with state agencies and organizations to benefit young people, and serves as a resource and information center for local communities concerned about youth at risk of school failure. CISNC attempts to take a holistic approach to dropout prevention by addressing the physical, emotional, social, and academic needs of children and families through a wide range of services. CIS of North Carolina (CISNC) has 38 established communities in various counties across the state (http: //www.cisnc.org.).

Holistic Approach: CIS of Durham County

A holistic approach involves taking into consideration all the needs of the individual which enables them to flourish and mature despite their circumstance. CIS attempts to take a holistic approach to dropout prevention by addressing the physical, emotional, social, and academic needs of students and their families. The community, parents, business leaders, service and faith-based organizations are all conjoined to provide students with the best resources and environment conducive to learning and flourishing as an individual. One exemplar is CIS of Durham County.

CIS of Durham acknowledges there are too many students failing in traditional schools today, leaving the classroom without the skills needed to succeed in life. According to CIS of Durham, in the 2005-2006 academic year, 520 young men and women dropped out of Durham high schools (Communities In Schools of Durham, n.d.). In addition, 31% of high school students in Durham did not graduate on time, and every four years, approximately 2,000 students drop out of school and enter the community lacking the foundation for a successful life as an adult. *The State of Durham's Children 2000* found that over 50% of Durham's African-American males dropped out before finishing high school (Communities In Schools of Durham, n.d.). CIS contends that the solution lies in engaging the strengths of entire communities, bringing together a wide range of human service organizations, faith organizations, and businesses to provide a holistic support system for students (Communities In Schools of Durham, n.d.). The CIS program of Durham County has seven different services for students and parents that address student's needs holistically.

CIS of Durham implements two activities that address the physical needs of students. Physical needs include resources that students must have in order to be attentive, focused, and receptive. These resources include food and school supplies. CIS of Durham provides these resources by an established weekend backpack program and school supply drive. The weekend backpack program provides nutritious meals and snacks for students over the weekend who are on free and reduced lunch during the school week, and the school supply drive is launched each year to help students in need with school materials such as paper, notebooks, backpacks, etc. CIS of Durham also aids in the emotional development of students.

In meeting the emotional needs of students, CIS of Durham involves their families, communities, and teachers. CIS of Durham emphasizes the strengthening and building of caring relationships. For example, CIS of Durham created the "Incredible Year's Parenting Program." This program is a research-based program. That is, program activities reflect the effective practices cited in the research literature. It helps strengthens families and enhance parent support for their children by offering workshops and counseling. Realizing that the development of children and youth also includes a social dimension, CIS of Durham developed supportive networks for students.

Socially, students need positive interactions with persons who can relate to them and who can serve as models of success and inspiration. CIS of Durham established a mentoring program that linked mentors and students as a means to prevent and curtail drug use and violence. CIS of Durham also established e-mentoring. In e-mentoring, individuals from local companies mentor students via email and discussion boards. Lastly, but certainly not least, CIS of Durham attends to the academic needs of students.

CIS of Durham provides resources that students and parents can access for academic success. For example, CIS of Durham developed a literacy tutoring program to help students with reading. The organization also set up the community leaders speaking program where community and business leaders talk about career options and discuss what it takes to be successful. In addition, CIS of Durham established a performance learning center which is a non-traditional high school for students who have failed one to two years of high school courses or who have dropped out of traditional schools and want to complete their education. The program includes an online curriculum, small group projects, mentoring, internships, and life skill development component.

As exemplified by CIS of Durham, the mission and framework of Communities In Schools is a compelling structure and design. The explicit efforts that CIS of Durham has initiated and implemented are intended for all Communities In Schools of North Carolina. The CIS framework uses a holistic approach to educate students who are either at risk of dropping out or who have already dropped out but are interested in returning. The framework addresses the whole student--the physical, emotional, social, and academic. Of the initiatives underway in N.C., CIS is the only one that seeks to impact students on multiple levels. I consider this approach more beneficial and influential.

Program Critique

Successes of CIS programs across North Carolina are promising. At CIS of Durham, parents, through a survey, reported 91 percent of students improved in overall academic and social skills. Also, teachers reported 83 percent of students improved in classroom performance (Communities In Schools of Durham, n.d.). Other programs had

93 percent program completion rates, 91 and 100 percent improved sixth grade reading scores as well as 86 percent of teachers agreeing that students had an improved attitude (Communities In Schools of Durham, n.d.). The CIS approach, as demonstrated in the CIS of Durham exemplar, is the first step in recognizing the complex mission to educate African American students.

Authentic caring relationships and high expectation are well addressed in the CIS framework. Parental figures, community involvement, faith and business-based organizations all collaborate in the educative process. This approach exemplifies a main premise in the African American community which states "it takes a village to raise a child." Programs such as the literacy tutoring program invite business leaders and people in the community to highlight career options and goals to give students a sense of attainability. Students are also grouped with mentors to serve as a method of exposure and expectation. The implementation of these programs through CIS and the ideology that underlies the CIS framework proves to be beneficial in the lives of African American students and enhances their experiences in the educational process. In accordance with the CRT tenet, permanence of race and racism, the effectiveness of CIS can be broadened by addressing issues of race.

The CIS framework can be expanded to invite dialogue regarding race, being raced, and racial maneuvering. CIS acknowledges the disparity among students who dropout of school, largely as it pertains to African Americans. Thus, race is a known factor as to why such a large percentage of students are pushed or pulled out of traditional schools. The statistics mentioned previously support the notion that race, being raced, and the mastery of racial maneuvering is critical for African American students. CIS could

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expand by implementing into their framework dialogue about race, being raced, and racial maneuvering in traditional schools. For example, the majority of participants served by CIS of Durham are African Americans who have had detrimental experiences in the traditional schools. Therefore, dialogue aiming to deconstruct the experiences of traditional schools and reasons why they were unsuccessful is important. Openly discussing experiences related to race will allow students to further explore not only their personal experiences in traditional schools but also their experiences in life as an African American in a White-dominated society. The old saying, "you can't change what you don't acknowledge" reigns true in many school-related experiences for non majority students.

Conclusion

There are many initiatives being implemented in North Carolina that are gaining headway in order to change the scope of potential dropouts. Previously covered content is a comprehensive collection of data highlighting various initiatives from the state to federal level that focus on alternative education methods. According to Yearwood and Abdum-Muhaymin (2007), evaluative research on the efficacy and impact of alternative schools documents substantial and significant improvements in the academic performance of those students enrolled in alternative learning programs. It was also stated that because many alternative school students report their lack of interest in returning to their original/home school, it is not surprising that attendance rates at the alternative schools have been found to be higher. These students are among those labeled as often displaying truant behavior that have since become less problematic than when they

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attended traditional public schools. Also, many researchers of alternative schools have found improvements in academic performance as measured by student grades, standardized tests, and aptitude tests. The programs previously mentioned, whether established as a small entity within a school or as an independent program, aspire to drastically improve the experiences of students resisting traditional structures. Programs such as Communities In Schools (CIS) aim to establish or re-establish a sense of interest and motivation among students. CIS, to a degree, embodied the tenets that were introduced at the beginning of this paper, such as authentic caring relationships and high expectation. CIS aims to take a holistic approach to educate students. The structure intends to acknowledge students' life circumstances and experiences while simultaneously maintaining authentic caring, and a level of high expectation. The sense of belonging and community that CIS considerably deems credible has a profound impact on the shaping of a students' academic performance (Yearwood and Abdum-Muhaymin, 2007).

SECTION 3

PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK

The proposed framework is based on the information covered throughout this paper, in particular, the three suggested tenets. In order to make significant gains in deconstructing the experiences of traditional schools, one has to address through dialogue the racial barriers that exist. The mission of this framework is to deconstruct unwarranted experiences through a truthful and caring, yet structured, environment. Referring back to Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004), traditional schools do not acknowledge racial barriers embedded in our educational system, but if it happens to be addressed, it is validated through "niceness" instead of truth. This approach simply perpetuates the cycle and further silences the oppressed. I propose that in an alternative framework there should be, with respect to the hidden curriculum, open and honest dialogue regarding race, being raced, and racial maneuvering, authentic caring relationships, and high expectations. Further, students should be guided through this process that keeps validation and acknowledgment at its focus. Again, one can not change that what is not acknowledged.

The CIS framework is well structured in that the educative process is holistic and comprehensive. In particular, the framework addresses two of the three tenets I propose which are authentic caring relationships and high expectation. CIS shows the importance of authentic caring relationships by intensely involving the community in the educative

process. This aspect of the program is significant because it allows teachers and administrators the opportunity to become familiar with students' communities. This component creates additional avenues that are helpful in fostering caring relationships. In addition, the framework exhibits a level of high expectation in that students are coupled with mentors, provided beneficial academic resources, and expected to devise a future career path. High expectations are inherent in the framework in that it encourages students to consider the feasibility of having a career path. Because African American students tend to significantly value the expectation and opinion of their teachers, this component is critical to student success.

A Second Look at Caring

As mentioned previously, CIS has a beneficial framework helpful in creating authentic caring relationships. It seeks to deconstruct notions of untrustworthy relationships by expanding the educative process beyond school walls and into the communities. Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) also deconstruct untrustworthy relationships through a three developmental level structure. This view of caring can be instrumental in helping African American students. The three developmental stages are intended to deconstruct and transform conceptions involving the types of relationships expected or required in traditional schools. The stages are as follows:

Caring for self (ethic of survival)

Transition from survival to conventional goodness

Caring for others (conventional goodness)

Transition from conventional goodness to reflexive care

Caring for self and others

Caring for Self: Ethic of Survival

Students enter an alternative program either because they did not establish a personal connection with their traditional school, or because they were no longer permitted to attend. Therefore, students enter alternative programs with a sense of opposition and resistance. The environment of a traditional school failed them on many levels that drastically influence their opposition and resistance for another school-like environment.

Level one represents the beginning stages of deconstructing opposition and resistance to an educative process. In this stage students are not interested in caring for anyone but themselves due to experiences that have failed or served as disappointments in the past involving traditional environments. Students are in a survival mode, solely caring about their own well-being. This tactic is a defense mechanism to avoid being hurt, taken advantage of or questioning self-worth or identity. This stage is the most important stage in forming genuine relationships that aim to *not* allow "niceness" to trump truth (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). It is also the most significant because it will hinder the progression of all subsequent stages in which students should be receptive to care for others. This stage, care for self, requires an authentic position of care and concern. It is imperative to consider as many factors as possible such as family life, community, or school related when deconstructing at this level. CIS considers these factors in its holistic approach. These factors may be critical in explaining why a student

has been stagnant or trapped at the stage of survival caring and acknowledging the factors are crucial in moving students to level 2.

Caring for Others: Conventional Goodness

This level focuses on individuals' abilities to care for others. However, this stage solely focuses on caring for others minus the inclusion of caring for themselves. At this level, students are unable to balance caring for themselves in the midst of caring for others which is why the focus is centered on caring for others (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). To focus solely on understanding the cares and desires of others minus egocentric motives makes it easier for students to take the role of care-giver. This allows students to stand in an unfamiliar role, experiencing all of the negative and positive consequences of being in such as role. For instance, entering this stage enables students to experience firsthand the emotional strain of caring for others. This stage is also critical for demonstrating to students the direct affect one's actions has on a person involved in an authentic caring relationship.

Caring for Self and Others

This level represents students now being able to care for themselves and others simultaneously. This stage represents surrendering personal shields or guards to invite and receive caring relationships, and high expectation from others. This approach operates on the assumption that in opening the door to fostering caring relationships students will not only care for others but also begin to value the care that others have for them via their hopes to see them succeed and flourish. Meaning, a student will strive to

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flourish knowing there are others who care for and expect them to succeed. Thus, students will have a light that has been lit; no longer needing to oppose education with an uncaring attitude or lack of interest for things associated with it.

Various activities can be used in employing the Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) framework to move students from caring for self, to caring for others, to ultimately caring for self and others. The activities should address each level and gradually enable students to progress to the next level. The first activity might encourage students to think and dialogue about their conditions and how they address them. These conditions may involve things such as a lack of food or school supplies or a situation in which they believed they were treated unfairly. The conversation would help students to decipher the structural racial issues, to understand their realm of responsibility in the situation, to examine the advantages and disadvantages of their actions in the situation, and to speculate on more productive ways to respond. The second activity might involve students working with younger students who are experiencing struggles in school that are similar to their own. Working with these younger students would change the focus from self to others. The third activity might involve students becoming mentors of other students which require caring for both self and others. In mentoring these younger students, the older students could utilize the first activity in helping the younger students to cope and succeed. This last activity would move students from caring for others to caring for self and others. In being a mentor, one must exhibit a form of self care (i.e. achieving in various domains) in addition to caring for others. Crucial to helping students to function at level 3 in caring is to explicitly address the role and impact of race.

Alternative Framework for Race

To recall, there was one important tenet lacking in the CIS framework, dialogue about race, being raced, and racial maneuvering. The deconstruction process for race, being raced, and racial maneuvering would be conceptually similar to the three- level developmental stages posited by Siddle Walker & Snarey (2004). The three-tier approach for addressing race is based upon the premise that acknowledgment and awareness leads to progression towards constructive action. The first level would only focus on race through dialogue, the second level would focus on being raced through validation and acknowledgement, and the third level would focus on racial maneuvering through acceptance and progression. To further illustrate this idea, I offer concrete activities to move students from one stage to the next.

The first activity might involve a visit to an African American history museum where students would thereafter dialogue about the influences of race in order to draw connections to personal experiences. At this stage it would be important for students to exercise the notion of *naming* things. Drawing connections between the experiences of traditional schools with accepted/ mainstream language (e.g., dialogue) would allow students to transition into the second stage.

The second activity might be a roundtable discussion about being raced in traditional schools. At this stage it would be critical to validate and acknowledge perceptions. For example, a child who has the painstaking task of forgiving a parent who relinquished their parental rights would find great difficulty in doing so if the parent is in a place of denial or justification. The parent would first have to acknowledge and validate the child's feelings of abandonment, hurt, anger, resentment, or distrust to even

consider progressing forward. The same would apply for students at this stage.

Encouraging dialogue centered on critical issues such as being raced is complex, but

necessary for progression, which would be required in the next stage.

There are four ways to maneuver race which are code-switching (Landrine &

Klonoff, 1995), opposition (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), passing (Levine, 1977), and

acting White (Ogbu, 2004). For example, a third level activity might require groups of

students to visit different settings─ fine dining restaurant, community recreation center,

or an educational conference─ to understand the different expectations for the different

environments in which they find themselves. This would be an example of code-

switching. Another activity might require students to observe an In School Suspension

(ISS) room at a local high school to interview students therein to gather information

about what occurs in ISS. The students would then use the information in role-playing.

Students would be grouped in threes. One student would emulate the actions of the

authority figure in ISS, another student would imitate students' reactions within ISS and

the third student would act in ways that are alternative to the imitated students' reactions.

The role-playing would provide an opportunity to show students how actions can be

perceived and how being raced can influence a situation. An additional activity might

involve students dialoguing with a panel that appears to be comprised of three White

members; however, one of the panelists would not actually be White. This would be an

example of passing. This activity would also serve to make connections to being raced.

A final activity would address acting White. The activity might involve students

discussing what it means to act White and taking a poll of the different characteristics

associated with acting White. These characteristics might include dress, language, tone,

or peer association. The purpose of the activities is to show students the various maneuvering tactics that African Americans or people of color might use to afford themselves social and political mobility. Dialogue regarding the benefits and costs of each tactic would be encouraged. For instance, code-switching allows for crossing cultural and language boundaries (Ogbu, 2004) without divorcing your true identity, while acting White does not. Or, as cited by Ogbu (2004), the *double consciousness* concept by DuBois can trigger anxiety in many African Americans, and be problematic in affording social and political mobility. In addition, although passing may seem less troublesome and effortless, it may be burdensome for establishing personal connections and relationships with significant others and other African Americans.

The three tier approach aims to expose race, being raced, and racial maneuvering and to prepare African American students to manage them. Students must understand the structure in which they operate, and be given direction on how to move forward and function for their personal benefit. The decision to practice a maneuvering method is solely the decision of the student. Racial maneuvering is a concept many non majority persons understand and have coped with but for those who struggle, it becomes ever more critical to be guided.

SECTION 4

Concluding Remarks

Places where African American students find academic success tend to be outside of traditional public schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As stated before, to positively impact the educative experiences of African American students, traditional schools should address the cultural and bureaucratic structures that enable the gap to continually increase. However, the bureaucratic structures of traditional schools will not likely enable that to happen. Thus, creating a forum that will guide and encourage African American students in how to be successful in an unbalanced educational system can be achieved with an alternative. I proposed three tenets and corresponding framework for consideration; these dealt with race, being raced, and racial maneuvering, authentic caring relationships, and high expectation. The most comprehensive alternative program in North Carolina was expanded to align closer with the proposed framework. Communities In Schools (CIS) seeks to establish or re-establish a sense of interest and motivation among students. CIS, to a degree embodied the tenets that were introduced in the beginning of this paper, such as authentic caring relationships, and high expectation. CIS also seeks to take a holistic approach in the educative process by acknowledging students' life circumstances and experiences while maintaining high expectation

and authentic caring. The proposed alternative program framework expands that of Communities In Schools (CIS). Like CIS, it has a holistic approach for the educative process. As an addition to what occurs in CIS, I iterated the importance of creating a platform for dialogue regarding race, being raced, and racial maneuvering in order to show the interconnectedness of race and traditional schools that negatively impacts African American students. An alternative program framework centered on race is a significant factor for addressing opposition and resistance in traditional schools.

Future Directions

Future directions would include implementing the framework I propose and researching the overall effectiveness of the proposed framework for African American students in alternative programs across North Carolina. There is very limited literature on such frameworks and little research regarding the effectiveness of programs that address race, being raced and racial maneuvering. In addition, literature in education that explicitly addresses racial maneuvering tactics for African Americans that highlights the benefits and costs of each is also very limited. As my previous statements indicate, much work remains. If the goal is to improve the educative experiences of African Americans then this work, with a focus on race, must take place.

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