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RACIAL STEREOTYPE THREAT: A CRITICAL RACE PERSPECTIVE

Daniel Craig McCloud

99 Pages

America is currently at a crossroads regarding race relations. Social and racial inequities have led to disparities in the educational outcomes for Blacks and other groups in this country. These educational disparities, incorrectly defined as an achievement gap, are part of a larger deficit-based construct, which continues to deflect attention away from a system of hegemony that has been used to maintain a hierarchy of power and dominance over African Americans. Central to the continuance of this structure is the use of deficit based rhetoric, ideology, and research that continues to perpetuate stereotypes of African American intellectual inferiority.

The present study draws on Critical Race Theory (CRT) to examine the racial stereotype threat research to determine its contribution to the achievement gap construct and to examine its place among deficit theories. Counter narratives are provided to illustrate the need for additional research that focuses on the structural, rather than the proposed, psychological causes found within the stereotype theory.

Findings of this study show that the current racial stereotype threat research has several limitations, including lack of generalizability, less emphasis on racial stereotype threat between Whites and other racial groups, as well as a blaming-the-victim ideology,

and less emphasis on the role that racism and deficit ideology have contributed to the disparity in academic outcomes between Blacks and other racial groups in this country.

KEYWORDS: Critical Race Theory, Racial Stereotypes, Racism, Stereotype Threat

RACIAL STEREOTYPE THREAT: A CRITICAL RACE PERSPECTIVE

DANIEL CRAIG McCLOUD

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Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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RACIAL STEREOTYPE THREAT: A CRITICAL RACE PERSPECTIVE

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I would like to thank God for life and the strength, courage, and perseverance to undertake this journey and to see it through to its fruition. I would also like to thank my lovely wife, Jonelle, and my two beautiful daughters, Jonae and Jaida, for their love, understanding, and inspiration. I would be remiss if I didn't thank my loving mother and father, who instilled in me the power of education and accountability. I must also thank the members of my committee, Dr. Mohamed, Dr. Hoff, Dr. Rugutt, and Dr. Hartlep. Your guidance and insight have been invaluable in assisting me in achieving this goal.

I undertook this journey to position myself to effect change for African Americans in this country. Being constantly aware of the issues facing African Americans, including disparities in health care, education, poverty, and incarceration, I recognized long ago that to assist in seeking solutions to these issues; I would need to be proactive in my approach. It is from this unique viewpoint that I began my pursuit of a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from Illinois State University. Needless to say, this has been a long and arduous process, but the rewards of completing this process far outweigh the late nights and early mornings spent working towards this goal, and the insight that I have gained about myself during this journey is priceless.

D. C. M.

CONTENTS

iv

TABLES

FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

When discussing higher education and Blacks, the discourse inevitably leads to the discussion of an "achievement gap." According to Hill (2008), an achievement gap is present when "roughly one standard deviation difference in scores on standardized and/or norm-referenced tests and the quantifiable differences in grades and other academic outcomes that is evident between racial groups (particularly Blacks and Whites) in the American education system" (p. 27).

As a working definition, the achievement gap would be a comparison of academic outcomes, based not on the academic talents of the individual, but on a comparison of Blacks to a system of "whiteness." Whiteness is a system that Blacks can never truly be a part of due to the dominant hegemonic White society's subservient view of Blacks. According to Apple (2004) in defining hegemony as a construct that:

> Seeks to saturate our very consciousness, so that educational, economic and social world we see and interact with, and the commonsense interpretations we put on it, becomes the world *tout court*, the only world. Hence, hegemony refers not to congeries of meaning that reside at an abstract level somewhere at the "roof of our brain." Rather, it refers to an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central, effective and dominant system of values and actions which are *lived*. (p. 4)

From within this system of hegemony, and when defined as a social construct—a system built to maintain a hierarchical order—the achievement gap takes on an entirely

1

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different meaning. Hill (2008) defines the achievement gap construct in the following

way:

> The racist societal belief that the quantifiable differences in educational, social
> and economic scores and outcomes of the different races, are based on
> "true"/"real", authentic differences in the intellectual ability, academic potential,
> social viability and moral proclivity of different races. It essentially posits that
> these differences (all to the benefit of whites who are seen as the norm) are a
> matter of fact that governs the relationships among outcomes of racial groups.
> (p. 28)

As a social construct, the achievement gap is a belief system in which the values,

beliefs, and behaviors of White society are the norm by which all other groups and

individuals are measured and compared (Hooks, 1997). When measured against this

premise, "the attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, values, ideas, and characteristics of all others,

especially Blacks, become viewed as abnormal and inferior, especially when thought to

be in opposition to this premise (Hooks, 1997).

I theorize that the achievement gap as a social construct is no different or less

effective than the countless terms, ideologies, and areas of research that have historically

been used to create and maintain the racial stereotype of African American intellectual

inferiority. Compounding the problem is the fact that this achievement gap construct, at

every educational level, is continuously presented throughout the media and higher

education research as an indicator of the academic value of Blacks. At the post-secondary

education level, measures such as admissions, enrollment, retention, attrition,

preparedness, and persistence are used to measure and perpetuate the achievement gap

construct. Other assessment measures, such as the annual Scholastic Assessment Test

(SAT), which are given to students with college aspirations and are designed to assess the

educational development of high school students and their ability to complete college-

level work, are also used to perpetuate this construct.

However, what is often absent from this discussion is the fact that this achievement gap construct is deeply rooted in research grounded in a deficit perspective that blames the victims and their communities, rather than the hegemonic system that has been designed to perpetuate the myth of African American intellectual inferiority (Gorski, 2010; Hill, 2008; Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 2014). This deficit is of critical concern. Many of the policies and interventions aimed at improving the educational outcomes of Blacks are developed based on these false assumptions and stereotypes is, therefore, ineffective (Ramirez & Carpenter, 2005).

Thus the achievement gap, when viewed as a social construct, and when coupled with such emerging deficit-based research such as racial stereotype threat, only serves to perpetuate the stereotype of African American intellectual inferiority. Current research on stereotype threat tends to reside within the individualistic paradigm, which dictates that, to a certain extent, the factor of racial stereotype must contain elements of those issues related to a self-fulfilling prophecy (internalized oppression), presumed incompetence (structural hegemony), and stereotype threat (external messages). This conflation warrants more research than has been previously conducted. The dialogue, rooted in a deficit perspective, fails, adequately, to explore the factors of oppression, racial inequality, and social inequality.

By tracing the history of this deficit-based construct, including the deficit-based research used to justify and maintain it, a critical examination of the current racial stereotype threat research to determine whether it continues the long dark history of racial stereotypes and intellectual inferiority commenced. Thus, educators and policymakers

can be presented with evidence that the current achievement gap discourse is a farce.

Significance of the Study

According to Creswell (2009), by providing the significance of the study, the writer is creating a justification or purpose for the study and a statement of why the research is important. Conclusions drawn from this research on the deficit-based achievement gap discourse will help higher education administrators and instructors, as well as policymakers, not only understand the deep-rooted social, economics, and racial injustices that continue to be used to maintain a system of hegemony, but also recognize that emerging research on this topic, such as stereotype threat, only adds to the myths of African American intellectual inferiority.

Research Questions

According to Paterson, Thorne, Canam, and Jillings (2001), "the meta-study research question should be broad enough to capture the attributes of the phenomenon under study in various contexts and situations but narrow enough to create a feasible limit to the number of selected research reports to be included" (pp. 24-25). The following research questions were used to guide this meta-study analysis.

1. How has the racial stereotype research contributed to the deficit-based achievement gap construct?

2. What are the limitations of racial stereotype threat?

3. What are the implications of the racial stereotype threat discourse for higher education administrators, educators and policy makers?

Theoretical Framework

Merriam (2009) describes the theoretical framework as "…the underlying structure, the scaffolding or frame of your study" (p. 66). For the purpose of this study, Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used. According to Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009):

> This [CRT] race-based epistemology is particularly useful because it provides a lens through which to question, critique, and challenge the manner and methods in which race, White supremacy, supposed meritocracy, and racist ideologies have shaped and undermined policy efforts for African American student participation in higher education. (p. 390)

The basic premise of this research was the fact that deficit ideology has been used to create a hegemonic system that continues to perpetuate the myth of African American intellectual inferiority; CRT allowed the researcher to examine racism in all of its forms, including racial stereotypes and deficit ideology and deficit research. The CRT allowed the researcher to highlight the continuance of racial and social injustice, by challenging existing hegemonic systems and intuitions, including those both political and economic. The CRT recognizes that racism is a means by which society allocates privilege and status (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 17). The CRT was used to dispel the myth that racism is somehow uncommon, rather than innately woven into the fabric of American culture as the notion of equality of all races.

Valdes, McCristal, Culp, and Harris (2002) explain three central beliefs of a mainstream culture that must consistently be challenged by CRT. Those central beliefs include the following: (a) blindness to race will eliminate racism; (b) racism is a matter of individuals, not systems; and (c) racism can be fought without paying attention to sexism, homophobia, economic exploitation, and other forms of oppression or injustice.

Through the use of CRT, the researcher offers a critique and analysis of the research on racial stereotype threat and how this research is used to explain, define, and justify the achievement gap construct. Through the use of CRT, the themes of race, racism, and racial stereotypes are defined, analyzed, and challenged in order to determine if this research perpetuates the achievement gap phenomenon.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was (a) to analyze the racial stereotype theory to determine its contribution to the body of deficit research, and (b) to shift the discussion of African American academic performance away from the deficit-based achievement gap discourse and correctly towards the social, political, and economic barriers established as a means of maintaining the dominant White power structure. In this way, educators and policymakers will have the necessary information to create programs, policies, and interventions that can be used to level the playing field regarding educational equality for African Americans.

Statement of Positionality

When analyzing research involving social injustice, particularly involving African Americans, the researcher must always be conscious of any biases regarding the specific topic and the participants. The fact that I am an African American male allows me to view life through a particular cultural and societal lens. Being constantly aware of our history and all of the issues facing African Americans, including disparities in health care, education, poverty, and incarceration, I have come to realize that, to assist with solutions to these issues, myself, as well as others, will need to be proactive in our approach. I long ago stopped feeling sorry for myself regarding any real or perceived

disadvantages that may exist as a result of being African American. For me, being African American is about accountability and obligation to those who have allowed me to place myself in the best possible position, to give back to society in a positive and meaningful way. It is because of this that I must acknowledge my biases regarding the subject matter as the researcher of this study. My worldview regarding race, discrimination, and prejudice are based on the oral history passed on to me by my father, my uncles, and other family members. Also, as an African American, I identify with the attempts of the White hegemonic power structures to maintain the system status quo through the use of racial stereotypes and deficit-based research.

Chapter Summary

Blacks in this country continue to suffer from years of educational inequality. As researchers, policy makers, and educators continue to make decisions based on a false precept of a post-racial society, it is imperative that we find solutions to this hegemonic system of oppression and its related constructs. A close examination of the deficit-based research that many of these individuals rely on as part of their decision-making process is warranted. This study sought to examine a critical aspect of today's current research, racial stereotype threat, to determine its contribution to the current fallacy of African American intellectual inferiority.

Organization of Study

Chapter I includes the introduction, statement, development of the problem, significance of the study, research questions, theoretical purpose of the study, scope and limitations of the study, positionality, and organization of the study. Chapter II reviews the relevant literature and research. Chapter III outlines the study's research

methodology, design, and procedures for data analysis. Chapter IV shares the findings,

conclusions, and implications for policy and practice. It also makes recommendations for

future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Overview

This chapter reviews the relevant literature related to the deficit-based research, which is an integral part of the achievement gap construct that continues the perpetuation of the fallacies and false assumptions regarding African American intelligence in this country. The review of literature begins by describing the racist ideology that has served as the foundation for the achievement gap construct. The literature probes this racist ideology by examining the body of deficit-based research used to bolster and maintain it. Conclusions will be drawn to illustrate what is currently happening in the field, what the dominant discourses are, how these discourses compete with one another, and the implications for African Americans regarding the influence of these theories on the maintenance of the achievement gap construct.

African Americans and Higher Education: A Historical Perspective

Following the end of the Civil War, America was faced with many challenges, including the significant loss of free labor and a social stratification system that was thrown into turmoil. Primary among these challenges was how to address the educational needs of newly freed slaves. Without their slaves, Whites were concerned with how a newly freed and educated people might upset the existing economic and political status quo. For the first time in history, African Americans and access to higher education had to be addressed. Understandably, this was of great concern to Whites, who, according to

9

Du Bois (1973), "viewed any formal education, for slaves or the children of slaves, as a major threat to their well-established state of White supremacy" (p. 63). Whites worried that granting former slaves' access to education would ultimately displace the existing dominant, White hegemonic system of oppression (DuBois, 1973).

Early attempts at establishing education for African Americans showcased stark inequalities between the African American schools and their curricula and those of their White counterparts. From the very outset, schools and curricula were differentiated for the purpose of establishing a hierarchy of both educational and social stratification (Sherer, 1977). Those who supported the vocational-based curriculum also believed that the more traditional liberal arts education was mostly for the White elite, and, therefore, could not possibly be made accessible to African Americans, whose exposure to college preparatory curriculum was nonexistent.

Not surprisingly, an abundance of individuals came forth to provide models and rationales for what higher education should look like for the newly freed African Americans. Samuel Chapman Armstrong was one such individual. Armstrong understood White southerners' dilemma and who believed that the future of the country depended on the type of education that newly freed slaves received. Armstrong's solution was to educate African Americans, but in such a way that appeased Whites and pacified the African Americans. Of course, his proposed solution to African American higher education was also rooted in deficit ideology. However, unlike the proponents of eugenics and scientific racism, Armstrong did not believe that African Americans were intellectually inferior; rather, he believed that African Americans were mentally capable but morally weak. It was because of this perception of moral weakness that Armstrong

sought to remove effectively Black voters and Black politicians from southern political life and relegate Black workers to the lowest forms of labor, thus maintaining the White social hierarchy that had existed for years. Key to this process was the establishment of a model of higher education that would: (a) train a workforce that the South would desperately need, and (b) continue to perpetuate the falsehood of Black inferiority, not only in the minds of Whites but African Americans as well (Watkins, 2001).

The model for these institutions, based on the "Hampton Idea," was to be carried out by Black instructors at existing industrial Normal schools. This form of instruction tended to be labor focused and served two primary purposes. Firstly, it satisfied African Americans who were seeking any form of education, and secondly, it maintained the pecking order of the South for Black labor and White supremacy. This argument represented an effort to promote some form of Black higher education while at the same time maintained a Southern workforce that calmed the White fear of educated African Americans (Mohr, 2009).

Also, many of these institutions were disproportionately funded when compared to the predominately White institutions of the time, despite the "separate, but equal" rule of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896). Sekora (1968) reports that even after *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), White institutions were still receiving state funding at a rate of 26 times that of Black colleges. Similarly, Bowles and DeCosta (1971) found that the per-student state expenditure rate for African Americans equaled about one-fourth of that for Whites. The existing hegemonic systems were so strong and powerful that laws such as *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896) were ignored. Given that not even the law appeared to be on their side, African Americans suffered immensely regarding gaining access to higher education.

Despite the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* case (1954), which found that separate schools for African Americans and Whites were unconstitutional, African Americans continued to face barriers to gaining access to educational equality. Many states and local governmental bodies, including local school boards, refused to recognize the ruling (Walters, 2001). It was only after the establishment of the Civil Rights Act (1964), and the subsequent Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), that the federal government had any effective means of preventing discrimination by restricting the federal funding to these institutions (Walters, 2001).

The debate as to what the model for higher education for African Americans would look like was not strictly a discussion held among Whites. African American leaders such as Booker T. Washington (a student mentored by Samuel Armstrong), also weighed in on the debate. Washington espoused the need for African Americans to obtain a curriculum focused on manual labor, discipline, a work ethic, and vocational skills, which he felt would provide the African American with a better opportunity to make a living.

Washington was concerned about the possibility of widespread violence against African Americans during that period. He advocated that African Americans accept their social place in exchange for a reduction of political backlash and violence. However, not all Black educators shared Washington's views. African American educators such as Alexander Crummell and W. E. B. Du Bois believed that African Americans should focus on a learning curriculum of science and technology. In this way, they theorized, African Americans would be better prepared to advance as a race. Crummell believed that all forms of African American education should include a classical and higher

education, to provide the African American a broader vision of life (Crummell, 1992b). Du Bois (1903) argued that, under Washington's plan, African Americans would be denied a critical component of higher education, that being the opportunity to develop the critical thinking skills that would be needed to advance socially, economically, and academically as a race.

Anna Cooper, a feminist educator, was also a part of this race uplift movement, and she too believed that African Americans should strive for higher education equal to that of Whites. Other African American scholars such as Carter G. Woodson also understood that it was critical for African Americans to know their history, so in that way, they would not be susceptible to the racial stereotypes that were prevalent during the time. The work of Carter G. Woodson is particularly relevant given the history of deficit rhetoric.

Racist Ideology

Central to the development of the deficit-based achievement gap construct was the creation of racist ideology designed to maintain and perpetuate racial stereotypes about African Americans' capacity to learn and function intelligently within the existing White supremacist social order (Hill, 2008). This movement, known as "scientific" or "intellectual racism" (Watkins, 2001) was used as a rationale and justification for the continued oppression of African Americans. According to Poress and Plan (2007):

> Scientific racism is the act of justifying inequalities between natural groups of people by recourse to science it is the result of a conjunction of two cultural values or ideologies: (1) that natural categories of the human species exist and are of different overall worth; and (2) that science provides a source of authoritative knowledge. These ideas arose separately, but at about the same time in the late seventeenth century. (p. 1)

And according to Watkins (2001),

> Scientific racism was a key component in the justification of social stratification. In addition to explaining racial differences, "it was the basis for segregation and was utilized as a rationale for inequality, and it provided the rationale for what Black colonial education would entail." (p. 24)

The false premise of scientific racism is that African Americans are inherently inferior to Whites regarding intellectual capacity. Intellectual racists, such as Arthur de Gobineau, were instrumental in perpetuating this ideology through the development of the racial determination theory, which suggested that all races derived from the White race, and that establish "Whiteness," the standard by which all other races would be compared and judged. Gobineau's theory was not only used to maintain social, economic, and educational hierarchies, but it also gave academic respectability to widespread racist convictions (Watkins, 2001). Others, such as Benjamin Rush, an original founding father of this country, believed that the African American was inferior at the biological level (anatomically, physiologically, and psychologically). In this regard, Rush believed the African Americans to be "pathologically infected" (Watkins, 2001), providing some of the first examples of the blaming-the-victim discourse, later defined by Ryan (1971). Scientific racism was used to provide an unjust explanation for racial differences and as a false justification for segregation and inequality. But more importantly, it planted the seeds for what Black education would look like in the coming years, something Watkins refers to as the architects of Black education.

Eventually, the racist vitriol of scientific racism would be bolstered by the equally disturbing theories of eugenics, which expanded deficit-based ideologies by introducing intelligence testing and statistics as a means to rationalize the perpetuation of the false

notion of African American cognitive inferiority (Watkins, 2001). Eugenicists argued that the use of large databases validated their conclusions regarding the intellectual inferiority of African Americans (Watkins, 2001). In contradicting the eugenicists' theories, Wooldridge (1994) argued that the men who developed these intelligence tests based them on their life experiences and structured the test to favor those individuals who were like them in thinking and personalities. According to Wooldridge (1994): "[M]en tend to admire qualities that they exemplify; [it's] possible that these psychologists loaded their tests, albeit unconsciously, for children with personalities like their own" (p. 216).

According to Miller and Lynes (2012), "intelligence tests were normed on individuals who reflected upper middle class, White Eurocentric values, attended elite schools, and frequently received personal tutoring" (p. 167). Critical to this line of thought is the fact that the primary focus and rationale for any outcomes from these assessments were inappropriately based on the genetics of the individual and groups, rather than the differences in their backgrounds. The results were the perpetuation of the stereotypes that the lower classes and racial minorities, particularly African Americans, were limited in their intelligence (Marks, 1980). Perhaps the most damaging aspect of the eugenic view was its use as a rationale for continued containment and segregation. Eugenics, as part of the overall scientific racism movement, served as justification for "the hierarchal order of races as historically evolved, divinely ordained, and socially expeditious" (p. 40). The most detrimental aspect of scientific racism is that it provided a lasting framework of both institutional and attitudinal racism, from which to rationalize all forms of social privilege in the 20th century (Marks, 1980, p. 40).

The scientific racism and eugenics discourse regarding African American cognitive inferiority was a topic of discussion as late as the 1970s. Jensen (1973) subscribed to these theories and utilized I.Q. and data from other achievement tests as evidence to substantiate the claims of African American cognitive inferiority. The research of Jenson and others even led to debate as to whether African Americans should have separate curriculums than Whites, based on this perception of biological differences.

The scientific racism and the subsequent eugenics movement, based on a deficit-based pseudo-scientific and racist ideology, lead to African Americans maintaining a subservient position regarding education, based on the outcome measurements used within the field of education. Unfortunately for African Americans, the racist, deficit-based ideologies of the scientific racism and eugenics movement laid the framework for the early years of higher education for African Americans. Because of these false perceptions and racial stereotypes, African Americans were viewed as being only fit for manual or industrial labor, which naturally led to educational opportunities that tended to focus more on vocational training.

Deficit-Based Research

Menchaca (1997) asserted that beliefs emanating from deficit thinking contributed to beliefs about race and intelligence. Manchaca further postulated that deficit thinking would eventually lead to the development of the achievement gap phenomenon. A comparison of academic outcomes was based not on the academic talents of the individual but on a comparison of African Americans to a system of "whiteness" of which African Americans could never truly be part of, due to dominant hegemonic White society's subservient view of African Americans.

According to Gorski (2010):

> …at the core of deficit ideology is the belief that inequality results, not from unjust social conditions such as systematic racism or economic injustice, but from intellectual, moral, cultural, and behavioral deficiencies assumed to be inherent in disenfranchised individuals and communities. (p. 4)

Proponents of this deficit ideology seek to justify this rhetoric by drawing on existing stereotypes that falsely portray African Americans and their communities as "intellectually, morally, and culturally deficient of deviant" (Gorski, 2010, p. 5). Much of the current research on the factors that may contribute to the disparities in the educational outcomes for African American students and students from other races seems to perpetuate this false rhetoric. Deficit-based ideologies, such as the 'achievement gap' construct, have been used to manipulate awareness to deflect attention from the systematic conditions that are used to justify a system of hegemony (Gorski, 2010; Jennings, 2004).

The theories and deficit-based research have changed over the years, but the consistent practice of blaming the victim has remained, including the concept of "nurture" versus "nature" (Erickson, 1987) found in the Cultural Deficit Model. This model postulates that the child's condition is a result of their social, cultural, or economic environment, viewing the individual as being "depraved and deprived" of the necessary social and emotional elements needed to achieve academically. According to the Cultural Deficit Model, these differences would make it difficult for culturally deprived students to achieve academic success (1966).

The deficit movement then moved toward the cultural difference theories that focused on the *'micro'* elements of people's lives and communities. As Erickson points

out, this theory "provided a way of seeing classroom troubles as inadvertent misunderstanding—teachers and students playing into each other's cultural blind spots" (Erickson, 1987).

From the cultural difference theory, the deficit research shifted to Ogbu (1986) and his Cultural Ecological Theory. The ecological view sought to explain why immigrant groups do well in school while others do not. Ogbu postulates that there are three types of minorities: *autonomous, immigrant,* and *caste-like*. According to Ogbu (1986), while *autonomous minorities* are those who may possess ethnic, religious, linguistic, or cultural identity, they are not "subordinated" in the social, economic, or political system. *Cast-like minorities (African Americans)*, however, were brought into the United States society involuntarily, such as through slavery or colonization. Ogbu (1986) postulated that *Immigrant minorities*, on the other hand, have become a part of American society voluntarily and don't experience the same hardships with academic success as *involuntary minorities*. Ultimately, the involuntary minorities are subject to "*secondary cultural differences*" from prolonged contact with a different dominant culture that causes a kind of resistance. Ogbu calls this resistance "*cultural inversion*" (1987).

Ogbu (1986) claims that these variables and others create barriers for involuntary minorities and keep them in a position of subordination. He cites the example of how these minorities come to perceive a job ceiling that will not allow them equal access to jobs. According to Ogbu, this creates a "*why bother*" attitude and clarifies why involuntary immigrants may be less successful academically than voluntary immigrants. Ogbu further theorizes that some groups do not want to give up a cultural

identity to "*act white*" to fit into the dominant Eurocentric society.

Social Dominance Theory

Even when not directly blaming the victim, theories such as social dominance still do not completely hit the mark. The social dominance theory attempts to explain the persistence and sustenance of social inequality by postulating that dominant and subordinate groups characterize all modern societies, and that subordinate group members have less access to allocated resources, including higher education. Within the context of this theory, African Americans have subordinate group status and are therefore less likely to achieve the same levels of academic success as individuals from dominant groups based on their overall subordinate social status.

Laar and Sidanius (2001) state that within the social dominance theory, at least, three groups of factors are associated with the continuance of the achievement gap between African Americans and Whites. These factors include "personal and institutional discrimination; the presence or absence of social, economic, and cultural capital; and reactions to the long-term effects of subordinate social status" (p. 49).

Within the concept of the social dominance theory, African American students who perform poorly academically do so as a result of their reactions to the subordinate status that results from constant exposure to the systematic conditions placed upon them by the dominant group. Similar to the racial stereotype theory, reaction to the subordinate status is theorized to cause an internalized psychological condition, which eventually leads to a self-handicapping behavior that contributes negatively to African American academic outcomes.

Emerging research, such as stereotype threat, is now being examined as a cause of the academic disparities between minoritized individuals/groups, women, and Whites in this country. Stereotype threat is a psychological phenomenon that has been shown to impact negatively the performance of a variety of groups (e.g., racial/ethnic minorities, women, people of low socioeconomic status). The stereotype threat phenomenon itself refers to being at risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one, which ultimately leads to underperformance in certain performance domains. The concepts of stereotypes and stereotype threat are not new areas of research. In fact, Gordon Allport (1954), in his book *The Nature of Prejudice*, examines the origins, dynamics, and consequences of racial and ethnic prejudice in the mid-20th century. As a result of his research, Allport created a definition for ethnic prejudice, defining it as "an aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group" (p. 7). Allport further stated that stereotypes, while they are not identical to prejudices, nevertheless are key mechanisms in the formation and continuation of prejudice. Allport theorized that individuals develop categories, which he defined as groups of related thoughts and recollections *that are used to help understand and guide daily* perceptions and actions, and that a stereotype is defined as "an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct about that category" (p. 191).

The stereotype threat phenomenon itself refers to being at risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's social group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Based on this theory, racial stereotypes are nothing more than exaggerated beliefs,

based on negative perceptions of others, used to justify racist behavior and to maintain a system of hegemony, by seeking to redefine what is to be non-White in America.

Racial Stereotype Threat

Steele and Aronson (1995) were the first to coin the phrase racial stereotype threat. Based on a series of several experiments, they determined that Black college freshmen and sophomores underperformed on standardized tests compared with the performance of White students when race was emphasized. However, the same was not true when race was not emphasized, and Black students performed better and equivalently with White students (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The results of these experiments showed that performance in academic contexts can be harmed by the awareness that one's behavior might be viewed through the lens of racial stereotypes.

Based on this general conceptualization of stereotypes, racial stereotypes are defined as exaggerated beliefs about a particular racial group that are used to justify one's behavior in relations to members of that particular group. However, this definition assumes that the individual who adheres to a specific stereotype will admit that a stereotype influenced his or her conduct (Museus, 2008). This definition also ignores how stereotypes are experienced by or influence members of the targeted group. The importance of these considerations is supported by other research (Steele & Aronson, 1995, 1997), which indicates that stereotypes can influence the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of members of the targeted group. This definition includes individuals who do not necessarily believe those stereotypes and those who invoke them as a justification for their conduct (Museus, 2008).

Racial stereotypes, therefore, are not limited to overstated beliefs that are used to justify conduct toward a group but rather viewed as overstated beliefs or overgeneralizations about a particular racial group that can help shape the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of members of the generalizing and the targeted groups. Stereotypes of racial minority groups include overgeneralizations of a broad range of personal traits that encompass students' physical, psychological, social, and academic characteristics (Museus, 2008).

These racial stereotypes or threats are described as a psychological condition that occurs among African Americans or other racial and ethnic groups when constantly bombarded with negative stereotypes associated with the targeted group's supposed inability to perform in academic domains. This deficit theory postulates that African Americans, when exposed to racial stereotype threat, internalize the fear of these stereotypes being true and either avoid these domains or become handicapped with anxiety and perform poorly within the settings (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Steele, 1997), including the domain of higher education. Furthermore, these stereotypes are perpetuated through television news reports, the internet, and newspaper articles that reinforce stereotypes with discussions about the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students (Kellow & Jones, 2008).

Steele (1995, 1997) theorizes that the pervasiveness of these racial stereotypes can reduce the cognitive capacity of African Americans, due to their preoccupation and concern with the negative stereotypes. The result is a feeling of self-doubt, which can lead to underperformance, particularly on standardized tests. The importance of these considerations is supported by other research (Museus, 2008), which indicates that

23

stereotypes can influence the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of members of the targeted group as well as individuals who do not necessarily believe those stereotypes and those who invoke them as a justification for their conduct. Knowledge of the ways in which stereotypes influence racial minority students' thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and outcomes are limited (Museus, 2008), particularly as it relates to academic performance. The racial stereotype theory postulates that racial stereotype threat can extend beyond underachievement on academic tasks and lead to self-handicapping strategies, such as reduced study and preparation time (Stone, 2002). Stereotype threat can lead to a lessened sense of belonging to the stereotyped domain, such as academics. Normal exposure to stereotype threat can diminish the extent that individuals value the domain in question (Osborne, 1995; Steele, 1997). Literature shows that this is most evident in domains in which achievement is expected, and the stereotype threat is present. Most studies have focused on poorer performance on tests in academic environments, and such effects have been demonstrated in laboratory studies (Steele & Aronson, 1995) in real classrooms (Good, Aronson, & Harder, 2008) and on state-wide standardized tests (Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003). Also, stereotype threat can lead students to choose not to pursue the domain of study and, consequently, limit the range of professions that they can pursue. Therefore, the long-term effects of stereotype threat might contribute to educational and social inequality (Schader, Johns, & Barquissau, 2004).

Summary and Implications of Literature Review

In summary, the literature reviewed on the achievement gap construct revealed that deficit-based research continues to contribute negatively to the achievement gap construct by perpetuating a pattern of "blaming the victim." What is absent in the

research is how the existing hegemonic, economic, social and political structures have negatively contributed to the educational outcomes of African Americans. According to Ladson-Billings (2006), the achievement gap narrative "moves us towards short term solutions that are unlikely to address the long-term underlying problem" (p.4). The literature also indicates that emerging research, such as racial stereotypes, also contributes to the achievement gap construct by perpetuating stereotypes of African American intellectual inferiority.

Chapter Summary

This chapter opened with a discussion of the use of deficit-based ideology as a tool of oppressing the educational opportunities of African Americans. Next, a review of the deficit-based research that has been used to grow this ideology was examined. The chapter closed with a call to arms for a closer examination of the true cause of the disparities in educational outcomes, which is a hegemonic system of oppression founded on racism, discrimination, and stereotypes.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DESIGN, AND PROCEDURES

Chapter Overview

The primary purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the body of racial stereotype threat research as it relates to African Americans and higher education. This investigation was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How has the racial stereotype research contributed to the deficit-based achievement gap construct?

2. What are the limitations of racial stereotype threat?

3. What are the implications of the racial stereotype threat discourse for higher education administrators, educators and policy makers?

The responses to these questions will assist policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in rightly focusing their gaze on the systemic conditions designed to oppress African American educational outcomes, and not on the very deficit-based research used to create the system of hegemony.

Research Design

This study was a conceptual analysis in which the existing stereotype threat research was examined, aiming to reveal underlying concepts, ideas, language, and perceptions that may contribute to inequities in higher education, ultimately exposing and analyzing themes and conclusions by identifying areas needing further study. I began by defining the methodology as a critical discourse analysis before describing the specific

25

procedures of the study. I then identified limitations of my research and finally provided a summary of this chapter.

Method

A meta-study was needed to review thoroughly and synthesize all components of the stereotype threat research, including theory, research methods, data, as well as assumptions and liabilities associated with the stereotype threat research, to utilize critical discourse analysis (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Meta-study

The meta-study was utilized as a process of new inquiry, based on critical interpretations of existing research on the racial stereotype theory research, to examine how the epistemology/theories associated with the racial stereotype threat research is used to explain, define, and justify the existing deficit-based achievement gap construct. The meta-study was used to generate new insights and new ways of thinking about the stereotype threat theory.

Selection of Stereotype Literature and Resources

The search for and collection of academic resources related to stereotype threat consisted of collecting, annotating, and synthesizing resources from various academic resources. A Google Scholar search using the key term of *stereotype threat* produced over 73,000 results. A Google Scholar search using the key term of *racial stereotype*

threat produced over 19,500 results. Due to the enormous amount of publication and resource types, including journal articles, books, book chapters, conference papers and Web sites, and because of time constraints, it was determined that the analysis would focus on those journal articles, books, book chapters, and dissertations most relevant to this study. Table 1 shows the results of the relevant literature in 5-year increments.

Table 1

Review of Research Related to Racial Stereotype Threat and the Achievement Gap Construct by Type of Publication and in 5-Year Increments

5-year increment	Journal Articles	Dissertations	Book/Chapters	Total
2015-2016	4	13	2	19
2010-2014	33	4	2	39
2005-2009	111	12	2	125
2000-2004	86	3	2	91
1995-1999	36	2	3	41

A computer search was used to identify and select research studies from various databases (e.g., Google Scholar, ERIC, ProQuest, Wiley, etc.). The search terms included *racial stereotype threat, African American achievement* gap, *stereotype threat*, *African Americans and higher education*. Also, reference sections of journal articles, books, book chapters and dissertations were used to locate additional research documents. For the analysis, data collection and analytic techniques similar to Turner, Gonzales, and Wood (2008), as well as Paterson, et al., (2001), were used. These techniques were used because they provided the best methods to select and examine the similarities between each

research report. This included a critical examination of all aspects of the research report including the research design, the methodological process, sampling, data analysis, and data interpretation.

Meta-Data Analysis

According to Paterson et al. (2001), "because there may be multiple research studies conducted on the selected topic, meta-study researchers must be specific about the nature of the report they require to adequately address the research questions" (p. 39). For the purpose of the meta-study the following criteria were utilized:

1. Research that highlights the implications of the racial stereotype threat research for higher education administrators, educators and policy makers?

2. Research that explores the common themes found in the racial stereotype discourse?

3. Research that illustrates the limitations of the racial stereotype discourse?

The meta-study compared the findings of the analysis against those of the selected research reports to determine that the meta-study includes both typical and atypical elements of the theory, interpretations, and descriptions of the phenomena located in the selected research (Sandelowski, 1986). The meta-study attempted to discount or discredit the interpretations by of the data, by utilizing the Critical Race Theory, to continuously ask questions about the meta-study data (Sandelowski, 1986).

Once the research documents were selected, each document was thoroughly read by the researcher, noting how the theory of racial stereotype was described. Also, the data in the selected research was compared and contrasted with data in other studies, as a whole and in subgroups, noting the similarities between the key themes and concepts of

each study. After references had been collected and annotated, the analysis began. All

resources were reviewed with attention to their (a) research purpose, (b) research

questions, (c) methodology, (d) theoretical framework, (e) findings, (f) recommendations,

and (g) conclusions. Emerging themes from the literature were then identified, distilled,

and pictorially depicted. A conceptualization is shown in Figure 2.
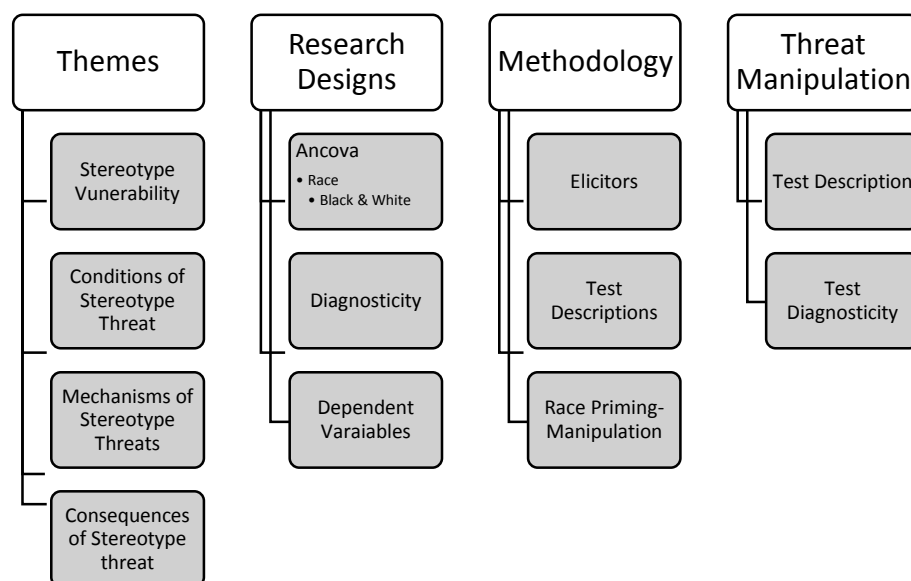
Figure 2. Conceptual themes

Meta-Method

The research designs of the selected research studies were compared and

contrasted to identify any commonalities, themes, trends, and assumptions that might be

relevant in leading to the understanding of the methodologies used and the outcomes

from each respective research report (Paterson et al., 2001). This comparison and contrast

was accomplished through the initial appraisal of individually selected research studies

and the examination of the research design, data collection, methodologies, and research

questions.

Meta-Theory

The meta-theory process of the meta-study design was critical to the meta-study researcher's ability to "systematically understand and evaluate the theories that drive the selected research about the racial stereotype phenomenon." The essential purpose of meta-theory was to analyze the implications of theory for the body of the selected research so the theories associated with this research could be "interpreted, tested, and even developed, by using meta-synthesis, into new theory" (Paterson et al., 2001, p. 92). The meta-theory process involved reading the selected research on racial stereotype threat, documenting the theoretical perspectives and any emerging theories, and determining which additional theories may have had a significant influence on the selected research.

Meta-Synthesis

The selected research on racial stereotype threat was critically examined to interpret the strengths and limitations of the selected research as a predictor of its contributions to the deficit-based research associated with the achievement gap construct. Through the meta-synthesis process of the meta-study, the researcher sought to uncover any false assumptions and specific theories. Also, alternative explanations for contradictions within the field were sought, determining which existing theoretical stances were and were not compatible and why; alternative theoretical structures are proposed within which existing knowledge is interpreted. This process drew from the meta-study steps of (a) meta-data analysis, (b) meta-method, and (c) meta-theory, to synthesize and generate new knowledge and insight into selected research on racial stereotype threat and how this line of research contributes to the deficit-based

achievement gap construct.

Critical Discourse Analysis

In this study, the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used to examine how language use in the stereotype threat research contributes to a negative discourse of the African American in higher education. The *critical* aspect of this discourse analysis originates when the links between language, ideology, and social change are made evident by examining the deficit-based conceptual themes that justify and sustain the stereotype of African American intellectual inferiority.

Through the use of critical discourse analysis, the researcher filled the gaps in higher education that turn a blind eye to research that continues to link African Americans to intellectual inferiority and fails to report how systematic barriers continue to be a hindrance to African Americans and higher education. Using critical discourse analysis, the researcher examined how the discourse of stereotype threat literature is symptomatic of a larger sociopolitical and sociocultural system of hegemony, where those in power, including higher education, attempt to control discourse and to maintain this system of hegemony.

Main Tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis

> Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has become the general label for a special approach to the study of text and talk, emerging from critical linguistics, critical semiotics and in general from a socio-politically conscious and oppositional way of investigating language, discourse, and communication. (Dijk, 1995, p. 17)

Several main tenets of CDA characterize critical discourse analysis. The first is the assumption that language is social and, therefore, we cannot separate CDA from its historical context (Bove, 1990, p. 56). The second tenant of critical analysis is that a

language is a form of symbolic action (Bove, 1990, p. 62). Therefore, certain words and concepts have the power to influence our perceptions. Because language can function as a form of symbolic action, it can be studied as a mechanism in which dominant groups maintain existing social, economic, and political systems. CDA focuses on (group) relations of power, dominance and inequality and the ways that these are reproduced or resisted by social group membership, through text and talk.

CDA allows the researcher to explore which structures and strategies of text and talk to attend to discover patterns of elite dominance or manipulation "in" texts. CDA allows the researcher to detail how forms of inequality, such as racism and discrimination are expressed, enacted, legitimated and reproduced by test and talk. CDA examines the ways in which the elite control text and talk, including scholars, who can control academic discourse, such as lessons, textbooks, courses and scholarly publications.

Evaluation, Dissemination, and Future Challenges

According to Paterson et al. (2001), "a significant measure of the quality of a meta-study is that it should provide a credible and comprehensive answer to the research question(s) through logically developed conclusions." Following the meta-study, the quality of the process was determined by giving consideration to the following questions:

1. Has it increased our understanding of the body of racial stereotype threat research?

2. Has it illuminated the implications of the contexts, methods, and theories of racial stereotype threat research on African Americans and higher education?

3. Has it generated new or expanded theories on the use of racial stereotype threat research as a predictor of African American academic outcomes?

4. Has it articulated an alternative overachieving perspective about the racial

stereotype phenomenon?

Delimitations and Limitations

One of the most significant limitations that the researcher must be cognizant of

when conducting a meta-study is the dependence on primary research to clarify and

provide the context for the research reports (Paterson et al., 2001). According to Paterson

et al. (2001), a meta-study may be limited by the researcher's ability to "articulate the

research design and research findings in a way that the meta-study researcher can follow

the primary researcher's decisions" (p. 15). Therefore, to reduce this limitation, the meta-

study researcher must be sure to document the retrieval process and the research reports

"so that others can judge the breadth of the data retrieval" (p. 25).

Chapter Summary

A meta-study was conducted on the selected stereotype threat research to

investigate the continuing perpetuation of the false assumptions associated with African

American academic disparities in higher education, including any stereotypes associated

with the false perceptions of African American intellectual inferiority. The following

chapter will highlight the findings of this study, and a critical discourse analysis will be

applied to explore the ways in which deficit language is used in the stereotype threat

research. Conclusions drawn from this study will help higher education administrators,

instructors, and policymakers understand the deep-rooted social, economic, and racial

injustices that continue to be used to maintain a system of hegemony and also recognize

that emerging research, such as racial stereotype threat, only adds to the myths of African

American intellectual inferiority.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Chapter Overview

This chapter begins by presenting the emerging themes, research designs and

methodologies most commonly found within this body of stereotype threat research.

Next, the methodological approaches found to be most commonly used are discussed,

followed by the theories most commonly associated with this research, proposed racial

stereotype threat interventions, and criticisms of racial stereotype threat. Finally, a

summary of the chapter is provided.

Emergent Themes

In this section, themes have been identified across publications. From the analysis

of the literature, four categories emerged: (1) Emergent Themes, (2) Research Designs,

(3) Methodologies, and (4) Threat Manipulation. Paragraphs are briefly describing the

various themes introduce each subsection. Words italicized in each paragraph denote

themes listed within each introductory paragraph along with the relevant references

where elaboration on the theme can be found. Tables 2–9 relate to the framework

presented in Figure 2. References for publications documenting each theme are in

alphabetical order.

Stereotype Vulnerability	Stereotype Conditions	Stereotype Mechanisms	Stereotype Consequences
• Anxiety, • negative cognitions, • lowered performance expectations • physiological arousal • reduced effort, • self-control, • memory capacity • creativity, flexibility, and speed,	• Lowered performance expectations • underachievement of stigmatized • decreased performance • self-defeating strategies • excuses for possible failure, • task discounting • dsengagement and disidentification,	• Anxiety • Negative cognitions, • Lowered performance expectations, • Physiological arousal, • Reduced effort, • Heighten stereotype–related thinking, • Lead to distraction • Loss of motivation • Negative thoughts and emotions • Reduced effort, • Self-defeating strategies • Reduced preparation and effort, • Diminished ability to direct their attention and behavior in purposeful ways. • Loss of ability to regulate their academic behavior • Reduction in the ability to regulate effectively behavior in a variety of related and unrelated domains. • Reduction in working memory resources	• Decreased performance • Internal Attributions for Failure • Self-handicapping • Task discounting • Disengagement and disidentification • Altered professional identities and aspirations

Figure 3. Emergent themes

Stereotype Vulnerability

Stereotype threat can affect any individual or group, particularly when those individuals or groups are exposed to circumstances that can lead to the creation of negative stereotypes. Everyone belongs to at least one group that is characterized by some stereotype. Stereotype threat effects have been shown with a wide range of social groups and stereotypes including, but not limited to, men in math, Whites concerning appearing racist, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds compared to students

from high socioeconomic backgrounds on intellectual tasks.

Table 2

Stereotype Threat Vulnerability

Croizet & Claire, 1998
Frantz, Cuddy, Burnett, Ray, & Hart, 2004
Harrison, Stevens, Monty, & Coakley, 2006
Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999
Walsh, Hickey, & Duffy, 1999

Consequences of Stereotype Threat

The primary consequence of stereotype threat is lowered performance expectation. Regarding African American students, there are lowered performance expectations among ninth-grade African American students under stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Other potential consequences include underachievement of stigmatized groups on classroom exams, standardized tests, and tasks that have previously been suggested to be "culture free" and relatively "pure" measures of cognitive ability. Primary examples include lowered performance of Hispanics in the classroom, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Croizet & Claire, 1998), and females in math (Good, Aronson, & Harder, 2008; Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999). Decreased performance on tasks in non-academic domains includes White men in sports (Stone, Lynch, Sjomerling, & Darley, 1999).

Other consequences of stereotype threat include an increased use of self-defeating strategies by stigmatized groups, including practicing less for a task and discounting tasks (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Good, Aronson, & Harder, 2008; Keller, 2007; Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003; and Brown & Day, 2006). Regarding reduced practicing time, research

has shown that White students also tend to practice less for those tasks that they view as requiring a high level of natural ability, a stereotype of Whites commonly associated with athletic performance. Steele and Aronson (1995) found that African-American students under stereotype threat also tended to have attributions for possible failure, including viewing the task as unimportant. Brown and Josephs (1999) showed that providing external excuses beforehand for failure eliminated stereotype threat effects. Other consequences of stereotype threat include task discounting. For racial stereotype threat, this means that African Americans, due to the deficit stereotypes regarding their intelligence, may question the validity of the task or even the importance of being tested.

Disengagement and disidentification have also been found to be consequences of stereotype threat. Disengagement occurs when a stereotype threat causes individuals to distance themselves from a threatening domain or to suggest that performance in a domain is unrelated to self-worth. For racial stereotype threat, this means disengagement from the domain of education, resulting in a thought process that views the domain of education as unimportant. Disengagement has also been shown to be true of other groups, including Whites. Research by Aronson, Lustina, Good, Keogh, Steele, & Brown, 1999; Stone, Lynch, Sjomerling, & Darley, 1999, showed that, before taking an IQ test, White students were reminded of the stereotype that Asians are intelligent. As a result, the White students tended to claim that intelligence was relatively unimportant to them.

Disengagement can also produce "disidentification" if an individual copes with the long-term threat by avoiding the domain or detaching one's identity from a domain. For example, the correlation between academic performance and self-esteem was significant for both Black and White students in eighth grade, but African American boys

showed a weakening correlation over time, so that by twelfth grade, academic performance and self-esteem were unrelated. Among students of color, those who most identified with academics (and would be, therefore, most susceptible to stereotype threat in academic domains) were most likely later to withdraw from school.

High achieving Black students who do not disidentify from academics were more likely to face peer-group ostracism compared with high-achieving White students. Other consequences include altered professional identities and aspirations. Recent research by Steele, James, and Barnett (2002) has shown that stereotype threat can alter stereotyped students' professional identities by redirecting their aspirations and career paths.

Table 3

Consequences of Stereotype Threat

Brown & Day, 2006
Cadinu, Maass, Frigerio, Impagliazzo, & Latinotti, 2003
Cole, Matheson, & Anisman, 2007
Croizet & Claire, 1998
Gonzales, Blanton, & Williams, 2002
Good, Aronson, & Harder, 2008
Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003
Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000
Keller, 2007
Kellow and Jones (2008)
Klein, Pohl, & Ndagijimana, 2007
Kray, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2002
Levy, 1996
Neuville & Croizet, 2007
Rosenthal, Crisp, & Suen, 2007
Schmader & Johns, 2003
Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999
Steele & Aronson, 1995
Stone, Lynch, Sjomerling, & Darley, 1999
Yeung & von Hippel, 2008

Conditions of Stereotype Threat

Although some individuals are more susceptible to stereotype threat than others, stereotype threat is also more common in some situations than others. Steele & Aronson (1995) suggest that stereotype threat is more likely to occur when one's stereotyped group status is made relevant or conspicuous by situational features and stereotype threat. Because stereotype threat arises from negative performance expectations in a specific domain, any group can show evidence of underperformance if the situation brings attention to the threatened identity. In other words, although stereotype threat tends to be experienced by members of some groups more than others, it would be inappropriate to conclude that it is experienced only by traditionally disempowered and minoritized members.

Mechanisms Behind Stereotype Threat

Anxiety, negative cognitions, lowered performance expectations, physiological arousal, reduced effort, self-control, memory capacity, creativity, flexibility, accuracy, and speed are just some of the proposed mechanisms involved in stereotype threat. Although stereotype threat effects appear to be robust, the specific mechanisms by which the stereotype threat harms performance are still not entirely clear. This vagueness likely reflects the fact that stereotype threat probably produces several different consequences, each of which can contribute to decreased performance (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). Steele and Aronson (1995), for example, speculated that distraction narrowed attention, anxiety, self-consciousness, withdrawal of effort, or even over-effort might all play a role.

Research has provided support for the role of some of these factors, at least in some contexts. It is quite likely that these factors work together to undermine performance under stereotype threat. It is also possible that certain consequences are more likely in some contexts (and among some groups) than in others. Since the notion of stereotype threat was first proposed(Steele & Aronson, 1995), it has been speculated that the emotional reactions it produces could directly interfere with performance. For example, Steele (1997; Steele et al., 2002) suggested that stereotype threat effects reflect increased anxiety confirming a negative stereotype about one's group.

The threat of a stereotype can heighten stereotype–related thinking, leading to distraction and loss of motivation that, in turn, can negatively affect performance. For example, Cadinu, Maass, Rosabianca, and Kiesner (2005) examined women's math performance when gender differences in math problem solving were either highlighted or explicitly refuted. To the degree that women under stereotype threat thought about gender-math stereotypes, their performance tended to be worse.

Related to negative thoughts and emotions are low expectations. If individuals anticipate poor performance on a particular task, they might not be able to perform as well as when confidence is high. Stangor, Carr, and Kiang (1998) showed that activating gender stereotypes undermined performance expectations of women who were asked to estimate their performance on an upcoming task involving spatial perception. Kray, Thompson, and Galinsky (2001) showed that subtle manipulations linking performance to gender stereotypes reduced performance expectations in women before a task involving negotiation. In accordance, Kellow and Jones (2007) research also illustrated lowered performance expectations among ninth grade African American students under

stereotype threat, although performance deficits did not emerge.

Stereotype threat can lead individuals to reduce their effort, perhaps because of low expectations of performance or perhaps using self-defeating strategies (Stone, 2002). Provided evidence that individuals who experienced stereotype threat before performing a task related to golf engaged in less voluntary practice compared with individuals not operating under stereotype threat. Stereotype threat can reduce preparation and effort, and use of such self-defeating strategies can offer psychological protection by providing an a priori explanation for failure. Of course, under-preparation can also produce a self-fulfilling prophecy, producing failure under the very conditions where people fear doing poorly.

Inzlicht, McKay, and Aronson (2006) showed that stereotype threat can diminish people's ability to direct their attention and behavior in purposeful ways. In their study, African Americans who reported anxious expectations of encountering racial prejudice reported lower ability to regulate their academic behavior, and subsequent experiments demonstrated that imposition of stereotype threat reduced their ability to regulate attention and behavioral resources effectively. Similarly, Smith and White (2002) produced evidence that individuals exposed to stereotypes that were then nullified were better able to focus on the task than were individuals operating under stereotype threat. These findings suggest that coping with stereotype threat can reduce the ability to regulate effectively behavior in a variety of related and unrelated domains.

Recent research suggests that stereotype threat can reduce working memory resources, undermining the ability to meet the information-processing requirements of complex intellectual tasks. Croizet, Després, Gauzins, Huguet, Leyens, and Méot's

(2004) study used Heart Rate Variability (HRV), an indirect, physiological indicator of mental load, to show that stereotype threat can impose a cognitive burden. More direct evidence regarding the nature of this burden was provided by Schmader and Johns (2003), who showed that working memory capacity (i.e., a short-term memory system involved in the controlling, regulating, and maintaining of information relevant to the immediate task) is affected by stereotype threat. Female students in the study performed a math task after being told that "women are poorer at math than men" or given no information about gender differences. Later, women's performance and their working memory capacity (defined as the ability to recall words that had to be held in memory while participants solved math problems) were assessed. Women under stereotype threat showed poorer math performance and reduced working memory capacity compared with the control group. Differences in working memory capacity also mediated the link between stereotype threat and poorer math performance.

Pressure-related thought, and worries can reduce working memory resources, and tasks that require working memory resources (such as a novel or poorly practiced skills) are most likely to reveal decrements under stereotype threat. Stereotype threat can increase worries and concerns, and these thoughts can reduce the working memory capacity necessary to meet the information-processing requirements of a task effectively. The effects of reduced working memory can be a task, or even component, specific. Stone and McWhinnie (2008) showed, for example, that subtle stereotype threat seemed to affect only task components that rely on concentration.

Table 4

Mechanisms of Stereotype Threat

Cadinu, Maass, Rosebianca, & Kiesner, 2005
Croizet, Després, Gauzins, Huguet, Leyens, & Méot's, 2004
Inzlicht, McKay & Aronson, 2006
Kellow & Jones, 2007
Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001
Schmader & Johns, 2003
Smith & White, 2002
Stangor, Carr, & Kiang, 1998
Steele, 1997; Steele et al., 2002
Steele & Aronson, 1995
Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002
Stone & McWhinnie, 2008
Stone, 2002

Research Designs

The results of the meta-study found that racial stereotype threat research tends to be experimental in nature and utilizes a group comparison research design. Group comparisons are between two groups and, in the case of racial stereotype threat, these two groups are usually from (a) a negatively stereotyped ethnic minority group, and (b) an ethnic or cultural majority. Ethnic minority studies are often comparisons between African Americans and European Americans or Hispanic Americans and European Americans.

The design of many stereotype threat studies, including Steele and Aronson's 1995 study, utilize analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). Cohen, Garcia, Apfel and Master (2006) also cite other research designs such as Random Control Trials (RCT) as well. In Steele and Aronson's study, ANCOVA was used to remove variance due to racial differences in performance on standardized tests of verbal ability (SAT scores). The

purpose was to equalize the groups statistically to provide a more accurate measure of differences in performance due to the stereotype threat manipulations (diagnosticity, racial priming, etc.). In the first two studies of their 1995 report, Steele and Aronson used an ANCOVA design. The first variable was race, of which there were two levels, Black, and White. The second variable was diagnosticity. Diagnosticity refers to the description of the test provided to subjects in the instructional set. Some subjects were given a diagnostic description by which they were led to believe the test was diagnostic of their verbal ability. Others were provided a non-diagnostic test description in which they were not informed that the test was diagnostic of their verbal ability. In Study 1, the third level of diagnosticity was used in which the task was framed as non-diagnostic, but the subjects were challenged to take the task seriously. This non-diagnostic challenge condition was dropped in the second study. The dependent variable (the task) was a performance on a series of verbal GRE items. The dependent variables in stereotype threat research tend to be a performance on some standardized test. In this study, the dependent variable was measured by the number of correct responses. The covariate used during statistical analysis was each subject's prior performance on the SAT.

Research Design-ANCOVA	Methodological Approaches	Threat Manipulation
•Race(Variable 1) •Black •White •Diagnosticity(Variable 2-description of test) •Non-diagnostic •Dependent Variable(Task-Performance on a standardized test)	•Elicitors(Stereotype Activators) • Test description •Race Priming- Manipulation	•Test Description •Informing participants that a given test will not produce group difference in performance •describing the test as fair or non-diagnostic •Test diagnosticity is not being made known or is retained

Figure 4. Research design, methodologies, and threat manipulation

Threat Manipulation

Racial stereotype threat studies utilize specific elicitors or activators to generate and measure the effects of the racial stereotype threat. One type of elicitor is test description. Specifically, the test is described as diagnostic of a person's ability. This form of diagnosticity is referred to as the diagnosticity manipulation. With this methodological approach, to determine the existence and possible effects of stereotype threat, the threat is commonly removed by changing the test description from diagnostic to non-diagnostic. The second type of elicitor is called the Race Priming manipulation. This elicitor involves asking the subject for a self-report of the race before the test (see Steele & Aronson, 1995). This form of manipulation is a more direct approach, by making known to the research participants the stereotype expectations and hostile testing environments. The first condition serves as a control, where a test is simply administered and then compared to a manipulated experimental condition. Theoretically, these design similarities allow for synthesis and comparison of standardized effect sizes from multiple studies to examine overall differences between ethnic groups.

Within the racial stereotype threat research, each of these elicitors was shown to

depress the performance of African Americans in experimental samples (Steele &

Aronson, 1995) greatly. Because these two methods of stereotype threat activation

operate under different assumptions, it is reasonable to assume that underperformance on

outcome measures may differ based on the method of activation used. Tables 5-9 reveal a

wide range of methodological approaches across all stereotype research studies.

Table 5

Test Description

Brown & Day, 2006
Davies et al., 2006
Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001
Marx & Goff, 2005
Marx, Stapel, & Muller, 2005
Mayer & Hanges, 2003
McFarland et al., 2003
McKay et al., 2002, 2003
Nguyen et al., 2003
Ployart et al., 2003
Sawyer & Hollis-Sawyer, 2005
Steele & Aronson, 1995

Table 6

No Group Differences in Performance

Johns, Schmader, & Martens, 2005
Keller & Dauenheimer, 2003
O'Brien & Crandall, 2003
Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2003
Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999

Table 7

Test as Fair or Non-Diagnostic

Croizet, Depres, Gauzins, Huguert, Leyens, & Meot, 2004
Jamieson & Harkens, 2007
Kiefer & Sekaquaptewa 2007

Table 8

Test Diagnosticity is Not Known or is Retained

Gonzales, Blanton, & Williams, 2002
Good, Aronson, & Harder, 2008
Harrison, Stevens, Monty, & Coakley, 2006

Table 9

No Mention of the Diagnosticity

Ambady, Paik, Steele, Owen-Smith, & Mitchell, 2004
Keller, 2002
Smith & White, 2002
Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000
Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000
Steele & Aronson, 1995

Race Priming

These studies solicit information about social group memberships before test-taking. Other studies seek to remind participants of typical group differences in performance on the task. Other studies have sought to manipulate the stereotype threat by changing the numerical representation of groups in the testing situation. Still other studies expose participants to media materials that reflect stereotypes.

Table 10

Race Priming

Steele & Aronson, 1995
Stricker & Ward, 2004
Aronson, Lustina, Good, Keough Steele, & Brown, 1999
Beilock, Rydell, & McConnell, 2007
Yeung & von Hippel, 2008
Ben-Zeev, Fein, & Inzlicht, 2005
Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000
Davies, Spencer Quinn, & Gerhardstein, 2002
Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005
Oswald & Harvey, 2000-2001

Given the fact that these studies show such a wide range of methodological approaches, utilizing both implicit and explicit stereotype threat activation, it raises the question of how many factors are present when the stereotype threat effect is supposedly triggered, and to what degree each trigger lead to the supposed underperformance. Multiple factors should be considered, including African Americans' reluctance to participate in what they may view as standardized tests. Other considerations are the variation of specific patterns of stereotype threat effects across studies. While some studies show performance decrements under threat, others show stereotype lift in one group and performance decrements in the threat group. Others produce a crossover interaction where one group's performance is superior in the control condition, but the other group's performance is better in the threat condition. The meta-study shows that more research is needed to determine exactly how this threat is triggered, as well as how these different manipulations and comparisons differ in nature, focus, or intensity of the threat they produce.

Criticizing the Meta-Analysis: Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) made it possible to examine the data used in the meta-analysis. CDA of the data collected from the meta-analysis made transparent the underlying ideology and theoretical frames of reference used to explain, define, and justify the existing deficit-based achievement gap discourse. The meta-study was used to generate new insights and new ways of thinking about the stereotype threat theory. The CDA made it possible to decode the stereotype of African American intellectual inferiority and shed light on the system of hegemony that has led to a lack of access for African Americans in higher education in this country.

The racial stereotype threat is typically measured by the use of some form of standardized test. Many of these tests include the SAT and the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Research by Miller and Lynes (2012) has shown that standardized tests have been used as measures to justify the achievement gap, a deficit based construct that has at its core the myth of African-American inferiority. The achievement gap construct is part of s system of hegemony, based on a standard of "whiteness," from which African Americans are compared. In determining the way in which the research and language associated with racial stereotype may influence how African Americans access and are perceived in higher education, CDA was conducted to determine how racial stereotype threat contributes to this hegemony. Critical Discourse Analysis has used a method to "exam the nature of social power and power abuse and in particular, the way dominance is expressed or enacted in text and talk" (Dijk, 1995, p. 20). Dijk (1995) contends that:

> …social power is defined a form of control, of one group by another, if such control may extend to the actions and minds of dominated group members, and if dominance or power abuse further implies that such control is in the interest of the dominant group, this means that dominant social group members, this means that dominant social group members may also exercise control over text and talk. (p. 20)

According to Dijk (1995), discourse control and access are closely associated with social power. Thus, the elite has more access and control over both informal and public and institutional forms, including politicians with governmental policy and procedure discourse, journalists with mass media discourse, and scholars who control academic discourse such as lessons, courses, and scholarly publications.

Access and control over discourse lead to social and institutional power. This type of power is achieved in the way that the minds of individuals are influenced (Dijk, 1995). CDA explores the ways in which influence and control of the mind are socially and morally illegitimate (p. 22).

This CDA revealed that, despite the belief by many that racial stereotype threat is a primary factor in explaining the educational outcome differences between African Americans and other groups in this country, there remain substantial questions surrounding this theory. Through an examination of the common themes, methodological approaches, and research designs of racial stereotype threat, it was found that a high level of ambiguity exists regarding how this theory is used to predict academic outcomes between African Americans and Whites. Given how widespread this theory has been accepted by educators and practitioners, this is extremely concerning.

CDA has provided evidence that a primary liability of the stereotype threat research is the fact that it utilizes deficit language. The language used in the research

reports are themselves deficit in nature. Figure 2 provides a summary of the deficit language that permeates the stereotype threat research. Words such as internalized, psychological effects, self-handicapping, and lack of effort are only a portion of the deficit language used to define this body of research. This language is not far removed from a stereotypical language, such as lazy, shiftless, cowardly, and lacking self-control, that has been used to describe African Americans in this country for centuries. Historically, this deficit language has constantly been projected through the media and research as a means of both describing and defining African American intelligence. CDA has also found there to be deficit language in the methodological approaches to the stereotype threat research, where terms such as race priming are used to describe the methods used by researchers to invoke a negative psychological effect on the African American research participants.

In analyzing the finding of this meta-study and subsequent Critical Discourse Analysis, Critical Race Theory (CRT) was utilized to challenge the assumptions and themes of racial stereotype threat. The first consideration of the Critical Race perspective is that racism still exists. Although the racial stereotype theory is not blind to race, it does not adequately take into account the influence of 'real world racism' and discrimination. For African Americans in this country, there is no 'threat'; racism and discrimination are real and have been for hundreds of years. Racial stereotype threat tends to perpetuate the myth of a color-blind society, seeking to mask the overt racism that African Americans face on a daily basis, rather than admit that African Americans have lived under a calculated system of racist oppression for hundreds of years. Rather than admit this, those in elite positions of power, including higher education, seek to conceal this fact through

deficit research and other means. The proponents of stereotype threat must at some point recognize that true oppression has been and continues to be an integral part of the fabric of this nation, anything less would be irresponsible and complicit to the structural barriers that racism and discrimination continue to be.

Stereotype threat research has contributed to the deficit-based achievement gap construct by moving the gaze of racial and social justice away from the economic and structural barriers that have been created to subordinate African Americans and directed the glare towards the individual, in much the same way that past deficit research has done.

In comparing the racial stereotype threat research to other deficit-based theories, several similarities were found, particularly when compared to Ogbu's deficit-based Cultural Ecology theory(1986). They both predict academic disidentification as a means of coping with the social, cultural, and psychological barriers that have been erected as a result of the dominant social order seeking to maintain its place atop the social and economic hierarchy. Disidentification by definition is a psychological process in which students seek to preserve and protect their self-esteem from the threat of poor performance. However, based on this premise, if the domain in question is education, and if performing well in school is not a consideration, then how can one's self-esteem be affected? A more likely scenario is that after years of overt oppression and racism, African Americans simply do not trust the White status structure, which continues to dictate policy regarding the current educational system.

Racial stereotype threat provides yet another example of how educational theories and practices can be used as a subordinate tool in the oppression of African Americans

and other racial and ethnic groups. From a CRT perspective, the dominant racist ideology that has birthed the deficit ideology must be challenged. In every instance, the African American has been made to look incompetent and incapable and lacking the necessary intelligence to survive and thrive.

Through the use of CRT, we offer a critique and analysis of the research on racial stereotype threat and how this research is used to explain, define, and justify the achievement gap construct. United States history shows us that race is a socially constructed category designed to differentiate racial groups and to show superiority or dominance of one race over another (Banks, 1995). Racial stereotype threat research is yet another example of this differentiation process. In the instance of the achievement gap construct, the race is again made prominent and a point of emphasis when seeking to prove that negative racial stereotype is a primary factor in African American academic achievement disparities. However, the degree to which stereotype is promoted as a major cause of racial underperformance is not as evident when it comes to other races, particularly when comparing Whites to other racial groups. This lack of comparison points to one of the limitations of racial stereotype threat: the failure of this research to spread equal panic when examining stereotype threat between Whites and other ethnic groups, such as Asians.

The main implications of the racial stereotype threat discourse are the concern that much of the focus of this phenomenon is centered around the individual failings of African Americans and not on the racist system of oppression that continues to be a barrier to a quality education for African Americans in this country. What is absent in the stereotype threat research is how the existing hegemonic—economic, social, and political

structures—have negatively contributed to the educational outcomes of African Americans. Whaley (1998) also suggested that stereotype threat research fails to distinguish between perceived threat and experienced racism and discrimination. Racism, like any other emotion or sense, is capable of affecting the social, political, and economic policies of America's various institutions (Anderson, 1988), including colleges and universities (Reyes & Halcon, 1988).

This study also points to the fact that many of the experimental designs utilized some form of threat manipulation, along with some standardized measures (ACT, GRE, etc.). The design for the stereotype threat research is of particular concern given the historical use of manipulation and standardized tests as a barrier to African Americans regarding access to everything from voting rights to higher education. Many African Americans remain leery of all such measures, particularly when the racial stereotype threat is made known beforehand and within a controlled setting. African Americans for years have felt that standardized tests are culturally biased and, therefore, many simply do not trust that these types of intelligence measures provide an accurate measure of their intelligence. Again, where do racism and discrimination stop and stereotype threat begin?

This study revealed that there are numerous differences in the methodological approaches of stereotype threat research. While it is evident that the typical research designs for this research are ANCOVA, the different manipulations and comparisons within the research designs lead one to conclude that nature, the focus, and the intensity of the experiments can lead to different outcomes.

Other findings show that the vast majority of the stereotype threat studies use standardized tests as part of the performance domain. The use of tests such as these is

concerning given the way that standardized tests are used as a rationale for the exclusion of African Americans to higher education. Many African Americans tend to be suspicious of most standardized tests, regardless of experimental condition (Whaley, 1998). It has long been felt within the African American community that standardized tests may be unfair and biased toward White America. Thus, the internal validity of Steele and Aronson's experiments may lead to concerns about discrimination on the part of study participants, rather than stereotype threat (Whaley 1998).

The generalizability of this research is also brought into question when taking into account the fact that much of the stereotype threat research is conducted within laboratory settings and not within the real world. Specifically, the applicability of stereotype threat to populations outside of higher education is called into question. The question of generalizability may also be an issue regarding the research study participants. Some argue that while stereotype threat may be a real concern for Black college students, it may not be as big of an issue for African Americans in general (Sackett, Hardison & Cullen, 2004; Whaley 1998). One major assumption of stereotype threat theory is that all African Americans share similar views of racial stereotypes of their in-group as Whites. I argue that for those African Americans who may have more interactions with Whites while in college, this may be the case, but this is not necessarily the case with African Americans outside this limited domain. Many of the first studies on stereotype threat were conducted with college students, and Whaley (1998) suggested that "research on college populations may be too narrow a base on which to rest social psychological theories of human behavior" (p. 679).

This meta-study and Critical Discourse Analysis revealed that despite the belief by many that racial stereotype threat is a primary factor in explaining the educational outcome differences between African Americans and other groups in this country, there remain substantial questions surrounding this theory. Through an examination of the common themes, methodological approaches, and research designs of racial stereotype threat, it was found that a high level of ambiguity exists regarding how this theory is used to predict academic outcomes between African Americans and Whites.

Chapter Summary

This meta-study has provided evidence that a primary liability of the stereotype threat research is the fact that it is deficit based. Even the language used in the research reports are themselves deficit in nature. Words such as internalized, psychological effects, self-handicapping, and lack of effort are only a portion of the deficit language used to define this body of research. Stereotypical language, such as lazy, shiftless, cowardly, and lacking self-control, has been used to describe African Americans in this country for centuries. This deficit language is constant and projected through the media and research as a means of both describing and defining African American intelligence.

The generalizability of this research is also brought into question when taking into account the fact that much of the stereotype threat research conducted is within laboratory settings and not in the real world. This meta-study also points to the fact that many of the experimental designs utilized some form of threat manipulation, along with some standardized measure. Many African Americans remain leery of all such measures, particularly when the racial stereotype threat is known beforehand and within a controlled setting. African Americans for years have felt that standardized tests are culturally biased

and, therefore, many simply do not trust that these types of intelligence measures provide an accurate measure of their intelligence. Again, where do racism and discrimination stop and stereotype threat begin? Chapter V will provide a closer examination of the findings of this meta-study, particularly as it relates to the research questions that have shaped this study.

CHAPTER V

OVERVIEW, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS,

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of the Study

This research compiled and examined the common themes, research designs, methodologies, limitations, and underlying theories found in stereotype threat research. The purpose of the study was to determine (a) limitations of racial-stereotype threat research, (b) how the stereotype threat discourse has contributed to the deficit-based achievement gap construct, and (c) the implications of the racial stereotype threat research for higher education administrators, educators, and policymakers.

From a Critical Race Theory (CRT) perspective, racial stereotype threat fails to acknowledge adequately the critical role that the social construction of race and racism has played in the subjugation of historically marginalized people. One cannot dismiss the contributions that racism has made to all form of oppression, including classism. Continuing from an education perspective, CRT sheds light on the way curricula and standardized tests have been used to create and maintain the fallacy of African American intellectual inferiority.

Since being forcibly brought to this country, African Americans have been a subjugated and oppressed people (Lynes & Miller, 2012). From the bonds of slavery to the false rhetoric and deficit ideology of genetic and intellectual inferiority, African Americans have repeatedly faced barriers in every aspect of life. These barriers include

58

lack of access to quality health care, racial and social justice, and higher education. These barriers are a part of an elaborate system of hegemony designed to maintain a hierarchy of White supremacy (Miller & Lynes, 2012). This elaborate plan has long utilized the media and higher education as tools of oppression and subjugation. Deficit research and ideology are the perfect means to categorize and segregate, regarding intelligence, thereby focusing America's gaze on the perceived faults of the individual, rather than on the system of oppression.

Deficit research has long been a tool of this system of hegemony. The current racial stereotype threat research is the latest in a long line of research that seeks to blame the victim, by perpetuating negative stereotypes of African American intellectual inferiority. The intent of this study was to examine stereotype threat research and determine how this research may be contributing to the body of deficit research that is used as a tool of oppression. The question to be determined was what role this body of research will play in higher education going forward.

This study revealed that stereotype threat tends to reside within the individualistic paradigm, which dictates that, to a certain extent, the factor of racial stereotype must contain elements of those issues related to a self-fulfilling prophecy (internalized oppression), presumed incompetence (structural hegemony), and stereotype threat (external messages). The discourse is rooted in a deficit perspective that adequately fails to acknowledge the factors of oppression, racial inequality, and social inequality. However, racial stereotype threat has yet to address the systematic barriers that African Americans face regarding access to higher education and the barriers that African Americans face once admitted to college. Research has shown that the barriers present

great difficulties and hinder the success of African-American college students (Swail, Redd & Perna, 2003).

This chapter will review, summarize, and compare several factors that continue to be barriers to African Americans regarding higher education access and success. This chapter will also provide recommendations to resolve these barriers as well as recommendations for future research.

The Barrier of Preparation

African-American high school graduates are less prepared for a college-level curriculum than any other racial or ethnic group and tend to attendschools of less quality than Whites(Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). In fact, Black students are more likely to take remedial courses in high school than another racial group(Cokely, Obaseki, Moran-Jackson, Jones and Vohra-Gupta(2016). Taking AP courses is positively correlated with standardized test scores. However, these courses are less likely to be offered in schools with a high concentration of African American students (Cokely et al., 2016). Also, students who take AP courses are more competitive when applying for admission to colleges and universities. Unfortunately, these courses are less likely to be offered in schools with large numbers of Black and Hispanic students (Cokely et al., 2016). Even when AP courses are offered, Black and Hispanic students are disproportionately less likely to enroll in them, presumably, because they are not as academically prepared as White or Asian students. However, even when Black students have strong academic skills, it is not recommended that they take AP courses (Cokely et. al., 2012). The College Board found that only 30% of Black students with strong math skills took AP math, compared to 60% of Asian students (2013).

In addressing the preparation barrier, more funding can be provided to schools with large percentages of Black students to offer more AP courses. Given the limitations of standardized tests, more schools should make these tests optional and, instead, use a more holistic set of admissions criteria. According to the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (2015), 195 top-tier schools de-emphasize the SAT and ACT in admission decisions. Some schools even exempt students from taking the SAT or ACT when they meet certain GPA or class rank criteria. It also includes schools that require the SAT or ACT only for placement purposes or to conduct research.

The Barrier of Cost

Research has shown that African American college students face greater problems than their White counterparts regarding being able to afford college. According to Cappanari (2002), 88% of African Americans require financial aid. Also, African Americans are more likely than any other racial or ethnic group to take out student loans (Jackson & Reynolds, 2013). For many African-Americans, student loans and earnings from employment during the year help pay college bills. One-third of African-American students takes out student loans each year, and 80% work during the academic year (King, 2002). More than half of the African-American students attending public or private 4-year colleges take out student loans, compared to only 11% of those attending community college. Consequently, among African-American students who complete a bachelor's degree, the share of students with debt is quite high. Although most African American community college students do not borrow, just under half (44%), of those who complete an associate degree graduate with some student loan debt.

The Barrier of Admissions Criteria

Many African Americans continue to face barriers to higher education during the college admission process. Research has shown that traditional measures, such as standardized tests, may not be as valid for African Americans as they are for Whites, based on the historical evidence of bias of tests such as the ACT and SAT towards African Americans. (Baggaley, 1974; Pfeifer & Sedlacek, 1971, 1974). According to Sue (2004), this bias occurs due to the subject matter they test being outside of the experience of many minority students. However, many institutions continue to utilize the traditional college admissions criteria (Sedlacek, Merritt, & Brooks, 1975; Sedlacek & Pelham, 1976). The negative consequences for African Americans include being denied access to college or being admitted as an "at-risk student," being placed in remedial courses, and being stigmatized as lacking the intelligence to succeed in college.

The Barrier of Race and Racial Climate

The academic and social experiences of African-American students in higher education have received increased research attention. An important part of this scholarly work examines African-American student life at predominantly White institutions and focuses mainly on the perceptions of what Davis calls the racial climate on campus (Sedlacek, 1987).

Hedegard (1992) mentioned that the experience of racism manifests in a variety of classroom experiences: (a) being prejudged as inferior or inadequately prepared for academic work; (b) being constantly criticized for forms and style of speech and writing; (c) being singled out for criticism, such as being constantly called upon by an instructor who knows the student will be unprepared; (d) feeling that papers or exams are down-

graded because of irrelevant reasons, and (e) feeling classroom pressures to become intellectual, or middle-class White (Hedegard, 1992).

The influence of campus environment on the educational experiences and outcomes of African-American students is a consistent thread in research on students in higher education (Allen, 1995; Fleming, 1994). Of particular importance has been the observed link between perception of campus racial climate and students' academic achievement. Hurtado (1992) argues that campus racial conflicts are connected to elements in the institution's racial climate, which influence the relationship between African-American students and their White peers, faculty, and administration. Hurtado mentions that conceptions of a campus climate that include race relations, whether considered to be a positive or a negative influence, are critical for understanding the educational experiences and subsequent development of African-American students (Hurtado, 1992).

According to King (2002), the influence of negative racial campus climate may be one of the reasons why only 15% of African-American students live on campus. More than half (57%) live off campus, and just over one-quarter (28%) live with their parents or other relatives. Although King (2002) reasons that the high proportion of students living off campus is due, at least in part, to the fact that many are independent and have their families.

Many institutions are concerned about the possible negative effects of increased racial tolerance and perceived hostile environments on students at predominantly White campuses (Ferrell, 1994; Green, 1989). When campus climate is conceived as including perception of race relations along with indicators of traditional institutional support, its

importance for students' experiences becomes even more important, especially for
African Americans. Several studies suggest that there are two salient nonacademic factors
that influence African-American students' academic experience and performance at
predominantly White institutions: the general institutional support, and the perceptions of
racial climate and race relations (Allen, 1990, p. 30; Oliver, Smith & Wilson, 1994, pp.
220-221).

> Being black means to walk across the campus on my first day of class and not see
> one black student. Being black means to have all white teachers and be
> surrounded in class by all white or nearly all white students. Being black is to
> open my textbooks and see pictures of white folks and to read white-washed
> theory, philosophy, and history which are irrelevant to me. Being black means to
> go to a white counselor whom I don't trust, and who doesn't know how to handle
> my presence or my problem. Being black is trying to get administrators to under-
> stand my needs and do something about them, or trying to convince a campus
> policeman that he should not arrest me out of prejudice. Being black is to watch
> whites look upon my natural hair, my mustache, my African garments, my black
> music and literature, my black community language, and my other symbols of
> black pride as being deviant. Being black is seeing a soul sister or brother slaving
> overtime on a dirty, menial job and being underpaid. Being black is to go into a
> class disadvantaged and find that I have a teacher who believes it is impossible for
> a black student to make an "A" or "B" grade. (Bowles & DeCosta, 1997, p. 132)

While researchers tend to agree that "institutional "fit" and campus integration are
important to retaining college students to degree completion, campus climate mediates
undergraduates' academic and social experiences in college. The normal challenges
associated with maneuvering through the college system are stressful to most students;
however, minority students at predominately White campuses (PWIs) encounter
additional stresses that come from having a minority status. Smedley et al. (1993) found
that minority students at PWIs experienced stress on five separate factors, including
social climate, interracial stresses, racism and discrimination, within-group stresses, and
achievement stresses. Major issues identified by students included: (a) not having enough

African American faculty, (b) few African American students; (c) racist institutional policies and practices; (d) difficulty having friendships with non-minorities; (e) rude and unfair treatment because of race; (f) discrimination; (g) the perception of acting "White"; and (h) doubts about their ability to succeed in college. Minority students who are inadequately prepared for such non-academic challenges can experience culture shock. Lack of diversity in the student population, faculty, staff, and curriculum often restrict the nature and quality of minority students' interactions within and out of the classroom, threatening their academic performance and social experiences.

Within a racist culture, African American students may be viewed by both non-African American students and faculty as somehow being academically and intellectually inferior (Anderson, 1988). These racist perceptions and preconceived notions regarding African Americans' intellect are part of a deficit ideology that is supported through the use of an achievement gap construct, which utilizes statistical data to bolster and perpetuate the myth of African American intellectual inferiority.

Writers such as Nasim, Harrell, and Young (2005) and Reyes & Halcon (1998) have theorized that, over time, the presence of such individual racism and discrimination can manifest and eventually become embedded, thus becoming an institutional barrier, similar to the concept of institutional racism. The long-term results can lead to social and cultural isolation on college campuses (Loo & Rolison, 1986). This is a detriment to the African American students currently enrolled at those colleges and even more of a deterrent to those African American students whose higher education goals and aspirations are focused on attending one of these institutions.

Other studies reveal evidence that racism may also be perpetuated by the White faculty, who may have common misconceptions that African American students come from impoverished communities and are not capable of handling the educational requirements of a postsecondary education (Garrett-Lewis, 2011; Feagin, 1992). African American students may also find it difficult to seek feedback from their White professors, due to a significant probability of racial bias. Garrett-Lewis (2011) and Feagin (1992) stated that African American students must distinguish between racial bias and actual constructive criticism. The ability to distinguish between racial bias and constructive criticism is not an easy task because many African American students have experienced racism and racial bias before coming to college and have developed an automatic defense mechanism against such practices. Often this adds pressure on African American students to be perfect students, thereby removing any doubt as to the quality of their coursework. Perfection is a burden that White students do not have to face.

The Barrier of Lack of Minority Faculty and Advisors

Research has shown that African American students enter college under the stigma of low academic performance and a perception that they will not succeed academically (Nasim et al., 2005). Researchers have given considerable attention to the lack of African American faculty as a barrier to the academic achievement of African American students. They need to have faculty who themselves may have entered college under these same pretenses and who have no fear of challenging and engaging these students; this is critical to their academic success. For the reason that African American faculty may share a culture with African American students, there may exist a better understanding of the many of the challenges that an African American student may

face—challenges such as racism and discrimination that non-African American faculty may not be culturally equipped to relate. African American faculty may have a sense of perceived obligation to African American students and may seek to develop a mentor relationship with them. Given the degree of influence that faculty can have on the overall persistence of African American students (Nasim et al., 2005), the importance of those students being taught by African American faculty cannot be understated. Researchers such as Costner, Daniel, and Clark (2010) point out that this is especially true based on their research that shows Caucasian faculty were less willing than their African American colleagues to teach African American students. African American faculty in many ways may be perfectly suited to engage African American college students. African American faculty can help them to persevere by positively influencing how the students feel about themselves emotionally, culturally, and academically (Nasim et al., 2005). Also, an increase in African American faculty on college campuses may present opportunities to build mentor relationships, provide support, and convey the academic expectations associated with academic achievement.

Because African American faculty have a shared culture with African American students, there may exist a better understanding of many of the challenges that African American students face. African American faculty may have a sense of perceived obligation to African American students and may seek to develop mentor relationships with them, again a factor that may not be present in non-African American faculty.

In discussing the positive effects of hiring African American faculty on college campuses, Opp and Smith (1994) provide evidence of the benefits of increasing the presence of African American faculty outside of the classroom. Their research suggests

the positive effects of having an African American presence on boards and committees, particularly regarding attracting other African American faculty to college campuses, thereby creating an environment of diversity and disproving any concerns from potential hires that African American faculty have no seat at the table or voice heard within the walls of academia. For colleges to address the barrier of lack of African American faculty, leadership must develop the strategies to recruit successfully and retain African American faculty. One thing is known, the hiring of African American faculty on college campuses must be a priority if the academic achievement of African American college students is to be seriously addressed. African American college students must be able to see images that they can aspire to emulate.

From a CRT perspective, it must be realized that there is no such thing as a color-blind society. Having acknowledged that fact, one would also have to acknowledge the presence of racism and discrimination at all levels of education within this country. When examining the theme of campus climate, it has been found that a negative campus climate is a barrier to the academic success of African American college students, particularly when the sub-themes of racism and discrimination emerge (Torregosa, Ynalvez & Morin, 2015). It comes as no surprise that the need for a diverse, socially-inclusive campus environment is needed for the academic success of all students on college campuses, particularly African America students, who historically have been segregated in many facets of life, including education (Torregosa, et al., 2015). Researchers such as Reyes and Halcon (1988) and Garrett-Lewis (2011) conclude that the issues of racism and discrimination have always been and continue to exist on America's college campuses and universities. Despite the fact that today African Americans have the greatest

opportunity to attend college than any time in American history, the issues of racism and discrimination remain as relevant issues when considering their role as barriers to the academic achievement of African American college students (Garrett-Lewis, 2011). Upon arriving on the college campuses, African American students can immediately be exposed to the same barriers of racism and discrimination found in society in general (Garrett-Lewis, 2011; Anderson, 1988; & Reyes et al., 1998). African-American students are often viewed by both non-African American students and faculty as somehow being academically and intellectually inferior (Anderson, 1988). They are often made to feel like their best is not good enough. And in fact, throughout the African American culture, there has long been a perception that because you are African American, you have to be twice as good and exert twice as much effort than other races at whatever you do, especially within the classroom. Many African American students enter the world of higher education expecting an atmosphere of intellectual discovery and exploration, only to find that preconceived notions of their inferiority have preceded them and, in some cases, was brought to the campuses by the African American students themselves. These perceptions and preconceived notions regarding African American intellect are founded in America's unfortunate history of negative images and racial stereotypes regarding the African American ability to academically achieve. Research has shown that there exists a very real academic achievement gap between African American students and other racial groups (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). Writers such as Nasim et al. (2005) have theorized that, over time, the presence of such individual racism and discrimination can manifest and eventually become embedded within institutions, thus becoming an institutional barrier, similar to the concept of institutional racism. The long-

term results can also lead to social and cultural isolation on college campuses. This is a detriment to the African American students currently enrolled at the college and even more of a deterrent to those African American students whose higher education goals and aspirations are focused on attending one of these institutions.

Another concern of the racial stereotype theory is that doesn't adequately take into account the lived experience of African Americans in this country. Central to the lived experiences of African Americans is racism and discrimination. Thus, when examining the basic premise of racial stereotypes, that is not only a small part of a larger system of hegemony; a greater consideration must be given to the unique dichotomy between African American racism in this country. When shedding light on this relationship, one will see that it has been one-sided, dominated by a "White" perspective, a perspective that does not adequately addressed through the in-house experiments associated with racial stereotype threat.

Conclusions

From CDA and CRT framework, the racial stereotype threat research is deficit-based and ignores the actual racism that has been faced by African Americans in this country for years. While acknowledging that there are indeed numerous factors that can lead to educational outcome disparities among African Americans and other ethnic groups, we must acknowledge that racism exists and provide counter-narratives regarding those factors that have been found to be successful in removing these barriers. The following section outlines recommendation to address the ongoing barriers that African Americans face in accessing and succeeding in higher education.

Recommendations

There must be increased financial assistance in the form of grants and subsidized loans which take into consideration the tuition expenses and personal needs of the college that the student is attending. There must also be increased the availability of paid internships in the junior and senior years, where African-American students can obtain academic credit while working and earning money. Paid internships will allow the student to contribute to the cost of college while still working towards a degree.

Regarding college preparedness, federally-mandated minimum resources are spent by each school district in the nation, per student, at the primary and secondary levels. The problems of African-Americans start in kindergarten, or even before. There are great disparities in per-student expenditures at the locally-financed school boards, which translates into fewer resources provided to poor districts and neighborhoods, where most African-Americans live. According to The Equity and Excellence Commission (2013), although recent analyses show disagreement on the extent of the overall gap in spending between poor and more affluent schools, it is clear that students in many high-poverty districts receive less funding than those in low-poverty districts. The concentration of poverty in the nation's public schools is growing. In 2009, almost 40 percent of all American students were enrolled in districts with concentrated poverty. The majority of states do not provide additional funding for students living in high concentrations of poverty (Equity and Excellence Commission, 2013).

The campus climate at colleges and universities must also be addressed. The particulars of African American life and culture—art, literature, political and social perspective, music, etc.—must be presented in the mainstream curriculum of American

schooling, not consigned to special days, weeks, or even months of the year, or to special-topic courses and programs aimed essentially to African-Americans. Such channeling carries the disturbing message that the material is not of general value, and, consequently, it wastes the power of this material to alter our images of the American mainstream, continuing to perpetuate the myth of African-American inferiority.

There must also be increased efforts by white colleges and universities to attract and retain African-American students and faculty. Also, PWIs should provide a more socially cohesive environment for all minority students. White colleges and universities should provide an education and curriculum that is more culturally sensitive to the needs of African-Americans. They should emphasize and require diversity and multicultural training in all colleges and for all students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research concerning the educational outcome disparities among African Americans and other groups should focus less on the individual and more on the structural barriers faced by African Americans. Future research should also explore how the barriers of cultural and social isolation may influence African American persistence and retention. Regarding the hiring of more African-American and minority faculty, additional research is needed about factors that limit the development and implementation of strategies designed to increase both the number of full-time as well as part-time African American faculty. In 1999, faculty of color represented about 15% of the professoriate. This number grew by less than 1% (15.6%) in the following 6 years (U.S. Department of Education, 2005), even though at the time minorities of color represented almost one third of the U.S. population (Williams & Kirk, 2008).

Recent studies (Williams & Kirk, 2008) on the underrepresentation of minority faculty in higher education found two primary themes: isolation and lack of mentoring. Minority faculty who have been successful attribute much of their success to a relationship with a senior faculty mentor. Mentoring of junior faculty by senior faculty appears to have the dual effect of socialization into the academy and social networking. Many minority faculty reports feeling isolated from informal social and professional networks. The degree of association with senior faculty has been shown to be a strong predictor of success in both promotion and tenure (Williams & Kirk, 2008).

Attention should be paid to the recruitment of African American doctoral students in higher education graduate programs for the purpose of increasing the number of available African American faculty. Regarding all of these themes, an examination of how universalistic problems affect the academic achievement of women, as well as other ethnic groups, must also be examined. This research must be conducted for the purpose of seeking solutions and interventions, as well as developing best practices and programs for educators to assist students in overcoming these and other threats to their ability to achieve academically.

Recommendation for future research on stereotype threat should continue to explore the generalizability of this research on high achieving African Americans. Evidence has shown that academically successful African Americans have developed mechanisms to combat racial stereotype threat (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). In a study conducted by Fries-Britt & Griffin (2007), higher achieving African American students at a PWI, who have found a way to connect with other African American students, to gain support, and thereby better cope with the negative campus climate.

Future research on stereotype threat should examine high achieving African Americans at PWI, who resist stereotype threat and continue to meet or exceed performance standards. Evidence has shown that not all high achieving African Americans have lowered performance when faced with the threat of racial stereotypes, and, in fact, have developed coping strategies designed to resist stereotyped domains. Qualitative research would be beneficial in exploring the ways in which high achieving African American students develop coping strategies in stereotyped racist environment. This research must be conducted for the purpose of a providing counter narratives to the racial stereotype threat discourse as well as developing best practices for the elimination of barriers to African American academic success.

Future research on stereotype threat should seek to determine the degree that racial stereotype threat negatively influences the academic performance of African Americans on historically black colleges, to further test the generalizability of the phenomenon. If the original premise of Steele and Aronson (1995) holds true that the highest performing African American students are the most susceptible to the stereotype threat effect, then stereotype threat studies on HBCU campuses should provide evidence of this.

Future research should continue to apply a CDA to the racial stereotype threat research. One of the limitations of this study was the lack of adequate time to conduct a more detailed critical discourse analysis of the stereotype threat research to determine more accurately the degree of deficit language that may exist in this research.

Future research on the stereotype threat phenomenon should be conducted by minoritized scholars. According to Delgado (1984; 1992), Whites who write racial

inequalities tended to cite research each other's research and not the research of minoritized scholars, who may have conducted scholarly research on similar topics. According to Harper (2012), "this results in incomplete or erroneous assumptions in their writing about the complex social realities and policy needs of minoritized communities (p.10).

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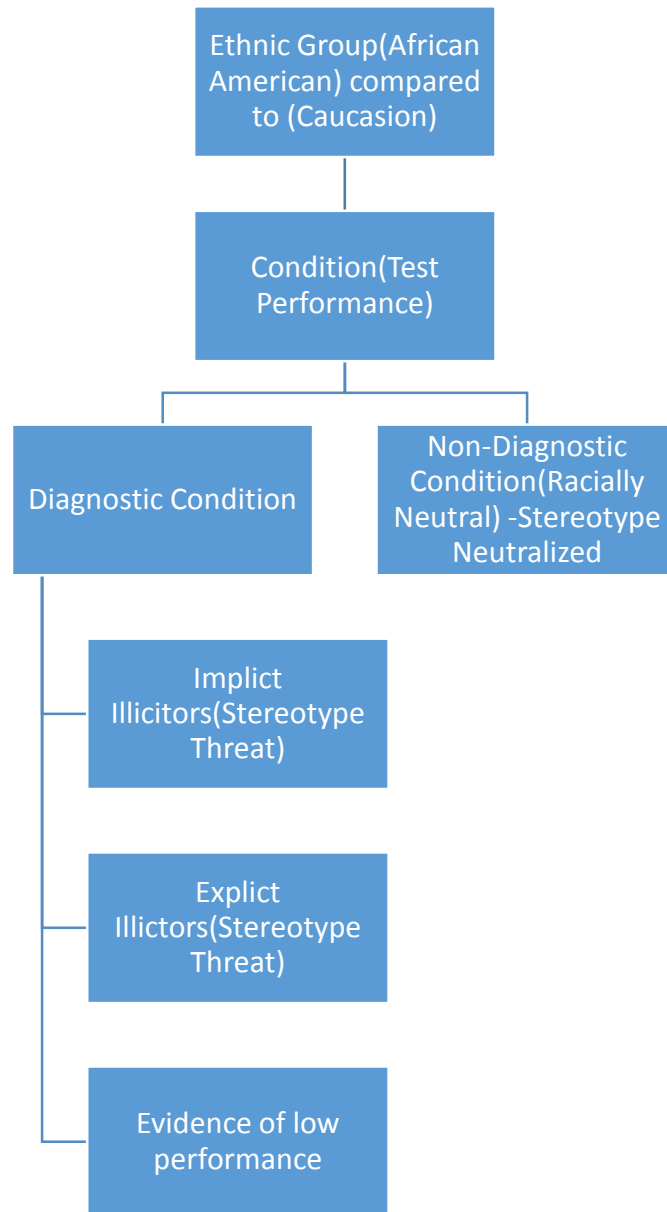
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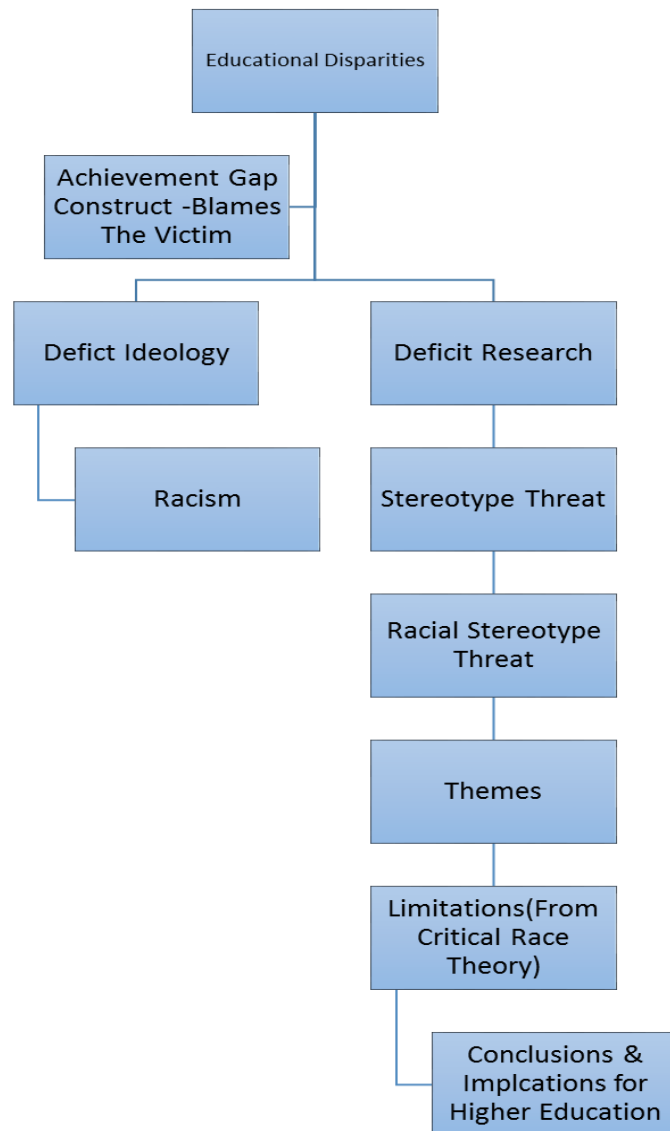
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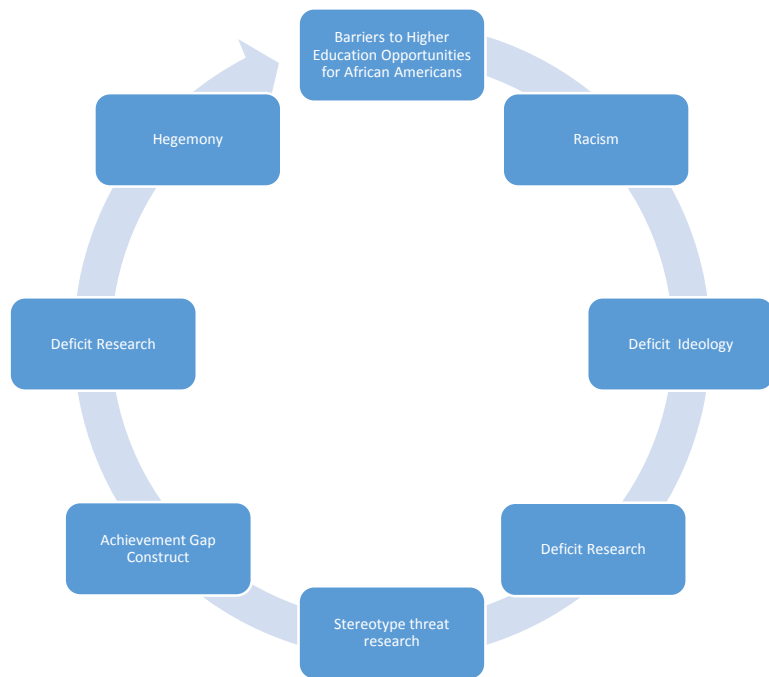
APPENDIX A

RACIAL STEREOTYPE THREAT RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

APPENDIX B

CONCEPT MAP

Barriers to Higher Education Opportunities for African Americans → Racism → Deficit Ideology → Deficit Research → Stereotype threat research → Achievement Gap Construct → Deficit Research → Hegemony → (back to Barriers to Higher Education Opportunities for African Americans)

APPENDIX C

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following is a list of the definitions of the terms used in the dissertation.

- *Achievement Gap*—In education, achievement gap refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students.

- *Discrimination*—Any conduct based on a distinction made on the grounds of natural or social categories, which have no relation either to individual capacities or merits or the concrete behavior of the person.

- *Disidentification*—A psychological process in which students protect their self-esteem from poor performance in a given domain by minimizing its importance to their sense of self (Whaley, 1998)

- *Meta-Study*— "The investigations of the results and processes of previous research or primary research. The meta-study process involves the "research of research". Meta-study involves the scrutiny, of the theory, method, and data analysis of research in a substantive area and culminates in synthesis" (Zhao, 1991, as cited in Paterson, et al., 2001, p. 5).

- *Meta-data-analysis*—The study of findings of reported research in a particular substantive area of inquiry using processing the "processed data" (Zhao, 1991).

- *Meta-method*—The study of the rigor and epistemological soundness of the research methods used in the research studies.

97

- *Meta-theory* involves the analysis of the underlying structures on which the research is grounded. It requires scrutiny of such features as the philosophical, cognitive, and theoretical perspectives underlying research design strategies.

- *Meta-synthesis*—The representation of the creation of a phenomenon that accounts for the data, method, and theory by which the phenomenon has been studied by others.

- *Oppositional Culture*—The avoidance of certain Eurocentric domains; by African Americans, based on a historical relationship of oppression, and a narrative of racist stereotypes created by a dominant White power structure. The result of this is an internalization of a self-handicapping mentality, which can manifest into the need to disassociate from whatever domain that is viewed as most Eurocentric and most valued by the dominant culture, including the domain of education and academic achievement.

- *Racial Stereotype Threat*—defined as the exaggerated beliefs or overgeneralizations about a particular racial group that can help shape the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of members of the generalizing and the targeted groups in a negative manner.

- *Social Dominance Theory*—The nature in which systems of group-based social hierarchies are developed and maintained as a function of the interaction between constructs at the individual, group, and societal levels (Laar & Sidanius, 2001).

- *Stereotype*—An exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct about that category.

    ▪ *Stereotype Threat*—Exaggerated beliefs or overgeneralizations about a particular group that can help shape the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of members of the generalizing and the targeted groups in a negative manner.

    ▪ *Disidentification* is a psychological process in which students protect their self-esteem from a poor performance in a given domain by minimizing its importance to their sense of self (Whaley, 1998).