American Education and the Black Girl

Hyacinth Dyer

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American Education and the Black Girl

Hyacinth Dyer

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Approved:

Chair, Dissertation Committee

Member, Dissertation Committee

Dean’s Representative

Director, Doctoral Program

Dean, National College of Education

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Education and the Black Girl

Hyacinth Dyer

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ABSTRACT

American educators often view the Black girl as aggressive, defiant, and too challenging to educate, leading to disparities in disciplinary responses between the Black girl and her peers. This study aimed to examine the experiences of the Black girl in the K-12 system and to determine effective strategies teachers can use to establish productive educational relationships with the Black girl. The context of this inquiry was various states throughout the United States. In this study, I used a mixed method research design. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through surveys. One group of participants were Black girls who are recent high school graduates. The other group of participants were teachers who had taught Black girls. I found a disconnect between the perspective of the Black girls and the teachers. I recommended a policy change that requires administrators to receive professional development and facilitative coaching each year so they will understand the unique needs of the Black girl in order to support their teachers. I also recommended that teachers of Black girls receive professional development each year. As part of my policy, teachers of Black girls will also be assigned a mentor to support them.
PREFACE

I am a Black girl and a teacher of Black girls. The topic of this dissertation began with a conversation with a friend and colleague. We talked about how the young Black girls we educate need extra understanding to be successful in learning environment.

My educational experiences have been met with challenges and triumphs, some related to being a Black girl and some not related to being a Black girl. I know how my experiences in education shaped my path. As a teacher of Black girls, I recognize and understand how their social and emotional needs must be meet through the use of an inclusive environment. I understand that for teachers to meet the unique dynamics of Black girls begins with acknowledging that their needs as individuals first. Teachers recognizing the cultural identity of the Black girl is the beginning to helping her understand that she is valued, understood and her voice matters.

There were leadership lessons I learned as I wrote my dissertation. I learned how difficult it is to enact policies, even ones that are written to positively impact students. I learned that I could not assume that everyone would welcome a policy that will make education better for Black girls. There could be people who would feel a policy directed toward one group of students is unfair to others. I learned there could be political and legal ramifications that could delay or make the policy weaker.

I learned how to understand a problem by asking questions that will provide specific data to bring about change. Communicating data through research helped me to understand why the focus of questioning and evaluating results is important to providing feedback and developing effective solutions that create change within organizational systems.
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I want to acknowledge those who supported me through my doctoral journey. First, thank you God for allowing me to challenge myself to accomplish a goal that I would have never attempted without your grace and mercy, and most importantly, favor. This moment reminds me that challenges are meant to encourage, empower and elevate. I would like to thank my husband, Willie Dyer, Jr., for allowing me to be who I am. My professional and personal journey has been met with difficulties, disappointments, and tears. The best is yet to come!

I would like to thank my Cohort; you all have left a lasting impression on me. The time we have spent together has been beneficial to my understanding and growth as an educator. Dr. Sparks, you inspired my thinking beyond my comfort and helped me always to find the positive in every situation. This journey would not be completed without Dr. Lorrie Butler. The endless conversations, laughs, and connections have been instrumental in my having a voice. Dr. Butler, thank you for helping me achieve this accomplishment through the dedication of your time, effort, and commitment and for having the courage to challenge me.

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To my godparents, Samuel and Coretha (Rete), your love for me has surpassed my greatest expectations. I am forever grateful for the time and dedication you gave to help a little girl who needed understanding without judgment. Rete, you will always be my SUNSHINE! You always know what to say to make me SMILE!

To my cousin Vickie who is more of a best friend and more importantly, big sister when I need someone who accepts me without judgment. You always know how to challenge me to be a better version of myself. You are the first person to challenge me to go beyond my comfort zone. You are loved and appreciated more than you know.

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To my siblings Dannon, Tarvares and Brianne. Our relationship is one of a kind and know that I am always on your side. My one and only sidekick, Alphonso, you were and will always be my softer side.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my parents C. W. and Dorothy Chance. I am uniquely me because of who you are. The best part of you has made the best part of me. This part of my journey is just the beginning of all the support that you have given. Thank you for being my parents!
DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my friend, Tamika Ruffin, who has the same passion that I have: to be the very best. The subject of this dissertation began with our conversation of how we educate young Black girls who just simply need extra understanding to be successful in learning environments. I hope you know how much I miss you.

I also dedicate this work to all of my Dyer Divas, JaDayah, Kamiya, Charnise, Charmaine, Menia, Macharia, Jacquavia, Takeria, Lamorria, Vurniyah, Nevaeh, Reginae, Charnelle, Serenity, Jordyn, Saraye, Gorgeous, Brechelle, Jazmyne, Amiliya, Christianna, Emiah and Senya. All of you have inspired me to never allow obstacles to stop me from achieving my own goals. I hope you always know that I am cheering for you.

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My nieces Bria, JaShaila, DeAsia, Ajah, Dior, and my homegirl Dysani, you are next in line to become what God has for you! You are the BLACK GIRL MAGIC at its finest!

Finally, I want to dedicate this to my phenomenal son, Hunter. The biggest moment of my life began when I became your Nani. I am extremely proud of the young man you are becoming, and I pray that you will never give up on your dreams. Remember, you are the BEST thing that I have ever done. If you can dream it, then you can achieve it. GO GET IT!

I also dedicate my dissertation in memory of Dawn.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Educating the young Black girl is becoming an increasing problem for American educators. The Black girl is characterized as sassy, aggressive, bossy and even more mature than her white counterparts (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). She is the canvas of what is characterized as disrespectful when her voice raises, her eyes show a staring glare or even when she lets her silence speak for her. In schools, many teachers perceive Black girls as loud, aggressive, and uncultured; they may see the need to silence and tame these girls (Fordham, 1993). Because of these perceptions, Black girls are often subjected to more frequent and harsher disciplinary actions, such as suspensions and expulsions, than White girls. The educational experience for Black girls in the United States projects a negative perspective that is founded in historical practices that continue to discredit the talent and ability of young girls who desire to achieve academic success in educational institutions that are insensitive to meet their needs academically, socially, and psychologically (Carter Andrews et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Program Evaluation

Through my research I aimed to understand how the relationship between teacher practices and the Black girl impacts her academic success. The purpose of my study was to examine the experiences of the Black girl in the United States K-12 public school system. I used the information I gathered to determine effective strategies teachers can use to establish productive educational relationships with the Black girl.

Rationale

My personal experiences as a Black girl in the public education system have led me to know that I must always be true to who I am. As a young girl, I was described as
that cute little Black girl with the fancy hair bows and well dressed in the white tennis shoes. While people made assumptions about me as a person based upon the way I dressed, it was not necessarily accurate and made me feel the only thing they cared about was my appearance. This experience continues today in comments from my White counterparts, when they question my ability to have a certain look almost as if my being well dressed intimidates them. I have been described as polished and well versed. My experiences have come in many forms of what was expected by their norms and standards. It became evident when I spoke with knowledge and application or even the ability to disagree, I was discouraged to have an opinion or idea that suggested a different approach. The perceptions of classroom teachers sometimes prevented me from the ability of expressing who I was and or wanted to be.

As a teacher, I now see other teachers basing their perceptions of Black girls who are students in their classrooms on their preconceived notion of Black girls. When a Black girl is outspoken or behaves outside of what the teacher feels should be the norm for female students (for example, questioning the teacher or dressed in a way that is not what the teacher feels is appropriate), it triggers a negative reaction toward the student. When they encounter a Black girl who is well dressed and compliant, the assumption is that the student does not need any additional support and she is ignored. These reactions may not be intentional but could be a result of a lack of an understanding of the needs of a Black girl.

As a Black woman, I want to be acknowledged for my ideals and for my talent for accomplishing set goals without feeling the need to work within counterproductive institutional policies that prevent success in the workplace. Through this evaluation, I will
seek to protect the innocence of the Black girl and to identify effective practices that contribute to Black girls’ opportunities upon which to flourish in an academic setting. The effective setting would be one in which teachers and administrators understand the need for Black girls to voice their concerns, to use their talents and accomplishments and natural personality to express and enhance their empowerment. Society has a responsibility to recognize the bias that continues to promote policies and procedures that punish the Black girl because of her natural ability to create, design, and achieve in an educational environment that recognizes her as a distraction. It is imperative that policy makers and educational leaders acknowledge how intentional biases continue to affect the ability of the Black girl to have an equal opportunity when the perception of others institute their values and beliefs in what is proficient and what is a distraction.

Some teachers attempt to instill traditional feminine behavior to Black girls which includes speaking softer, having body control, and being more conciliatory to authority (Neal-Jackson, 2018) while others encourage Black girls to be more assertive which leads to more acceptance to the teachers’ requests by the girls (Morris, 2007). Although Black girls may describe their behavior in similar ways to their teachers, girls understand these characteristics as strengths rather than impediments to their learning (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012; Neal-Jackson, 2018). All stakeholders, school officials and community members must recognize the needs of their children to promote global learners who are productive citizens.

Goals

The goal of my evaluation was to examine teacher practices that allow the Black girl to achieve academic success in the educational learning environment. The research
examined the instructional practices, beliefs, and goals that enhanced the educational experience of the Black girl that will help her be successful without compromising her identity. I will use the identified elements to develop best practices for educators aligned to supporting the Black girl in her academic and social emotional growth.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are used throughout the document, so clarifying definitions are provided here:

- **Black girl** - term used to identify young Black women used in a marginal way of describing them based on social, economic, and physical status. (Free Thesaurus, n.d.)
- **Implicit Bias** – “a form of bias that occurs automatically and unintentionally, that nevertheless affects judgments, decisions, and behaviors”. (National Institutes of Health, n.d., para. 2)
- **Socio Economic Status** - social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. (American Psychological Association, n.d.)

**Research Questions**

My primary research question was: How can the educational system in the United States better meet the needs of Black female students? There are many social and emotional factors that must be considered when teaching the Black girl. Teachers must help create a productive learning environment for her.
Conclusion

My personal experience as a Black girl has been an amazing journey that continues to be unimaginable. I have experienced times where my successes and failures were attributed to being a Black woman. There are people who continue to use my personal identity against me; however, I have gained the confidence needed to use my strengths for a purposeful destiny. I am an educator who believes self-identity gives a person the unique ability to design what is for them. Through this evaluation, I sought to find instructional practices that enable the Black girl to design her educational journey with the talent, strength, and motivation she needs not to ever explain herself. It is important to discover how educators can meet the demand of her strength, empower her talent, and appreciate her motivation to becoming and excelling without question.
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

To begin to establish a context and to frame the importance of the studies provided in my review of the literature, I would like to begin with a quote from Ruby Bridges, a lifelong activist for racial equality, who established in 1999, The Ruby Bridges Foundation to promote tolerance and create change through education:

Each and every one of us is born with a clean heart. Our babies know nothing about hate or racism. But soon they begin to learn – and only from us. We keep racism alive. We pass it on to our children. We owe it to our children to help them keep their clean start (Bridges, n.d.).

Black girls can only thrive educationally in a context free from hate and racism. Upon this crucial first foundation follows the literature addressing best practices for the promotion of Black girls’ educational success.

In my study, I investigated Black girl high school graduates’ perceptions of their K-12 education. I also investigated the perceptions of teachers of Black girls. According to Rollock (2007), historically Black girls became important only to educators and policy makers when there was a connection to their beliefs and concerns about Black boys. As Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) explained:

There is a need for more scholarship in the field of education that looks at the educational experiences and schooling processes of African American girls. Because feminist epistemologies tend to be concerned with the education of White girls and women and raced-based epistemologies tend to be consumed with the educational barriers negatively effecting Black boys, the educational needs of Black girls have fallen through the cracks (p. 12).
My goal of the study was to identify instructional practices teachers should use to help the Black girl not fall through the cracks.

In this literature review, I presented literature on the state of education for the Black girl in the United States. Most of the sources used in this literature review come from the National Louis University Library Academic Search Complete database hosted by Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO). The publication years for the articles ranged from 2007 – 2022. Most of the searches contained the words Black girls or African American girls, teacher relationships, student discipline, instructional practices, and parental involvement. When reviewing search results, I looked for articles and studies that specifically addressed the Black girl, expanding to articles and studies that addressed all Black students when needed.

The Black Girl and Family Support for School Success

Education in Black communities is viewed as an opportunity to attain professions that are acquired only with educational achievement (Castle, 2017; Delale-O’Connor et al., 2020). Family involvement in a child’s education is important for a child’s success. However, some educators may assume Black families are not involved in their children’s daily academic life because their involvement may not be the type that classroom teachers recognize because it is different from the type provided by parents in White or middle class homes (McGee et al., 2015). Researchers have conducted studies that detailed from the Black girls’ perspective how their families have supported them in their K-12 educational experiences (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012; Burnett et al., 2022; Clayton, 2017; Leath et al., 2021; McGee et al., 2015; Moore, 2020; White, 2015).
In the studies presented here, the Black girls described the different types of support their families provided.

Moore (2020) conducted a study examining Black girls in middle and high school and how they use their academic strengths, talents and strategies to make their way through their school day. The participants were 10 girls who were in a summer enrichment program. The girls ranged in age from 10 to 16.

Moore assigned her participants a comic book pseudonym. Crimson Avenger described a situation with her teacher:

Oh yeah, because my teacher thinks I'm a troublemaker. She’ll [teacher] say ‘you’re always the one in trouble somehow’ when this girl said the N-word I checked her I said you can’t say that and you ain’t Black. She [the girl who said the n-word] was the one saying the racist word, um, to me...she [teacher] was like why you are starting drama, you trouble....my old teacher she used to shame students and call it lessons. She made me call my mom and dad in front of the whole class and tell em’ I was talking in class. She [teacher] said, ‘So we’re gonna call dad and mom.’ I talked to them [Crimson Avenger’s parents]. Then she [teacher] goes and takes the phone and tells them [parents] ‘she’s [Crimson Avenger] was not listening at all. She was talking’...my mom and dad understand. They take my side over hers. During the parent-teacher conference my dad got really upset. She [teacher] said ‘Crimson Avenger is very disrespectful and she’s very out of control blah blah blah’ and my mom was like tell’n the teacher “as a teacher you should handle disruptions without having my child call me in front of the class. That is disrespectful and shaming. Don't ever do that again’ and my dad
said what steps were taken to address the N-word being used in your classroom...

(p. 75)

Crimson Avenger’s parents understood the need to advocate for their daughter. This provided support for her to continue in the classroom.

McGee et al. (2015) conducted a study titled *Black Parents as Advocates, Motivators, and Teachers of Mathematics*. The participants in the study were 24 high achieving Black college students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. The participants were juniors and seniors, 15 were female and nine were male. The researchers gathered data through the use of video-taped semi-structured interviews. In her interview, Elise described how her father supported her:

He said the only reason he was staying in Chicago was because of me. When I was younger we used to play special games. Not like Monopoly or the regular board games, but dice and dominoes. My Dad lightened up on the rules for my young brain. But when it came to my homework my dad would always get frustrated with what he did not know. It’s funny that on the street he was considered a math whiz but [after 7th grade] he barely could help me with my homework. (p.481).

This is an example of how the parent was involved with his daughter’s academic success in mathematics though it does not fit the traditionally accepted parent involvement activity. He could not help with her homework, but he provided opportunities for her to work with mental mathematical concepts.
Another student in McGee et al.’s study, Latasha, described the support she received to stay positive in unfavorable situations from her parents and her extended family:

My parents were so influential in my unyielding determination. Actually, my whole family in general. If I’d come home and I’m upset about something, my parents taught me how to remain positive and, you know, look on the bright side, which was very annoying to hear when you’re frustrated, like I don’t want to be positive, I just want to be in my own little mood right now. But in hindsight, I realize it’s a really good thing to keep positive and be determined. (p. 482)

Latasha relayed how her parents modeled hard work and successfully dealing with constant life struggles inspired her to keep working at doing well in school.

A third student in McGee et al.’s study, Annetta, told how her parents insisted that she do her best but also seek help from teachers and support staff when she struggled at school. Their message was to not simply complain about the work but be proactive in getting what she needed. Annetta said:

My dad, he is an education driven person. Never went to college, my mom neither, but they finished high school. But he is always up on education. Always. He was the one that was always pushing me to do the best. [He would say] “Strive for the best.” “Get the best. Why shouldn’t you?” I deserve it just as much as everybody else. People in big corporations, and they’re making millions and millions of dollars . . . he would tell me that I can do that too. And I will be a multi-millionaire. (p. 484)
The message from Annetta’s parents was that she was capable and deserved to reap the rewards of education.

In the conclusion, the authors stated, “The participants communicated their early STEM lives in concert with their parents’ role of advocacy, which included fostering self-efficacy, serving as mentors, and being their first teachers, in addition to instilling emotional perseverance, providing reassurance, and being on-going sources of inspiration” (p. 485). While the authors focused on how the families supported their students in the STEM fields, the findings can be generalized to parent support in other fields.

Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2012) had findings in their research in four areas: school policies, caring adults, family support and academic and racial identity. In this section of my literature review, I focused on the findings for family support. The participants in their study were eight high school girls who were high achievers. The participants were all in honors classes; some of the girls were in Advanced Placement (AP) program and one student was in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The researchers collected data from interviews (individual and focus group), journal entries and field notes (p. 206).

The participants in Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein’s study described how parents and family members supported them. The family members “offered moral, physical, and financial support that the participants needed to excel” (p. 211). Family members checked up on how the students were doing with their schoolwork, encouraged them to succeed, and urged them to continue to work even when faced with adversity.

One of the participants, Trina, described how her mother supported her:
I am able to do well in school because of my mom. She checks every day to see what’s going on with me in school, and if I have homework... She doesn’t know how to go about helping me to apply for college, but she will ask other people... or my guidance counselor about stuff that I have to do. Sometimes I forget to meet deadlines... so she keeps reminding me of what I have to do. (p. 211)

Trina’s mother demonstrated for Trina the importance of getting her education by monitoring her academics. She also modeled perseverance for Trina in her willingness to go outside of her comfort zone to learn how to help her with her college entrance paperwork.

Another participant, Karima, described her mother’s help:

This scholarship thing... she was, like, you’re not going to give up, you are gonna stay up and you’re gonna write the essay and keep looking. My mom would spend hours on the Internet looking for scholarships even when I didn’t feel like doing it. In the end, I got three scholarships to attend college in the fall. (p. 211).

Karima’s mother supported Karima by keeping pressure on her to find scholarships. However, she did more than just tell her what to do. She showed her daughter through her actions how important it was to keep trying.

In Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein’s findings, the girls felt supported by their parents and extended families to do well in school. They all agreed that the support was what allowed them to be successful. They acknowledged they knew how important the support was because when the parents or family members were unable to provide the support, it was harder to maintain their academic standing.
A study by Leath et al. (2021) examined the effects parents had on their daughters’ college attendance. The participants in Leath et al.’s study were 50 Black women between the ages of 18 and 24 who were attending college. The participants were undergraduate students. Consistent with the findings of McGee et al. as well as Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein, the support the parents gave their daughters was instrumental in their college attendance.

One participant, Jordan, described her mother’s support:

I never really felt different because I always had the things I needed and the things I wanted. But I didn’t understand that not all Black people have the same reality as me until I got to college. My mom was awesome. Without her, I probably would not be able to speak in the tone that I do or to relay my emotions as well as I do. My mom did an incredibly good job with letting me be exactly who I wanted to be without saying, "Lower your voice a little or you may be associated with being a loud, Black girl." Those are things I didn't realize until I was in college. (p.33)

Jordan’s mother gave her the gift of being able to be authentic but also able to navigate the obstacles Black girls’ face in an academic setting.

Another participant, Candice, described how her parents provided her with a positive message:

My parents really raised me with, "anything that a man can do, you can do," and the idea that I should just kind of reach for the stars and not settle for anything less. I think that's why my mindset is more forward thinking. I don't see myself working for people. I really want to have my own company, I want to just help
a lot of people. (p. 33)

Candice’s parents made sure she knew she was not limited with her goals and aspirations.

The studies highlighted the importance of parental or family support for Black girls in their educational journey. Each girl interviewed reported different ways her parents or extended family way supported her. These ways included providing them with their material needs, by advocating for them in the school setting, reinforcing that they are capable people, instilling perseverance or inspiring them to continue in their education.

**The Black Girl and Teacher-Student Relationships**

Black girls are double minorities: Black and female. As a result, they face unique challenges in the educational environment (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012; Morris, 2007; Zimmerman, 2018). Researchers posit that Black girls are penalized for not fitting the model of white femininity and for standing up for themselves and what they believe (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). Educators often look at Black girls using a deficit lens; they focus on what the girls do not have instead of looking at their strengths (Annamma et al., 2019; Watson, 2016).

Morris (2007) found that Black girls faced challenges related to historical negative stereotypes of Black females. Morris stated, “many teachers encouraged these girls to exemplify an ideal, docile form of femininity, emblazoned in the prescription to act like “ladies.” At the same time, however, most teachers viewed the existing femininity of these girls as coarse and overly assertive, leading one teacher to describe them as “loubies.” (pp. 1-2). Annamma et al. (2019) stated the teachers often characterized the Black girl as sassy, combative and defiant. Black girls also have to
battle stereotypes related to their body and dress, their intellect and their academic potential (Burnett, 2022; Koonce, 2012; Neal-Jackson, 2018). As a result of the stereotypes assigned to them, Black girls have developed coping and defense mechanisms that teachers and administrators misinterpret (Koonce, 2012; Ricks, 2014).

Carter Andrews et al. (2019) conducted a study of Black girls in five public high schools in a Midwestern City. They recruited their participants by having teachers recommend girls from all academic achievement levels who would be willing to talk with the researchers. There were 70 girls across the five schools who agreed to be in the study. The researchers reported their interview findings by school site.

Black girls in Carter Andrews et al.’s study related how their dress was monitored more closely than boys:

A guy can wear a tank top, and it’s fine, but if I wear a tank top and it’s covering everything, I’ll get in trouble. I have to go get a hoodie or something, but it feels like it’s 100 degrees in here ’cause we don’t have AC!” (p. 2546)

They also reported how they were reprimanded for dress code violations when White girls were not:

I’m not trying to be racist—these really skinny white girls wear short shorts, but [teachers] won’t say anything. But for me—not everything fits me. I have really big legs! And I can’t find shorts that go down to my knees. But they want me to call home, and I’m like, “‘I’m not calling home. I’m wearing clothes.’” I don’t see why it’s a problem. (p. 2546)

Another example from Carter Andrews et al.’s participants:
I’ll be sent to the office for a coat, rain boots, and a pair of overalls that’s two times my size. And to Sally [indicating any random white student], ‘‘You go ahead to class. I’m sorry she’s bothering you.’’ So now I’m out of class, but Sally’s gonna go learn and get the A1, while I’m stuck with a B because my knees are showing, which [with sarcasm]are very sexual, obviously . . . [The white girls] got these white see-through shirts, and all they wear is a bra, but they put a little jacket on to cover it. But she has no clothes on. She could go to a club right now, and she’ll pass. But I’m distracting everybody? No, you’re wrong, and I’m not going to stand for it. (p. 2547)

The lack of consistency in enforcing dress code was unfair to the Black girls.

Carter Andrews et al.’s participants commented on their teachers’ lack of belief in their intellect:

I was saying something and [the teacher] was like, ‘‘Stop that street talk.’’ I was like hold up. . . . They expect you to be underneath this threshold and it don’t work like that. I’m educated, and I’m proud to say I’m educated because you’re not going to talk down on me and act . . . [a teacher] was so surprised that I had all this vocabulary. I took out my own time to strengthen my vocabulary, don’t act like I’m supposed to be this dumb girl, don’t be surprised when you hear me speaking big words. (p. 2549)

Another participant commented:

[A] lot of white people and people who aren’t Black don’t think that we know how to use our brains. I think a lot of white people look down on us; look down on our abilities, so they have low expectations. (p. 2547)
When teachers have low expectations for students, they do not push them to achieve as much as they can.

Academic potential was another stereotype addressed by Black girls in Carter Andrews et al.’s study: “Math is so easy to me and . . . I can just figure out on my own and I get 100. I got 98 on the final, and he was like, ‘Did you cheat?’” (p. 2550). Participants also addressed the few numbers of Black students in the Advanced Placement (AP) program: “All my classes are advanced, and there’s like four Black people in the class” (p. 2548). The authors stated more than a few participants felt the adults did not think Black girls should be in AP classes. They provided this quote from one of those students: “They think Black people can only play sports, or sing or do some entertainment, they don’t think that we know how to use our brains” (p. 2549). When students heard these types of comments, the stereotype of Black girls not being able to succeed in academics is reinforced.

Black girls in Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein’s (2012) study provided anecdotal evidence of adults reinforcing the stereotype of Black girl loudness. One participant, Brandy, stated “. . . you have those teachers who don’t care whether you pass or fail. . . . Then there are those who act like they are scared of African American girls, because they say that we are loud and like to talk back” (p. 210). Another participant, Karima, provided the following example:

If the African American girls are loud and like to argue, then I think they are treated different than those girls who are doing their work, [and are] quiet, and polite. I think teachers respect them more, and show more interest for them in the classroom. (p. 210).
The Black girls pointed out their perception of what occurs when a teacher believes the stereotype of loudness. Their statements revealed the result was a teacher not invested in their academic success and less inclined to work with them in the classroom.

**The Black Girl and School Discipline**

Black girls are targeted for more severe discipline than White boys and White girls. According to the National Women’s Law Center (2021), “Black and Native American girls face some of the largest barriers to educational opportunities due to racism and sexism baked into school codes of conduct, discipline policies and practices, and school dress codes, especially when these rules result in students being removed from their classrooms” (p.1). When barriers exist solely based the Black girl’s race and gender, equitable education is not possible. Even though discipline referrals and out of school suspension severely impact student achievement, according to Crenshaw et al. (2015) “investigations into why Black girls are much more likely to be harshly disciplined than other girls have been few and far between” (p. 26). If the Black girl is to achieve her maximum academic potential, she must be supported and allowed to remain in the learning environment.

In an analysis of the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OFCR) Civil Rights Data Collection for the 2017-2018 academic year, Epstein et al. (2020) compared the discipline data for Black girls and White girls. They found that Black girls were 4.19 times more likely to receive out of school suspensions, 3.99 times more likely to be expelled, 3.66 time mores likely to be arrested at school, 2.17 times more likely to be restrained and 5.34 times more likely to be transferred to another school or facility for disciplinary reasons (p. 1). Fabes et al. (2021) in their analysis of the 2017-
2018 OFCR data found Black girls were suspended at approximately the same rate as White boys.

Annamma et al. (2019) conducted a study in a large urban school district in Colorado. The authors used a data set from all disciplined female students in kindergarten through 12th grade. They analyzed the data based on race and type of referral. The authors used the district handbook to gain a better understanding of the observed behavior that would result in the referral type.

Annamma et al. found Black girls, when compared to other races of girls, were more likely to have referrals for being disobedient or defiant (p. 17). The definition of disobedient or defiant behavior provided by the school district was “being willfully disobedient or openly and persistently defiant or repeatedly interfering with the school’s ability to provide educational opportunities and a safe environment for other students” (p. 19). The authors argued that the determination of this behavior was subjective and based upon the perception of the person writing the referral. The definition allows the introduction of the teacher or staff member’s personal bias toward the student to show.

Annamma et al. also found Black girls were significantly more likely to have referrals for detrimental behavior. The definition of detrimental behavior provided by the school district was “behaviors on or off school property that are detrimental to the welfare or safety of other students or of school personnel,” including behavior that “creates a threat of physical harm . . . such as harassment, hazing and incidents that result in minor injuries” (p. 19). Again, the authors argued that it was the perception of the teacher or staff member that determined if the action was worthy of a referral.
Annamma et al. found that Black girls were more likely to have referrals for third-degree assault than other girls (p. 17), appeared to be less subjective than disobedient or defiant behavior or detrimental behavior. However, the school district defined third-degree assault as when a student “knowingly or recklessly causes bodily injury to another person or with criminal negligence he causes bodily injury to another person by means of a deadly weapon” (p. 19). The authors pointed out that it is the words “knowingly” and “recklessly” allow the perception of the teacher or staff member to come into play. They also argued that the phrase “bodily injury” was also up to the interpretation of the teacher or staff member.

Annamma et al. found only one area where Black girls were less likely to be referred than other girls: alcohol or drug possession or distribution. The authors argued that this because it was the one area not open to the bias or interpretation of the person writing the referral. The teacher or staff member had to have the physical evidence in order to write the referral.

The authors found that when Black girls in their study received an office referral, 52% were suspended, higher than even the district average. When White girls received an office referral, 31% were suspended out of school. When the authors’ compared the percentages of females who were expelled, 9% of Black girls received expulsion as a disciplinary consequence whereas 0% of White girls were expelled.

Annamma et al. stated “our findings indicate that Black girls are being punished largely for perceptions of threat, non-compliance, and harm” (p. 20). The authors’ assumptions are that it is the bias against Black girls and the stereotypes of Black women that led to the inequities in the disciplinary data. When disciplinary offenses are defined
with words that are open to each individual’s interpretation, there are groups of people who will not be treated fairly as the data from Black girls in this study showed.

While Annamma et al. (2019) conducted their study on a school district in Colorado, Morris and Perry (2017) conducted their study on discipline referrals in a public school district in Kentucky. The authors analyzed the district’s discipline data of 6th through 12th grade students from 2007 through 2011 and found results that supported Annamma et al.’s findings. Also, similar to the results Epstein et al. (2020) and Fabes et al. (2021) identified in the OFCR data for out of school suspensions, Morris and Perry found that Black girls were three times more likely to receive a referral than White girls and were just as likely as White boys to receive a referral (p.145).

Morris and Perry went further in their analysis to identify the type of offenses that resulted in office referrals. The authors stated that when analyzing for race and gender, there were few differences in students when referrals were written for the most serious violations such as drug and alcohol possession or weapons. The data indicated the difference could be seen in the referrals written for lower level offenses. They found “Black girls are disciplined primarily for less serious but more ambiguous offenses, such as disruptive behavior, dress code violations, disobedience, and aggressive behavior” (p. 146). Morris and Perry found that Black girls received significantly more referrals for the lower level subjective offenses than White girls. They argued that “the ambiguous and comparatively inconsequential nature of behaviors like disobedience and disruptiveness may create a space for unintentional, implicit racial and gender bias” (p.146). It was the negative bias of the teacher toward the Black girl that resulted in official disciplinary action for minor offenses.
Morris and Perry went further to state that a possible long term effect of being disciplined for minor offenses could be Black girls feeling disinterested in school or feeling as though there is something wrong with them. They posited that the Black girl is being disciplined for behavior that is not considered normal (White) feminine behavior. They cautioned the reader that because they did not conduct observations or interviews in their data collection, their assumptions could not be verified with their data.

Blake et al. (2022) conducted a study to determine how the racial background of the girl, developmental status and type of offense affected the type of disciplinary response she received from the teacher. In contrast to Annamma et al. and Morris and Perry’s studies, Blake et al. also examined how the teacher’s race or ethnic background and discipline philosophy impacted the discipline the girl received. Blake et al. recruited 515 educators from across the United States to participate in their study. The participants received “mock discipline files of female students as if they were a member of an advisory school discipline referral team that had been requested to provide a discipline recommendation to the Dean of School Discipline. Participants were randomly assigned to review two mock discipline files and to complete questions about their beliefs about discipline as well as to share demographic information” (p. 4). This study differed from the two previous studies presented in this section of my literature review because the authors did not use data from real life disciplinary files. This may have made the participants more objective in their responses than if they had a relationship with the girl.

Although Blake et al. thought they would find that highly developed Black girls received more serious consequences no matter the offense, their data did not support that hypothesis. They found that it was the teachers’ race/ethnicity that determined the
severity of the disciplinary response, not the race of the student or the infraction. The authors found that Black and White teachers were harsher disciplinarians than teachers of other racial and ethnic groups. They also found that Black and White teachers recommended the same level of discipline for female students.

The authors stated, “Black and White teachers are equally punitive toward Black girls” (p. 7). Although the teachers were equally punitive, the authors wondered if the reasons for the severity of the response was the same for both sets of teachers. They cited research that might provide explanations that included cultural misunderstandings on the part of the White teachers or socialization on the part of the Black teachers (p. 7).

**Black Girl Teachers**

If educators are going to make a positive difference in the lives of Black girls, they must address the racism Black girls feel daily in many classrooms. The discipline data I provided in the previous section of my literature review provided one evidence of racism: the Black girl is treated differently from girls and even boys of other races. Researchers provides anecdotal evidence of racism Black girls experience in the classroom from their teachers and other educators.

In Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein’s (2012) study of high-achieving African American girls in high schools, Veronica stated:

. . . one of our teachers told us toward the beginning of the semester that many of us would get pregnant before the semester was over . . . . They don’t talk to the White girls like that. Some teachers treat us with a lot of respect, so we just talk to them about these incidents. (p. 209)
Even though Veronica had proven through her academic history she was high achieving, her teacher ignored her accomplishments. The teacher gave voice to her own racist beliefs.

Also, in Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein’s study, Amelia recounted her experience with teachers’ racism:

I don’t think the teachers have the same expectations. I guess it’s the race thing...

Like for years and years, many African American girls have not been motivated, and I guess they expect, . . . more out of like the White girls than us. (p. 210-211).

This high achieving Black girl student expressed the lack of high expectations for her from the teachers she encountered in her K-12 journey.

Joseph et al. (2016) in their study, Black Female Adolescents and Racism, conducted interviews with 33 junior and senior high school students where were in a program designed to help students of color consider teaching as a possible career choice. One of their participants, Kishana, described her experiences:

I feel like when I first walk into a classroom, the teacher expects, because of the way I dress and the people I talk to, they automatically expect that I’m going to be disrespectful, that I don’t care about learning, that I’m only there, I’m being forced to be there, that I’m not going anywhere and that I’m only there because I would get in trouble for not being there. So, I feel like that is what they expect, so, I try not to play into those stereotypes. (p. 18).

Kishana’s experiences of viewed unfavorably were similar to the experiences related by other Black girls in studies examined for my literature review.
The question becomes: What do educators need to do to make things better for the Black girl in American education? According to Kishana this is what needs to happen at her school:

The only way I can think of it is to wipe all the teachers out and have new ones. Because the teachers, especially here [Ridge], are so set in their ways in their mindsets of this is how it is going to work and if it doesn’t they [meaning the students] are too stupid to learn. Because I know I’ve talked to several of my teachers and every time I’ve asked them to re-explain it they will explain it the same way. That doesn’t make sense. If I’m saying I don’t understand it, they should be able to explain it another way, to adapt and find a new way for me to learn. They need more workshops or something that teach teachers’ alternative ways of teaching, new methods or something. (Joseph et al., 2016, p. 21).

Kishana believed that the entire teaching staff should be replaced in order to make her school a better place for Black girls.

Another participant in Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein’s (2012) study, talked about the type of teacher who would be able to make an influence difference on the lives of Black girls:

You know the teachers that are interested in making sure that African American girls succeed. They always tell you that you can do it and that you shouldn’t listen to the negative stuff that people say about us. . . One teacher would take books to class about successful African American women to let us know that we can do anything we set our minds on. . . [Other] teachers go out of their way to make sure that you understand everything that they teach in class. . . [They] will
take other textbooks to the class to help you to better understand the topic. They just show you in every way possible that they care about your learning. They are real [supportive]. (p. 209).

She described a teacher who is caring, provides culturally responsive curriculum and has high expectations for the Black girl.

Researchers have stated that Black girls need more Black teachers in their K-12 classrooms (Annamma et al., 2019; Joseph et al., 2016; Lindsay & Hart, 2017). Lindsay and Hart specifically found that students who are assigned to teachers who are of the same race and same receive fewer disciplinary referrals that result in the student being removed from the classroom. A Black girl with a Black female teacher may be able to remain in the classroom more often. They also found teachers of the same race and gender establish a better rapport with the student and have a better understanding of their physical and social development.

Delpit (2016) had a different view about the teacher who would be best for Black girls. She stated:

In my experience in predominantly Black school districts, the middle-class African American teachers who do not identify with the poor African American students they teach may hold similarly damaging stereotypes [as White teachers]. These adults probably are not bad people. They do not wish to damage children; indeed, they likely see themselves as wanting to help. Yet they are totally unable to perceive those different from themselves except through their own culturally clouded vision. In my experience, they are not alone. (p. xxiv)
Delpit cautioned that just because the teacher is Black does not mean the teacher will be able to understand all the needs of a Black girl from a different socio-economic level.

Butler-Barnes and Innis-Thompson (2020) advocated for teachers and schools to see Black students as individuals, not as a homogenous group. They stated bonding with teachers and staff would promote a better connection for the student and less discipline referrals. When students feel connected with their teachers, the outcome is more positive.

Butler-Barnes et al. (2018) stated that Black girls benefit academically and behaviorally from a school where there is racial harmony. When their teacher makes them feel successful and supported, their academic performance will improve. Classroom engagement and learning will be a result.

Conclusion

American educators must develop a deep understanding of how perceptions of the Black girl determine her academic success. Researchers have identified how negative stereotypes have hindered the academic achievement of the Black girl. She has been subjected to disproportionate rates of discipline that prevent achievement in the learning environments. Interventions and other punitive disciplinary actions have created a complicated relationship that challenges her identity solely based on her authenticity.
Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter, I explained the research design overview. I identified participants and identified data gathering and analysis techniques and defined the data gathering techniques. I identified the ethical considerations and limitations of the study and provided a conclusion.

Research Design Overview

The purpose of my study was to examine how the relationship between teacher practices and the Black girl impacted her academic success. Through my research, I attempted to understand the firsthand experiences of the Black girl and her teachers in learning environments through a mixed-method design, examining qualitative and quantitative data. I used the results to establish culturally relevant strategies teachers can use that promote emotional, social, and academic success for the Black girl.

I used a formative evaluation (Patton, 2008, p. 140) in conjunction with a social justice focus (Patton, 2008, p. 301) and an implementation focus (Patton, 2008, p. 303). The primary goal of this program evaluation was to create, develop and implement district-wide initiatives to meet the needs of the Black girl through instructional practices that engage, promote, and elevate educational opportunities beyond the learning environment.

Participants

There were two stakeholder groups in my study. I selected these stakeholder groups because they had firsthand knowledge and experiences that allowed me to answer the research questions in my study. The participants were current educators and Black girl high school graduates. There were four teacher participants. Each teacher had more
than five years of experience and had taught Black girls. There were four Black girl participants. The Black girl participants graduated from high school during 2017 through 2021 school years.

I recruited participants using Facebook groups. I emailed the administrators of 18 Facebook Groups. After receiving permission, I posted an advertisement flyer with a link to the electronic informed consent form for Black girl high school graduates and a flyer for teachers with a link to the electronic informed consent form for Black girls to the appropriate Facebook group.

The participants in my study were anonymous. Because I recruited through social media, there is no way I can verify if the teachers and the Black girl participants had any relationship.

Data-Gathering Techniques

I implemented a mixed methods research design. Teacher and Black girl graduate participants in my study completed online surveys that consisted of closed-ended Likert scale items and opened ended questions. I collected quantitative data from the Likert scale items on the surveys. The open-ended survey questions on the high school graduate and teacher surveys generated the qualitative data. I used extant data from the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. These data are public records and I accessed them from the Department of Education of Civil Rights website.

Teacher Surveys

I created an electronic survey that consisted of 15 Likert scale items and six open-ended questions for teachers (See Appendix B). I also included four demographic questions in this survey asking the teachers to identify their sex, the number of years they
had taught, and the grade levels they had taught. I provided a link to the informed consent document and the survey through Facebook accounts.

**Black Girl Surveys**

I created a survey for Black girl high school graduates which consisted of 12 Likert scale items and five open-ended questions (See Appendix A). In this survey, participants responded to statements about their experiences in their K-12 education. I asked for clarification on responses to three of the Likert scale items in the open-ended questions. The last two opened-ended questions I asked on the survey were for all participants. I provided a link to the informed consent document and the survey through Facebook accounts.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

Patton (2008) described analysis, interpretation, judgment, and recommendation as necessary components to fully understand the findings and implications of the program evaluation. He further defined analysis as “organizing raw data into an understandable form that reveals basic patterns and constitutes the evaluation’s empirical findings” (Patton, 2008, p. 478). I analyzed the data from the teacher surveys to determine the teachers’ perceptions of Black girls and their ability to meet the needs of the Black girls. I analyzed data from the Black girl surveys to understand their experiences in their K-12 classes.

I used extant data for student discipline publicly available through the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. I specifically analyzed the suspension rates of Black girls, both in and out of school. I used the data to compare the rates of suspension by race and gender with other subgroups.
I analyzed the quantitative data from the responses to the Likert scale statements from surveys of teachers and Black girl graduates by determining the percentages each response was selected. I began my analysis of the qualitative data from the open-ended questions on the surveys by compiling the responses. After I compiled the responses to each question, I analyzed them to identify consistent phrases, backgrounds, experiences, and philosophies. I then identified common themes within the responses.

**Ethical Considerations**

I sought permission from the administrators of Facebook Groups to post flyers to recruit participants for my evaluation. I provided participants with an informed consent form before they participated in the survey. The informed consent document assured participants that their participation was voluntary, and their responses were only used for research purposes.

There were no anticipated risks to participants in this program evaluation beyond that of everyday life. Teacher participants taking part in this study may have benefited by reflecting on their teaching practices regarding Black girls in their classrooms and by contributing to the body of knowledge that will assist stakeholders in providing better support for the Black girl in any academic environment. High school graduate participants taking part in this study may have benefited from self-reflection of their K-12 experience and the knowledge that sharing their experiences may impact teacher practices in the future.

**Limitations**

The limitations of this research included my own personal experiences and beliefs about the way Black girls have been classified and identified. My personal interest
in the topic of this study may have been biased as well. This would be because of my educational experiences and how I feel I am perceived.

The limited number of participants who answered the surveys presented challenges of having a robust sample size of participants. I could only recruit participants through social media. I reposted information about my study three times on the sites that allowed me to recruit. The lack of a robust sample size may have resulted in responses not representing the total population as accurately as possible.

A final limitation of my study is that the teachers and students did not have a classroom relationship. I cannot claim a correlation between what the Black girls related that they experienced in their classrooms to what the teachers stated they did in their classrooms.

**Conclusion**

This program evaluation was designed to determine the relationship between the perceptions of American teachers and Black girl students. I surveyed teachers and Black girl high school graduates to ascertain the practices in place. In the next chapter, I presented the results of my study.
Chapter Four: Results

The objective of my study was to understand how the relationship between teacher practices and the Black girl impacts her academic success. I developed this study to answer the primary research question: How can the educational system in the United States better meet the needs of Black female students? In this chapter, I presented my findings of extant data and survey data I collected. I explained the results through the lens of the 4Cs of Contexts, Culture, Conditions, and Competencies (Wagner et al., 2006, pp. 98-110). After the 4Cs, I presented my interpretation, judgments, and recommendations.

Findings

In the next section, I present the findings of my research study. I presented the extant data first. I presented the results of my two surveys after the extant data.

Extant Data

I collected student disciplinary data from the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) of the Office for Civil Rights. The CRDC compiles data from most public schools in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. The data are collected biennially and the most recent publication of the report at the time of my study was June 2021. However, the data presented in the publication was from the 2017-18 school year.

According to the CRDC, public school enrollment for the 2017-18 school year was 50.9 million students. Black students accounted for 15.1% of the population, White students accounted for 47.3%, Hispanic students accounted for 27.2%, Asian students were 5.2% of the population, students of two or more races were 3.8%, American Indian or Alaska Native were 1.0%, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander were 0.4%.
Girls accounted for 48.6% of school enrollment and of that 8.6% were Black girls. Black girls were the only group across all races and ethnicities for girls where a disparity was observed. Black girls received in-school suspensions (11.2%) and out-of-school suspensions (13.3%) at rates almost two times their share of total student enrollment of 7.4% (U. S. Education Department, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2017-18 State and National Estimations, released June 2021). The discipline data showed disparities in how the Black girl receives exclusionary discipline.

In an analysis of the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OFCR) Civil Rights Data Collection for the 2017-2018 academic year, Epstein et al. (2020) compared the discipline data for Black girls and White girls. They found that Black girls were 4.19 times more likely to receive out of school suspensions, 3.99 times more likely to be expelled, 3.66 times more likely to be arrested at school, 2.17 times more likely to be restrained and 5.34 times more likely to be transferred to another school or facility for disciplinary reasons (p. 1). Fabes et al. (2021) in their analysis of the 2017-2018 OFCR data found Black girls were suspended at approximately the same rate as White boys.

**Survey Data**

I collected data using two surveys. I used Google Forms to administer a survey to teachers of Black girls. The survey consisted of four demographic questions, and 10 statements to which participants responded using a Likert Scale of agree, strongly agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. This survey also included six open-ended questions. I used Google Forms to administer a survey for Black girl high school graduates. The Black girls had graduated within the five years prior to the start of my study. The survey
consisted of 12 statements to which participants responded using a Likert Scale of agree, strongly agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The survey also included five open-ended questions.

**Survey for Teachers of Black Girls.** There were four teachers who participated in my survey. I designed the first four items of the survey to collect demographic information. The teachers had an average of 19 years of experience ranging from kindergarten through adult education. Of the four teachers, three had primary education experience (K-Grade 3) and one had secondary experience ranging from Grade 6 to adult education. All four teachers (100%) were female. One teacher identified as White (25%), and three teachers identified as Black (75%). I asked teachers to respond to 10 Likert scale type statements after they complete the demographic information in items 1-4.

Teachers responded to the following statement in item 5: I feel confident teaching Black girls. Teachers all selected the same response. All four (100%) teachers strongly agreed that they felt confident teaching Black girls (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Teacher Survey Item 5: I Feel Confident Teaching Black Girls*

![Bar chart showing responses to Teacher Survey Item 5]

*Note. N = 4*
Teachers responded to the following statement in item 6: I feel I was provided adequate professional development for meeting the needs of Black girls in my classroom. All four (100%) teachers responded to this statement. Of the four teachers, two (50%) disagreed with the statement, one (25%) agreed with the statement and one (25%) strongly agreed with the statement (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Teacher Survey Item 6: I Feel I was Provided Adequate Professional Development for Meeting the Needs of Black Girls in My Classroom*

![Bar chart](image)

*Note. N = 4*

I asked teachers to respond to the following statement in item 7: I feel that my classroom environment supports the Black girl’s emotional and social needs for her to be successful. The four teachers responded with the same selection. All four (100%) teachers strongly agreed that they felt that their classroom environment supported the Black girl’s emotional and social needs for her to be successful (Figure 3).
Teacher Survey Item 7: I feel that my Classroom Environment Supports the Black Girl’s Emotional and Social Needs for her to be Successful

Note. N = 4

I asked teachers to respond to the following statement in item 8: I feel it is important to honor a student’s cultural identity. All of the teachers selected the same response. All four educators strongly agreed that it is important to honor a student’s cultural identity (Figure 4).

Teacher Survey Item 8: I Feel It Is Important to Honor a Student’s Cultural Identity

Note. N = 4
Teachers responded to the following statement in item 9: I feel that there is a difference in the social and emotional needs of Black girls compared to the needs of White girls. All teachers responded to this statement. Of the four teachers, one teacher (25%) strongly agreed, two teachers (50%) agreed, and one teacher (25%) disagreed that they felt there is a difference in the social-emotional needs of Black girls compared to the needs of White girls (Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

*Teacher Survey Item 9: I Feel that There is a Difference in the Social and Emotional Needs of Black Girls Compared to the Needs of White Girls*

![Bar Graph](image)

*Note. N = 4*

I asked teachers to respond to the following statement in item 10: Inclusive activities in my classroom are important to meet the emotional needs of Black girls. All teachers in this study responded the same. All four (100%) teachers strongly agreed that inclusive activities in their classrooms were important to meet the emotional needs of Black girls (Figure 6).
**Figure 6**

*Teacher Survey Item 10: Inclusive Activities in My Classroom are Important to Meet the Emotional Needs of Black Girls*

![Bar chart showing the response to the teacher survey item.](chart)

**Note.** N = 4

Teachers responded to the following statement in item 11: I use culturally responsive materials to engage my Black girls in my lessons. Of the four teachers, two (50%) teachers agreed, and 2 (50%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement (Figure 7).
Figure 7

*Teacher Survey Item 11: I use Culturally Responsive Materials to Engage my Black Girls in My Lessons*

![Bar Chart](image1.png)

*Note. N = 4*

I asked teachers to respond to the following statement in item 12: *I feel that building trust especially with my Black girls helps their academic achievement.* All teachers selected the same response for this statement. All four (100%) teachers strongly agreed that they felt building trust especially with their Black girls helped their academic achievement (Figure 8).

Figure 8

*Teacher Survey Item 12: I feel that Building Trust Especially with my Black Girls Helps Their Academic Achievement*

![Bar Chart](image2.png)

*Note. N = 4*
Teachers responded to the following statement in item 13: I feel confident that my instructional practices meet the needs of the Black girl. While all four teachers agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. One-half of the teachers (2) selected agreed and one-half of the teachers (2) selected strongly agreed indicating they felt confident their instructional practices met the needs of the Black girl (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Teacher Survey Item 13: I Feel Confident that My Instructional Practices Meet the Needs of the Black Girl

Note. N = 4

I asked teachers to respond to the following statement in item 14: I feel that Black girls learn best from Black teachers. There was a split in teacher responses to this statement. Two (50%) of teachers disagreed with the statement and two (50%) of the teachers agreed with the statement (Figure 10).
Figure 10

*Teacher Survey Item 14: I Feel that Black Girls Learn Best from Black Teachers*

![Bar Chart](image)

*Note. N = 4*

The last Likert scale item to which I asked teachers to respond was I feel the American educational system supports the Black girl in achieving academic success. The teachers’ responses to this statement were split between two of the choices. Of the four teachers, two (50%) disagreed and two (50%) agreed with the statement (Figure 11).

Figure 11

*Teacher Survey Item 15: I Feel the American Educational System Supports the Black Girl in Achieving Academic Success*

![Bar Chart](image)

*Note. N = 4*
The online teacher survey concluded with six open-ended questions that required the educators to reflect on the teaching practices they used in the learning environment to help Black girls achieve academic success. The educators were asked to respond to the questions in their own words.

I asked in question 16: What do you do in your classroom that positively impacts your Black girl students? The themes represented in the teachers’ answers to these questions included affirmation, high expectations (standards), and relationships. The outlier answer to this question was from one teacher who had only taught two Ethiopian Black girls in her teaching career. She relied heavily on celebrating the girls’ culture and did not mention any of the themes the other teachers mentioned.

I asked in question 17: How do you feel when a Black girl student challenges your authority in the classroom? I did not identify a specific theme in the responses to this question. Teachers indicated they did not feel any different than when any other student challenged their authority. Teacher C stated, “Like it's my job to let her know that that's inappropriate and unacceptable. That expectation in my class will be high and she will have to meet it.”

The next question I asked on the survey was: After the Black girl challenges your authority, does it change your perception of the student? If so, how? Of the three teachers who responded to this question, none stated it changed their perception of the student. Teachers B and D replied ”No.” Teacher C stated, “It makes me want to work with her more closely for her to see her potential and set goals for her future.”

The next question on the teacher survey was: What type of support do you want from your administrators when your authority is challenged? Teachers in this study
indicated they wanted a collaborative effort with the administrator to send a message that challenging their authority was not acceptable. Teachers mentioned parental notification as well as support for the student using peer groups, guidance lessons, or mentoring. Teacher B stated she did not usually need administrator support. She stated, “I typically don’t need support from Admin. I know how to build strong relationships with my students which allows me to teach and them to learn because behavior is not an issue.”

The next question on the teacher survey was: What skills do you think teachers need to have to help Black girls be successful? Teachers had diverse responses to this question. Teacher B stated it was important to know how to connect with students in an authentic manner. Teacher C provided the following list of skills: common sense, goal setting, resilience, understanding, transparency, and tolerance. Teachers A and D referred to needing culturally responsive education. Teacher D added “They need to understand cultural differences and respect them. We cannot expect our children to conform into a factory type learning situation. They also need to make sure that they have expectations that are equitable and fair and stick to them.”

In the 17th question on the online teacher survey, I asked: Please share anything else you would like to me to know about your experiences teaching Black girls in American K-12 education. Teachers indicated their appreciation of the work I was doing in this study. Teacher C stated, “For the most challenging scholars It is hard, but worth it.” Teacher D stated,

Many times, girls are lost, and they are trying desperately to fit in, not only with their friends but to also fit into a society that refuses to see them for who they
are. They are Black girls and will grow to be Black women. For (teachers) to say at times, they don't see color, is dismissive and does not address underlying issues.

**Survey for Black Girls.** I asked the Black girl high school graduates to respond to the following statement in item 1: My educational K-12 experience prepared me to be career or college-ready. All four (100%) of the graduates responded. Of the four graduates, one (25%) disagreed and three (75%) agreed with the statement (Figure 12).

**Figure 12**

*Black Girl High School Graduates Survey Item 1: My Educational K-12 Experience Prepared Me to be Career or College-ready*

Note. N = 4

The high school graduates responded to the following statement in item two on the survey: My classroom experiences were culturally/socially relevant to me. All four (100%) of the graduates selected the same response. All graduates disagreed with the statement (Figure 13).
Figure 13

Black Girl High School Graduates Survey Item 2: My Classroom Experiences were Culturally/Socially Relevant to Me

Note. N = 4

I asked the Black girl high school graduates to respond to the following statement in item 3: My teachers worked to understand my individual needs. All four (100%) graduates responded. Of the four graduates, three (75%) disagreed and one (25%) agreed with the statement (Figure 14).

Figure 14

Black Girl High School Graduates Survey Item 3: My Teachers Worked to Understand My Individual Needs

Note. N = 4
I asked the Black girl high school graduates to respond to the following statement in item 4: My teachers provided inclusive activities that made feel me important. All graduates selected the same response. All four graduates (100%) disagreed with the statement (Figure 15).

**Figure 15**

*Black Girl High School Graduates Survey Item 4: My Teachers Provided Inclusive Activities that Made Feel Me Important*

Note. N = 4

I asked the Black girl high school graduates to respond to the following statement in item 5: There were opportunities for me to have a voice in my learning environments. Graduates were split in their response to this statement. Of the four graduates who answered, two (50%) disagreed and two (50%) agreed with the statement (Figure 16).
Figure 16

Black Girl High School Graduates Survey Item 5: There were Opportunities for Me to have a Voice in My Learning Environments

![Bar Chart](chart1.png)

Note. N = 4

The Black girl high school graduates responded to the following statement in item 6: I prefer having Black teachers. More graduates agreed or strongly agreed than disagreed with this statement. Of the four graduates, one (25%) disagreed, one (25%) agreed and two (50%) strongly agreed they preferred having Black teachers (Figure 17).

Figure 17

Black Girl High School Graduates Survey Item 6: I Prefer having Black Teachers

![Bar Chart](chart2.png)

Note. N = 4
The Black girl high school graduates responded to the following statement in item 7: My Black teachers understood my academic and social needs. All graduates responded to this item. Of the four graduates, one (25%) disagreed and three (75%) agreed with the statement (Figure 18).

**Figure 18**

*Black Girl High School Graduates Survey Item 7: My Black Teachers Understood My Academic and Social Needs*

![Bar chart showing responses to survey item 7.](image)

*Note. N = 4*

The Black girl high school graduates responded to the following statement in item 8: My White teachers understood my academic and social needs. None of the graduates agreed with this statement. Of the four graduates, one (25%) strongly disagreed and three (75%) disagreed that their White teachers understood their academic and social needs (Figure 19).
Figure 19

Black Girl High School Graduates Survey Item 8: My White Teachers Understood My Academic and Social Needs

![Bar Chart](chart1.png)

Note. N = 4

The Black girl high school graduates responded to the following statement in item 9: My family had strong expectations for me to succeed in school. All graduates selected the same response for this statement. All four graduates (100%) strongly agreed with the statement (Figure 20).

Figure 20

Black Girl High School Graduates Survey Item 9: My Family had Strong Expectations for Me to Succeed in School

![Bar Chart](chart2.png)

Note. N = 4
The Black girl high school graduates responded to the following statement in item 10: I received a disciplinary response (not suspension) for my behavior at some time in my K-12 experience. All graduates responded to this statement. Of the four graduates, one (25%) strongly disagreed and three (75%) agreed they had received a disciplinary response other than suspension (Figure 21).

**Figure 21**

*Black Girl High School Graduates Survey Item 10: I Received a Disciplinary Response (Not Suspension) for My Behavior at Some Time in My K-12 Experience*

![Bar Chart](image)

*Note. N = 4*

The Black girl high school graduates responded to the following statement in item 11: I was suspended at least once during my time K-12 grades. All graduates responded to this item. Of the four graduates, one (25%) strongly disagreed and three (75%) strongly agreed they had been suspended (Figure 22).
Figure 22

Black Girl High School Graduates Survey Item 11: I was Suspended at Least Once During My Time K-12 Grades

Note. N = 4

The Black girl high school graduates responded to the following statement in item 12: As a student, I questioned the authority of the teacher. The graduates were evenly divided in their responses to this statement. Of the four graduates, one (25%) strongly disagreed, one (25%) disagreed, one (25%) agreed, and one (25%) strongly agreed (Figure 23).
Survey for Black Girls Open-Ended Questions. My survey for Black girl high school graduates included five open-ended questions. Questions 13, 14, and 15 were follow-up questions to Items 10, 11, and 12 in the survey. The graduate only answered question 13 if she agreed or strongly agreed with item 10. The graduate only answered question 14 if she agreed or strongly agreed with item 11. The graduate only answered question 15 if she agreed or strongly agreed with item 12. I asked all graduates to provide answers to Questions 16 and 17. I asked the graduates to respond to the questions in their own words.

I asked the following in question 13: If you chose to agree or strongly agree for #10 (received a disciplinary response other than suspension) please explain what happened and the response you received. The Black girls listed receiving a disciplinary response for the following minor offenses: speaking out of turn, disagreeing with the teacher, cleaning out a desk while a substitute was covering the class, and excessive...
tardiness. The responses they received included a note home for speaking out and being scolded in front of the class for cleaning out a desk.

I asked the following in question 14: If you chose to agree or strongly agree for #11 (you were suspended), please explain. All three girls who were suspended, received the suspension for fighting. One girl stated she fought a bully that teachers knew about, and one girl stated a young lady hit her, so she hit back. One of the three girls was suspended for both fighting and for being late to class.

I asked the following in question 15: If you chose to agree or strongly agree for #12 (you questioned the teacher’s authority), please tell how your teacher responded when you questioned their authority. Answers to this question were varied. Graduate B wrote, “The teachers seem to always regulate the class with their Whiteness that wasn’t always making sense to me.” Graduate C stated it was not a teacher but an administrator who “was upset and argued with me.” Graduate D wrote, “Casually and tried to provide an answer to my question.”

I asked the following in question 16: What do you think teachers should have done to better meet the needs of yourself and other Black girls? All four graduates responded to this question. The graduates stated teachers should develop a sense of belonging for the girls, have a desire to teach Black students, have more patience, be fair to all cultures, and have strong a classroom community. Graduate C wrote:

They could have been more patient. I’m thinking about all my experiences and interactions. And from a purely personal point of view, I think that most teachers expect opposition from us, so they come armed ready to react instead of understanding, be it our personal feelings, opinions, or valid concerns.
In Question 17, I asked the graduates: Please share anything else you would like to know about how you felt as a Black girl student in America K-12 education. Three graduates responded to this question. Graduate A wrote, “Teachers should find ways to build Black girls’ self-esteem and confidence. Give them jobs and positions in the classroom as the leader.” Graduate B wanted me to know, “I often time felt alone while in school. I would try to fit in really hard with the White students.” Graduate C addressed textbooks, “History books should be inclusive to ALL cultures.”

**Contexts**

According to the Office for Civil Rights (U. S. Education Department, 2017-18 Civil Rights Data Collection, released June 2021), even though the number of Black girls enrolled in school is less than the number of White girls, the discipline rate for Black girls was six times higher than White girls. Black girls made up 7.4% of enrollment in all public schools but received 11.2% of all in-school suspensions and 13.3% of all out-of-school suspensions. Additionally, Black girls had suspension rates higher than White males.

The Office for Civil Rights (2017) reported that Black children represented 18% of preschool enrollment with 48% of out-of-school suspension compared to White children accounting for 26% of out-of-school suspension. In my data collection of the Black girl graduate experiences, 75% of the participants reported being suspended at least once in their K-12 years. Each of the Black girl graduates had been suspended for fighting. One girl also reported being suspended for being tardy. From kindergarten through their senior year in high school, Black girls are seven times more likely to be suspended than White girls, and four times more likely to be arrested at school. As early
as preschool, Black girls accounted for 54% of all girls suspended despite being only 20% of the girls enrolled (Williams, 2019).

**Culture**

There was a discrepancy between the perceptions of the teachers and the Black girl graduates. Teachers indicated a culture in their classrooms where the emotional and social needs of Black girl students were supported. They further indicated classroom cultures that honored students’ cultural identities and built trust. Most of the teachers indicated there was a difference in the social and emotional needs of Black girls when compared with the needs of White girls and all felt confident teaching Black girls.

However, the Black girl participants’ experiences at school did not reflect the supportive culture the teachers indicated. It is important to note that the teachers in my study were not the teachers who taught the Black girls in my study. Specifically, half of the participants felt they did not have opportunities to voice their opinions in their learning environments. Most (75%) of participants felt Black teachers understood their academic and social needs. However, all participants felt that White teachers did not understand their social and academic needs.

The Black girl participants reported a culture within their homes of strong expectations to succeed in school. Evans-Winters’ (2005) study also indicated that Black female students’ families have the most influence on their educational outcomes. For example, female caregivers in particular have the most significant impact.

**Conditions**

In my study, 50% of the teachers surveyed indicated that they felt Black girls learned best from Black teachers. Evan-Winters’ (2005), additional findings
demonstrated that girls also expressed a desire to have more Black female teachers or noted wanting culturally competent teachers who were not necessarily Black. The majority of Black girl graduates (75%) in my study indicated they preferred having Black teachers. According to the results from the 2017–18 National Teacher and Principal Survey, about 79% of all public-school teachers were non-Hispanic White, 7% were non-Hispanic Black, and 9% were Hispanic. Among private school teachers, about 85% were non-Hispanic White, 3% were non-Hispanic Black, and 7% were Hispanic.

The National Women Law Center reported in 2010 over one third (34%) of Black female students did not graduate on time, compared to only 19% of White female students and 22% of all female students. The graduation rate for Black girls was lower than all other groups of girls, except Native American girls. Teacher participants in my study were split in their perception of whether the American educational system supported the Black girl in achieving academic success. All of but one of the Black girl graduates indicated that the American educational system supported her in being prepared to be career or college ready.

**Competencies**

Teachers in this study indicated inclusive practices were important, they used culturally responsive materials, and they were confident their instructional practices met the needs of the Black girl. However, all the Black girl participants indicated teachers did not provide inclusive activities or culturally/socially relevant experiences. Most of the Black girl participants (75%) disagreed that their teachers worked to understand their individual needs.
Professional development is important for teachers to develop knowledge and competency with skills. According to Mizell (2010) “Educators who do not experience effective professional development do not improve their skills, and student learning suffers” (p. 6). Adequate professional development for meeting the needs of the Black girl was not provided for half of the teacher participants.

**Interpretation**

The results indicated there was a disconnect between the perceptions of the support teachers said they provided and the Black girls’ perceptions of how they were actually treated. Using the data, I discovered that 100% of the teachers felt that they were confident in teaching Black girls and provided a classroom environment that supported the emotional and social needs of the Black girl. However, the high school graduates disagreed that their classroom experiences met their emotional and social needs. My data showed that 75% of the graduates felt that their teachers did not meet their individual needs and 100% of them felt that the teacher did not have inclusive activities that made them feel important. The data showed that only 50% of the graduates felt that they had an opportunity to have their voice heard in the learning environment. All high school graduates in my study identified their academic success was based on family expectations of completing high school.

The significance of the findings is that until the disparity between what teachers perceive and what the Black girl perceives is happening in the classroom is addressed, the Black girl will feel as though she is not valued. She will feel invisible in the learning environment and feel as though she does not have a voice. Essentially, meeting the social and emotional needs of the Black girl begins with establishing relationships that include
communication and understanding is necessary for the Black girl to be successful. Until the disparity is addressed, the educational system may continue to not meet the needs of the Black girl. For clarity, I must point out the only commonality between the participants in study is that they all lived in the United States. The students and teachers did not have a classroom or school relationship.

Judgments

The overarching research question in my study was: How can the educational system in the United States better meet the needs of Black female students? The Black girl high school graduates in my study provided several things teachers can do to better meet their needs. They stated teachers need to want to teach Black girls, develop better relationships with them, use culturally relevant materials, and allow them to have a voice in their learning. Teachers in my study also provided suggestions on how to meet the needs of the Black girl. They stated standards need to be kept high, meaningful relationships needed to be built with the girls, and teachers should acknowledge the unique needs of the Black girl.

The results of my study were positive in that both groups identified suggestions for strategies that can be helpful to increase the academic achievement of the Black girl. While it is good that solutions were identified, the results indicate there is still much work to be done. Even with all of the progress in meeting the educational needs of minority students that has been made, it is appalling that the problem still exists at the level it does.

Recommendations

Teachers of Black girls must learn to identify, acknowledge and understand the Black girl’s unique status in the learning environment. Teachers must have a full
understanding of who they are serving. This begins with them having the mindset that providing an equitable educational opportunity means adapting instruction and having behavioral expectations that are clear and consistent. Teachers need to make sure their Black girl student understands what is being expected of her. To help the Black girl reach her academic potential, teachers need to build relationships that allow authenticity in her thinking, learning, and actions that help to create teachable moments for growth opportunities.

To achieve this, I am recommending a policy change that will provide educators with successful strategies to improve the educational experiences of the Black girl. This will be accomplished through professional development that includes mentorship and observations of the mentors. This will require scaffolding opportunities for teachers as they work to acquire the skill set needed. This policy will allow teachers to develop a mindset of openness that will allow the Black girl authenticity in her thinking, learning, and actions that help to create teachable moments for growth opportunities.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I analyzed data from surveys of teachers and Black girl high school graduates. I used the data to develop an understanding of how teachers and Black girls perceived their experiences in the classroom. I also used the data to develop a list of suggestions for how teachers can better meet the needs of the Black girl. In the next chapter, I described my vision of the successful ‘To Be’ using the four arenas of change by Wagner et al. (2006).
Chapter Five: To-Be Framework

My study of American teachers and the Black girl revealed the disconnect between the perceptions of classroom teachers and Black girls. The participants in this study were anonymous and recruited through social media posts that were open to all educators of Black girls and all Black girl high school graduates. It is important to note there was no verified classroom relationship between the teachers who participated in my study and the Black girls who participated in my study. The data results were only measured based on comparisons.

Teachers in my study stated they provided culturally responsive instruction, and all felt they met the needs of the Black girls in their classes. However, I found that the Black girls in my study perceived the curriculum and actions of teachers in their classrooms did not support their social and emotional needs. Of my Black girl participants, 75% had been suspended. This supported data from the Office for Civil Rights (2017) showing the suspension rate for Black girls is higher than the rates for White girls and for White boys. In this chapter, I provide my vision of the successful To-Be including the ideal context, culture, competencies, and conditions (Wagner et al., 2006).

Envisioning the Success to Be

In my vision of the success To Be for the Black girl, American educators will support her by providing culturally responsive instruction. The Black girl will have her social-emotional needs met by teachers fostering inclusive learning environments through engaging collaborations that provide advocacy, mentoring, and counseling. Educators
will provide services including designed interventions specialized according to the specific needs of students.

**Future Contexts**

According to Wagner et al. (2006) in Change Leadership, context refers to “skill demands all students must meet to succeed as providers, leaders and citizens, and the particular aspirations, needs, and concerns of families and community that the school or the district serves” (p. 104). In my ideal context, the suspension rate of Black girls will decrease by at least 50% from 12% to 6% based on data from the U. S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2015-2016 Civil Rights Data Collection: School Climate and Safety. Teachers will provide mentorship and coaching and will be advocates building strong relationships with the girls. Teachers will examine their responses when the Black girls show resistance in the classroom. There will be dialogue between the Black girls and their teachers that provides positive reinforcement to help them express their thoughts without fear of retribution.

**Future Culture**

Wagner et al. (2006) defined “culture as the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to student learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school” (p. 102). The culture for the Black girl in American education will begin with educators who have the mindset of positive thinking toward the Black girl. For many Black girls, schools are toxic, traumatizing places where they receive mixed messages about who and what is valued (Carter Andrews et al., 2019) As teachers seek to understand Black girls and their schooling experiences, “research and policy frameworks must move beyond the
notion that all of the youth of color who are in crisis are boys, and that the concerns of White girls are indistinguishable from those of girls of color’’ (Crenshaw et al., 2015, p. 9).

The beliefs and opinions of the educators in the ideal future culture will align to the belief that the Black girl is capable of learning and achieving academic success. Teachers will have high expectations and provide positive support and empathy to encourage academic growth through equal access and opportunities that engage her interest and directly influence higher order experiences that are aligned to meet the mastery of standards (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

**Future Conditions**

Wagner et al. (2006) defined “conditions as the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources” (p. 100). American educators will adopt strategies that support the emotional state of the Black girl by recognizing her talents and strengths through best practices and not be influenced by the educators’ perceptions of the Black girl as being defiant or deficient. Leaders at the district and school level will hire qualified staff and Black teachers that mirror the cultural identity of the Black girl. Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) discussed the need for more women scholars of color to directly confront the social and educational needs of girls of color, documenting the unique challenges they encounter due to their race, class, and gendered status. They purported that the stressors that Black girls may face in their homes, communities, or schools can be buffered by exposure to successful Black women and support systems to help them cope and persist.
**Future Competencies**

According to Wagner et al. (2006), competencies are “the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning” (p. 99). In the ideal To-Be situation, teachers will have competencies that allow the Black girl to accomplish academic success with equal opportunities that are given to all other subgroups. The educators in my survey all replied that they had sufficient experience and provided an inclusive environment that allowed them to understand what the Black girl needs. They also felt they had sufficient training that helped them to recognize what culturally relevant activities were needed for the Black girl to accomplish her goals. However, the results of the survey of Black girl high school graduates contradicted the teachers’ survey results.

Teachers will have culturally responsive training they implement that engages the Black girl in her learning. All teachers will have professional development that is a continuous practice and application to understand instructional design and how to implement it to help the Black girl achieve success regardless of her background. The curriculum design would include peer to peer coaching, mentorship, and community involvement within the school community that is being taught.

**Conclusion**

My study results revealed the relationship between American teachers and the Black girl as perceived by the participants. As a result of my study, I seek to establish a culturally relevant curriculum that is inclusive of meeting the needs of the Black girl socially, emotionally, and academically. In the next chapter, I create a change leadership plan based on Kotter’s 8-Step Change process. My vision is to create a strategic framework that prepares educators to recognize and understand how the Black girl relates
to education. This will include envisioning academic goals that prepare instructional
delivery that is inclusive of meeting the needs of the Black girl and enacting a culture that
is effective in establishing a continuous way of work for the Black girl in American
education.
Chapter Six: Strategies and Actions

Creating the ideal relationship between American educators and the Black girl begins with identifying and addressing the barriers that create disparities in the learning environment. In Chapter 4, I identified the challenges as depicted in Appendix C As-Is and in Chapter 5, I identified the successful outcomes as presented in Appendix D in the “To-Be” chart. In this chapter, I identify the strategies and actions needed to bridge the two. The organizational change plan that I will utilize to create procedural changes will be referenced from the book Leading Change by John Kotter (2012) and 8 Steps to Accelerate Change in Your Organization (2014). I use Kotter’s eight-step process for successful change to identify the areas of change needed to allow teachers to provide an inclusive environment to meet the needs of the Black girl through curriculum, academic instruction, and mentorship.

Step One: Create a Sense of Urgency

The first step is creating a sense of urgency as explained by Kotter (2008). True urgency focuses on the issues. It is driven “by the determination to win, not anxiety by losing” (p. 6). I will use Kotter’s idea of “examining the opportunities which can be tapped through effective interventions” to work with leaders design a plan to help improve the systemic issues that the Black girl experiences. To establish a sense of urgency, I will meet with education leaders in the Federal Department of Education, State Departments of Education and school superintendents.

I will explain the disparity that disruptive behaviors are deemed more problematic when committed by Black students and how the Black girl is subject being labeled as aggressive, defiant, and disrespectful when trying to have her needs met. I will present
the data from the Office for Civil Rights (U. S. Education Department, 2017-18 Civil Rights Data Collection, released June 2021), showing that the number of Black girls enrolled in school was less than the number of White girls but the discipline rate for Black girls was six times higher than White girls. Black girls made up 7.4% of enrollment in all public schools but received 11.2% of all in-school suspensions and 13.3% of all out-of-school suspensions. Additionally, I will point out that Black girls had suspension rates higher than White males.

I will present data from my study highlighting the discrepancy between the perceptions of the teachers and the perceptions of the Black girls. Specifically, I will present my findings that teachers reported inclusive practices were important, that they used culturally responsive materials, and that they were confident their instructional practices met the needs of the Black girl. However, all the Black girl participants indicated teachers did not provide inclusive activities or culturally/socially relevant experiences. Most of the Black girl participants (75%) disagreed that their teachers worked to understand their individual needs. I will emphasize that education of the Black girl must be reflective of inclusive measures that protect her social and emotional needs while increasing cultural relevancy in curriculum and instructional practices to meet her academic needs.

**Step Two: Build a Guiding Coalition**

The second step forming powerful guiding coalitions, Kotter (2012, pg. 6), suggested that working as a team requires that a powerful change coalition identifies effective and influential leaders across an organization to help make sufficient changes that will increase achievement. Kotter described coalition members as “individuals from
all silos and levels who want to help you take on strategic challenges, deal with hyper competitiveness, and win the Big Opportunity” (2014, p. 29). They will have the “drive, the intellectual and emotional commitment, the connections, the skills, and the information to be an effective sun in the dynamic new solar system” (2014, pp. 29-30).

I will invite state education leaders, district leaders, principals, teachers, Black girl high school graduates and current Black girl high school students to be members of my guiding coalition. This team will use research driven data practices, instructional input, and parental input to establish a continuity of services that will develop consistent practices for learning environments to become inclusive for the Black girl.

**Step Three: Develop the Vision and Initiatives**

According to Kotter (2012) “a good vision serves three important purposes” (p. 62). The vision clarifies the direction of change, motivates people and coordinates actions (p. 62). The guiding coalition will collectively design a vision that will guide their work distinguishing specific roles to help define the vision. The vision will be reflective of current practices that are successful and increase additional strategies to engage instructional practices to enhance instructional settings inclusive of the Black girl. The expectations will be clear and consistent with state standards, culturally relevant and intentional to include the identity of the Black girl. The direction of the guiding coalition will be established through assigned collaborative planning, action plans including coaching of instructional practices. The vision will increasing the academic achievement of the Black girl while decreasing the rate of disciplinary actions.

The guiding coalition will communicate the vision plan through various media outlets. They will connect the school and community interests through public forums
with feedback from the community and local support groups that specialize in social justice changes. They will communicate through back to school nights, social media platforms such as Facebook and local focus groups that are involved with school improvement.

**Step Four: Enlist a Volunteer Army**

The volunteer army will include educational leaders, mentors, teachers, coaches and parents. The actual people who are a part of this “enlisted army” for change will believe the vision, implement change and monitor results. The volunteer army will “communicate information about the change vision and the strategic initiatives to the organization in ways that lead large numbers of people to buy into the whole flow of action” (Kotter, 2014, p. 31). The people in the army will collaborate with local services such as social services, mental health services and counseling to provide support for the Black girls and their families.

**Step Five: Enable Action by Removing Barriers**

Kotter’s fifth step is to enable action by removing barriers (2018). This step examines how present barriers may prevent the vision from being implemented successfully. It is important in this step to understand what barriers will be addressed to create a successful plan that will help educators meet the needs of the Black girl. The current educational practices for the Black girl are consistent with corrective and punitive action that create resistance, defiance and isolation preventing the Black girl feeling included within the learning environment.

One barrier that will be addressed is the limited teacher knowledge of the needs of the Black girl. Many teachers have preconceived ideas about their Black girl students and
their families. It is possible that teachers’ preconceived ideas are not conducive to helping
the Black girl be successful. Educators will have professional development and training
to have the right skills, attitudes, and behaviors to help the Black girl be successful. This
barrier will also be addressed by having educators in colleges of education providing the
same type of training to preservice teachers.

Another barrier that will be removed is the lack of culturally responsive materials. All teachers will have materials that allow the Black girl to see herself represented. In my study, the teachers stated they all used culturally responsive materials and provided inclusive activities. However, the Black girl participants indicated their experiences did not include culturally responsive materials or inclusive activities.

The barrier of a lack of teachers understanding the social/emotional needs of the Black girl will be removed. This barrier will be addressed by teachers receiving professional development that will allow them to meet the emotional and social needs of the Black girl. In this training, teachers will learn how to allow the Black girl to have an opportunity to have their voice heard in the learning environment.

**Step Six: Create Short Term Wins**

Kotter’s sixth step of change is planning and creating short term wins (2018). Creating short term wins is essential in creating the cultural change to occur in helping the Black girl gain inclusivity in American education. The success of disciplinary rates decreasing would create a short-term win for the Black girl in the learning environment. The task of creating instructional practices to reflect positive relationships with educators would be a short-term win that would provide evidence of credibility that the academic services provided will help establish alignment to expectations of higher order levels of
learning. Another short-term win would be an increase in the academic achievement of the Black girl in meeting or exceeding expectations for achievement when compared to her White classmates.

**Step Seven: Sustain Acceleration**

Kotter (2012) stated "Whenever you let up before the job is done, critical momentum can be lost, and regression may follow” (p. 108). Until the new ways of working are deeply embedded into the organization a change effort is fragile and may regress at speed. This step helps establish credibility that the changes occurring are making progress towards full implementation of the vision and urgency of creating inclusivity for the Black girl in American education.

According to Kotter (2018), “It is so easy to lose sight of the ultimate goal” of the change plan (p. 29). I will work with the guiding coalition to “revisit urgency after generating some significant wins” (p. 29) described in the in Step Six: Creating Short Term Wins. I will keep the focus on sustaining change by making everyone aware of the long term issues that will still need to be addressed.

In addition to revisiting the urgency of changing the reality of the Black Girl in American Education, I will also sustain change by inviting more people to become members of the volunteer army. Kotter (2018) advocated including more people in the army after the initial recruitment. The new people will bring fresh ideas to the group and may help identify additional barriers that the original army may have missed. It is only by being vigilant in removing the barriers that stakeholders will be able to sustain the change that will allow the Black girl to meet her full potential.
**Step Eight: Institute Change**

The last step of this change plan is instituting change, which only happens by making changes in the culture of the organization. According to Kotter, “Culture changes only after you have successfully altered people’s action, after the new behavior produces some group benefit for a period of time and after people see the connection between the new actions and the performance improvement” (2012, p. 126). The cultural change in the learning environment will become reality as educators see the positive effects of the changes on the social/emotional well-being and academic achievement of the Black girl.

To institute the change, the professional development and preservice instruction for teachers will continue and expand to all schools throughout the United States. School leaders will identify teachers who are effective with helping Black girls be successful in their academic achievement and social/emotional growth, have low occurrences of disciplinary referrals for Black girls and enjoy working with Black girls. The leaders will work to retain those teachers. The leaders will highlight the actions of those teachers and spread the good news of their success and the accomplishments of their students. The identified teachers will work as mentors and teacher leaders for their colleagues.

As the volunteer army expands and builds their influence on the culture outside of the school system, they will work to build additional community partnerships. As the community members become more aware of the positive outcomes for the Black girl as they will become more vocal in their support of the change plan. The support will lead to individuals insisting that the Black girl in their community be treated by educators in a manner that leads to her success.
Assessing the Effectiveness of the Strategies and Actions

I will assess the effectiveness of the strategies and action plan in four ways. The first way will be by reviewing the academic achievement of the Black girl. The second way I will assess the effectiveness is by reviewing disciplinary actions involving the Black girl. I will also examine the amount of culturally responsive materials being used in the schools. Finally, I will review the number and types of staff development offered that specifically targets understanding the Black girl.

The data I collected for this study was not specific to one state in the United States. Participants in my surveys were from throughout the country and the extant data was a compilation of data from all 50 states. However, there are very few national requirements that impact education in every state. State leaders are responsible for education decisions pertaining to teacher certification rules and staff development content. In many states, each district determines the curriculum selected and how discipline infractions are addressed. Therefore, I will select three districts in three different states to assess the effectiveness of my strategies and actions.

I will begin by selecting districts where there are high numbers of Black girls enrolled. I will collect data on academic achievement, disciplinary responses, types of instructional materials used and staff development before the plan is enacted. At the end of the first year after implementation, I will collect the same data again. I will compare all the data. If there is an increase in academic achievement of the Black girl, a decrease in disciplinary referrals for the Black girl, an increase in the number of culturally responsive materials and professional development for teachers that specifically address the needs of the Black girl, I will deem the plan successful.
Involving Community Partners in Decision Making

Involving the community is vital in order to have supportive parents, volunteers, and leaders. I will use community partners in each level of planning for this plan to help establish academic, social, and emotional needs that will increase academic success within the community. The initiatives will include partnerships with the local city officials such as the mayor office, city council and representatives. The local officials play a vital part in defining the needs of the community as well as the city to help determine what services are needed to achieve needs beyond the classroom. The vision for this partnership will include community partners as mentors who have specific expertise in their field to encourage opportunities of interest. This partnership will align with the strategic initiatives of the school district to provide individualized assistance for the Black girl. The second partnership will be local college communities that will have targeted support and collaboration for academic counseling to help the Black girl choose a pathway to college and career opportunities. The partnership will be in duration of the school year as an academic initiative to support higher level academics.

Conclusion

My goal for this study is improving the relationship between American teachers and the Black girl. The eight-step change plan will help establish a working process that is multi-tiered to address specific goals of increasing academic achievement and decreasing the disciplinary referrals for the Black girl. The plan is specific to implementing opportunities and experiences that will allow visibility, creativity, and encouragement for the Black girl through culturally relevant activities. In Chapter 7, I will discuss my policy recommendations and the implications of it through the analysis of seven areas.
Chapter Seven: Policy and Recommendations

I propose a policy that will increase the Black girl’s connection to teachers and other educators at her school while decreasing the high rates of disciplinary actions she receives. The experiences of Black girls in the learning environment have a continuous effect of them feeling that they are not valued and the feeling of being invisible. This policy will include require training for educators in instructional practices work to include her in the school environment. These changes will create opportunities that will allow the Black girl to become a shared partner in her educational experience.

Policy Statement

I propose a policy that requires educators to participate in professional development opportunities that will provide them with successful strategies that will let the Black girl be successful in her academic journey. Through this policy I seek to create schools with educators who are competent and committed to embracing culturally relevant instruction as a philosophy and process to establish an inclusive culture with a focus on the academic success of the Black girl.

The first stage of the policy targets administrators. In my policy, I will require all administrators to receive six semester hours of professional development (PD) and nine hours of facilitative coaching each academic year. Administrators will be trained to understand and be able to demonstrate the capacity to evaluate equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive instructional and behavior support practices among teachers and staff. State and district administrators will collaborate with experts on the Black girl to design the PD and support the facilitate coaching. As a result of this PD, administrators will develop a school wide culture of teachers using instructional materials and behavior
support practices within the learning environment provides the Black girl with equitable opportunities. Trainers and teachers will be assigned progress monitoring assessments that are aligned to meet quarterly and provide data checkpoints that supports the data of how the needs are being met. This process will occur in a three-step process that would measure identifiable learning styles, academic performance that would measure weekly and adjusting learning and or environmental changes to help build positive reinforcement to establish best instructional practices for the Black girl. This practice would be monitored through an assigned instructional leader who specializes in inclusive instruction.

The second stage requires all teachers and support staff to receive three semester hours of PD and nine hours of coaching from a mentor each year to increase competency and high commitment to the core work of teaching, learning, and continuous improvement of education of the Black girl. The training will focus on understanding the Black girl’s social/emotional well-being, her behavioral response mechanisms, and how to communicate effectively with the Black girl and how to use culturally responsive instructional materials. Each year teachers and support staff will receive supplemental assistance that includes one on one coaching with an assigned mentor to implement a scheduled check in to include observation and feedback.

It is important that teachers and staff members who have been trained and are successful in working with the Black girl be retained at their schools. Therefore, school leaders will receive additional funding to increase retention of exemplary teachers and support staff. Funding of professional development would be provided through school based funds that would serve this community through federal dollars that provides grants
for closing the achievement gap. The funding will be used to increase the salaries of the teachers and to provide stipends for those teachers who wish to be mentors. It will also be used to support teachers who volunteer to have their classrooms used as model classrooms.

**Analysis of Needs**

In the analysis of needs, I use the following six lenses to review my policy recommendation: educational, economic, social, political, legal and moral and ethical. Analyzing my policy through these lenses allows me to understand the impact of the implementation of the policy in many different arenas.

**Educational Analysis**

According to the data from my research, 75% of the Black girl high school graduates felt prepared and ready for college and beyond. However, scholarly research showed that Black students in high-achieving suburban schools struggle with educational achievement and access. They are less likely to be enrolled in advanced courses, which affects their academic self-concept as well as their college enrollment prospects (Darity et al., 2001; Diette, 2012). When teachers meet her social and emotional needs, the Black girl will be better engaged in the learning environment. Her perception of her teachers and their actions will be more positive, allowing her to increase her academic achievement. When the Black girl’s social and emotional needs are met, it will increase her self-awareness and how she relates to the learning environment while decreasing behavioral occurrences teachers view as disruptive.
**Economic Analysis**

The economic impact of my policy on the Black girl will be a result of specific preparation and professional development for teachers that provides the Black girl equitable opportunities to achieve academic success in and beyond the classroom. Teachers making changes in classroom instruction will lead to more Black girls graduating from high school and being eligible for post-secondary education. Increasing the graduation rates of the Black girl will make it possible for her to experience economic freedom from financial trauma associated with generational poverty with higher unemployment rates. Allocation of funds would be specific to meeting the needs of the Black girl. The funding through additional grants and financial donations would create opportunities that would allow continuous academic progress to meet financial needs within the communities in which they will serve.

District and school leaders will have an economic impact on their budgets due to having to allocate money for professional development of administrators and teachers and for the teacher retention incentives. One source of funding that can be reallocated to professional development is Title 1 funding. Leaders can allocate the Title 1 funds to ensure that teacher preparedness, readiness and implementation will occur continuously in learning environments that support higher level academic achievement. The Title I, Part D program statute was most recently amended in 2015 by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Title I funding for this programming provides supplemental help for students who are considered at risk and provide preventative measures to increase academic achievement beyond the classroom.
Social Analysis

When Black girls believe that their school system does not support them, they begin to distrust the school and the school representatives (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012). Being characterized and misunderstood can alter how she feels and or believes what is happening around her. The label of being described as aggressive, many times are based on misconceptions and biases that teachers are unfamiliar with. According to U.S. News (2017), Black girls are twice more likely to be suspended than any other ethnic group in every state. This higher rate of suspension begins as early as pre-school, with Black girls making up 20% of students, but 54% of suspensions. The social impact of this policy is that harsher levels of disciplinary actions that causes disruptive patterns for the Black girl will be decreased.

The policy would create positive reinforcement in learning environments that provide teachers the opportunities to teach in an inclusive environment promoting engagement, encouraging motivation and reduce the impact of negative interactions between teacher and students. Teacher student relationships between teachers and the Black girl would increase teacher expectations for academic outcomes and positive mindsets about students who are in front of them.

Political Analysis

The political impact of this policy includes all educational stakeholders. School districts are mandated by state expectations and standards that rely on specialized funding for specific programming. The initial stages of this type of programming would require full support of educational policymakers to mandate changes that would increase additional training for instructional and create uniformity that will decrease the way the
Black girl receives discipline. These changes will be specifically for Black girls; however, the continuation of these programs will have the ability to accommodate the social and emotional need of other girls of color. Cultural relevant education involves classrooms that have teachers who would receive specialty training and knowledge of how the pedagogy of this curriculum would increase the academic achievement of the Black girl. The policies and practices of school districts would reflect the culture of learning through cultural relevant training that would be inclusive of instructional strategies that support the learning of all students, especially the Black girl.

**Legal Analysis**

The legal implications of this policy may be seen in the requirement for educators attending professional development and making changes needed to establish cultural relevant instruction for the Black girl. Teachers could object to the policy based upon their personal beliefs and or opinions. Teachers who disagree with the policy could work with their local teachers’ union to bring a lawsuit or grievance against the district or school leaders to try to stop the policy being implemented. This could cause the policy being delayed or possibly becoming not sufficient in scope to bring about changes for the Black girl.

The legal implication of this policy could be the perception that particular communities and or school districts are receiving preferential opportunities with programs that support the social and emotional needs of the Black girl beyond the academic expectations. If Title I funds are used to pay for professional development and retention incentives, it could also lead to specific laws being challenged regarding Title I fund being disbursed to schools that do not serve Black girls. The funding I proposed
using for these programs specialized to helping the Black girl, however, the programs could be utilized to supplement help in creating inclusive environments for all students that align with specific needs of the programming. This would include high disciplinary actions, social and emotional learning and professional development to initiate policies that would decrease disciplinary actions against all girls.

**Moral and Ethical Analysis**

All American educators have an obligation to guarantee the right to equal education opportunity for all students, no matter the student’s sex, race or ethnic background. Through my policy, I will create an awareness for educators of the cultural identity of the Black girl and how she is perceived in American education.

Implementation of my policy allow all educators to have a complete understanding of how to use appropriate practices that support the Black girl in the learning environment. My policy will enable educators to meet the moral responsibility of providing equitable opportunities that allow the Black girl to have the ability to have expression herself and have a voice in her educational experience.

**Implications for Staff and Community Relationships**

Staff and community relationships will improve as a result of my policy. My policy would lead to a positive social change with the Black girls’ communities. Social change in local communities would occur through collaboration and communication of needs that support the Black girl in community and school partnerships that support financial barriers. The policy would support the Black girl by establishing parental involvement would help promote educational programming with firsthand experiences that allows parents to help communicate needs, issues, and concerns.
My policy is specifically designed to increase academic achievement for the Black girl; however, it is beneficial for all educators and the communities they serve. The pedagogy of culturally relevant training helps teachers engage all students in learning by building on their own understanding and experiences. Just as it will allow the Black girl to develop a sense of ownership in her learning, it will allow other students to develop sense of ownership in their learning. The professional development, training and mentorship will provide continuous development of instructional practices and strategies that will decrease barriers and disruption of learning for the Black girl as well as her classmates.

**Conclusion**

I propose a policy that would implement cultural relevant training for instructional personnel. My policy will equip all teachers to have the ability to deliver instruction to all students with fair and equitable practices. This policy is designed to increase academic achievement for the Black girl in American education. Increasing best teaching practices are assurance of meeting the needs of the Black girl with a unique way of learning through social, emotionally, and academically.
Chapter Eight: Conclusion

In my study, I analyzed how the relationship between teacher practices and the Black girl impacts her academic success based upon the perceptions of teachers of Black girls and Black girl high school graduates. I used the results of my study to determine effective strategies teachers can use to establish productive educational relationships with the Black girl. The results of my research did not determine that the Black girl participants experienced bias in their educational environment, but it has been revealed through scholarly research that there is bias. However, while my data did not support bias in my participants’ educational journey, it did reveal a disconnect between the teachers’ perceptions and the Black Girl high school graduates’ perceptions of what is happening in classrooms. In this chapter, I will provide a final discussion of my study and leadership lessons I learned.

Discussion

The goal of my evaluation was to identify teacher practices that allow the Black girl to achieve academic success in the educational learning environment. I surveyed four teachers and four Black girl high school graduates. My data results identified instructional practices, beliefs, and goals that enhanced the educational experience of the Black girl helping her accomplish academic success without compromising her identity. The instructional practices identified by teachers and responses to open ended questions explained how their expectations and their personal experiences helped in assuring the Black girl met successful outcomes. The end goal of this research was the development of a policy that when enacted will enable teachers and other educators to establish
culturally relevant learning environments that support the Black girl socially, emotionally, and academically.

The results of my study indicated there was a disconnect between the perceptions of the support teachers said they provided and the Black girls’ perceptions of how they were actually treated. The data showed that the experience of the high school graduates was similar in that they felt that their classroom teachers did not understand the way that they felt within the learning environment. However, the teachers surveyed felt that they delivered culturally relevant instruction allowing the Black girl to feel inclusive. The data also revealed that 100% of the teachers felt that they were confident in teaching Black girls and provided a classroom environment that supported the emotional and social needs of the Black girl. However, the high school graduates disagreed that their classroom experiences met their emotional and social needs. My data showed that 75% of the graduates felt that their teachers did not meet their individual needs and 100% of them felt that the teacher did not have inclusive activities that made them feel important. The data showed that only 50% of the graduates felt that they had an opportunity to have their voice heard in the learning environment. All high school graduates in my study identified their academic success was based on family expectations of completing high school.

I analyzed the rate of disciplinary actions applied to the Black girl. I used extant data from the United States Department of Office of Civil Rights. The data was specifically analyzed to compare how the Black girl experienced disciplinary actions within the learning environment. Girls accounted for 48.6% of school enrollment and of that 8.6% were Black girls. Black girls were the only group across all races and
ethnicities for girls where a disparity was observed. Black girls received in-school suspensions (11.2%) and out-of-school suspensions (13.3%) at rates almost two times their share of total student enrollment of 7.4% (U. S. Education Department, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2017-18 State and National Estimations, released June 2021).

The belief that every child can achieve must involve the use of best educational practices along the voice of staff, students, and community. Learner involvement is achieved by “encouraging students to become personally and collectively responsible as well as by creating appropriate conditions for students so that they are more involved” (Klimas, 2017, p. 25).

In my change leadership plan, I seek to increase the academic achievement, decreasing disciplinary referrals and social/emotional development of the Black girl. My plan requires educators to participate in professional development that will result in culturally relevant instructional practices being used in the classroom. Teacher capacity would be built through professional training and development. To ensure that this plan has consistency and fidelity of services, the teaching staff would have continuous support and training.

Education leaders must be able to recognize the importance of inclusion for the Black girl to accomplish academic success. The plan involves a transformational change that must have a strategy that involves a vision, mission and for the imperatives of daily action to improve student results. Incorporating to make immediate changes requires compliancy from all stakeholders. The changes would make an impactful change in the school district, school community and challenge the culture of thinking.
Leadership Lessons

I created this plan based on the growing challenges that the Black girl faces in American education. I learned that data is vital in increasing improvement through transformational change. Quality education for all children must be accessible, especially for the Black girl. The rates of harsher disciplinary actions and suspensions reflect current practices that do not create engagement and inclusion. I will use this information to create an understanding of how teacher actions and beliefs can be viewed as barriers that Black girls believe are offensive and unfair. The goal of this plan is to help teachers understand that the needs of the Black girl are many times based on other factors that cause specific behaviors to occur. Misconceptions of the Black girl have been characterized as negative stereotypes that many times are just misunderstood.

As a leader, I learned how difficult it is to enact policies, even ones that are written to positively impact students. I learned that I could not assume that everyone would welcome a policy that will make education better for Black girls. There could be people who would feel a policy directed toward one group of students is unfair to others. I learned there could be political and legal ramifications that could delay or make the policy weaker.

I learned all teachers must believe that building a relationship with every student is important. It is especially important that teachers know how to build relationships with especially with students who do not look like them. Teachers must understand that even though the student may not look like them or may come from an environment different from theirs, they can find commonalities that will help them establish their own way to
work with that student. Teachers must understand how their interactions with students determine how the students respond.

I learned how to understand a problem by asking questions that will provide specific data to bring about change. Communicating data through research helped me to understand why the focus of questioning and evaluating results is important to providing feedback and developing effective solutions that create change within organizational systems.

As a leader I have learned that equitable practices begin with my own understanding of the problem and creating intentional solutions that create change. I do this by having the ability to articulate my own vision through example. To become an effective transformational leader, I must understand that my personal voice is secondary to establishing guidance of practice. The vision is reflective of serving others through communication, collaboration, and application. I learned that through communication that the voices serve motivation, collaboration serves relationships and application serves accomplishment. The impact of my leadership is important to making changes that reflect how education serves the community.

Conclusion

American education continues to evolve academically, socially, and politically. The education of all children must be an equitable opportunity to ensure that they will be able to achieve their personal best. The Black girl is no exception that that promise. The effectiveness of American education relies upon recognizing that her identity is based on who she is not what educators perceive her to be.
During this study, my thoughts were challenged on what it means to have a full understanding of self-identity. The Black girl is a multidimensional person who has a unique experience of her own. As a Black woman, I would tell my young Black girl self, "Your voice matters and you are important." The narrative for the Black woman as being angry and aggressive begins with the perception of Black girls being defiant and disrespectful. Our story begins with being silenced as young girls who are supposed to act a certain way. So many of us have heard, girls are to be seen and not heard and or girls should never talk back. The first lessons of social and emotional learning come from family expectations that have traditionally been passed down to secure the passage of womanhood. The first experiences in learning environments are met with these lessons that silence the Black girl in her learning. The matter of not understanding and or knowing what to do and or what to say becomes defiance to the teacher. The actions of teachers are vital to how the Black girl relates in her environment.

I want teachers of Black girls to have an inner sense of understanding the girl power of a Black girl. I want the teachers to know they have the ability to teach the Black girl to her potential and beyond what the Black girl ever thought she could be. I want teachers for Black girls to be as Maya Angelo said “… a rainbow in someone else's cloud."
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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questions for Black Girl High School Graduates

Appendix B: Survey Questions for Teachers of Black Girls

Appendix C: “As Is” 4 C’s Analysis

Appendix D: “To Be” 4 C’s Analysis

Appendix E: Strategies and Action Chart
Appendix A

Survey Questions for Black Girl High School Graduates

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please provide feedback …

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

1. My educational K-12 experience prepared me to be career or college ready.
2. My classroom experiences were culturally/socially relevant to me.
3. My teachers worked to understand my individual needs.
4. My teachers provided inclusive activities that made feel me important.
5. There were opportunities for me to have a voice in my learning environments.
6. I prefer having Black teachers.
7. My Black teachers understood my academic and social needs.
8. My white teachers understood my academic and social needs.
9. My family had strong expectations for me to succeed in school.
10. I received a disciplinary response (not suspension) for my behavior at some time in my K-12 experience.
11. I was suspended at least once during my time K-12 grades.
12. As a student, I questioned the authority of the teacher.

Please provide written responses to questions 13 - 17.

13. If you chose agree or strongly agree for #10 (received a disciplinary response other than suspension) please explain what happened and the response you received.
14. If you chose agree or strongly agree for #11 (you were suspended), please explain.
15. If you chose agree or strongly agree for #12 (you questioned the teacher’s authority), please tell how your teacher responded when you questioned their authority.
16. What do you think teachers could have done to better meet the needs of yourself and other Black girls?
17. Please share anything you else you would like to me to know about how you felt as a Black girl student in American K-12 education.
Appendix B

Survey Questions for Teachers of Black Girls

Demographic Information:
1. Number of years teaching:
2. Grade Level(s) Taught:
3. Sex:
4. Race:

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please provide feedback …

1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

5. I feel confident teaching Black girls.
6. I feel I was provided adequate professional development for meeting the needs of Black girls in my classroom.
7. I feel that my classroom environment supports the Black girls emotional and social needs for her to be successful.
8. I feel it is important to honor a student’s cultural identity.
9. I feel there is a difference in the social emotional needs of Black girls compared to the social emotional needs of white girls.
10. Inclusive activities in my classroom are important to meet the emotional needs of Black girls.
11. I use culturally responsive materials to engage my Black girls in my lessons.
12. I feel that building trust especially with my Black girls helps their academic achievement.
13. I feel confident that my instructional practices meet the needs of the Black girl.
15. I feel the American educational system supports the Black girl in achieving academic success.

Please provide written responses to questions 16 - 21.

16. What do you do in your classroom that positively impacts your Black girl students?
17. How do you feel when a Black girl student challenges your authority in the classroom?
18. After the Black girl challenges your authority, does it change your perception of the student? If so, how?
19. What type of support do you want from your administrators when your authority is challenged?
20. What skills do you think teachers need to have to help Black girls be successful?
21. Please share anything else you would like to me to know about your experiences teaching Black girls in American K-12 education.
Appendix C

“As Is” 4 Cs for Analysis

PROBLEM STATEMENT: American educators do not support the Black girl’s academic or social emotional needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of understanding of social/emotional needs of Black Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of understanding of diversity of home life of Black Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers misunderstand communication from the Black girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of Cultural Relevant instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Learning Environment not inclusive of all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No Academic services support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of experienced teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low expectation of the Black girl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers have poor assumptions of the Black girl’s preparedness to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of voice for the Black girl in the learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Black girls are viewed disrespectful, aggressive, and angry</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Barriers are created by teacher assumptions about the Black girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High discipline referrals for infractions for small behaviors deemed inappropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

“To Be” 4 Cs for Analysis

STATEMENT: American educators will support the Black girl by meeting her needs using effective teaching strategies that include building relationships and culturally responsive instruction.

Competencies

- Teachers will provide culturally responsive instruction
- Teachers will have ongoing professional development targeted to helping the Black girl succeed
- Curriculum design will include peer coaching, mentorship, and community involvement

Conditions

- Teachers will use strategies that support the emotional state of the Black girl
- Black teachers and other qualified staff mirror the cultural identity of the Black Girl

Culture

- Teachers will have a mindset of positive thinking toward the Black girl
- The Black girl will have a voice in the learning environment
- Black girls are viewed as capable of learning and achieving academic success

Context

- Teachers will provide mentorship and coaching
- Teachers will build strong relationships with the Black girl
- Suspension rates decrease to be comparable with her non White Peers
## Appendix E

### Strategies and Action Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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</table>
| Create a sense of urgency.                     | Meet with education leaders in the Federal Department of Education, State Departments of Education, and school superintendents to share:  
  • research on how academic achievement rates are affected by disciplinary actions against the Black girl  
  • the disparity that disruptive behaviors are deemed more problematic when committed by Black students  
  • how the Black girl is subject being labeled as aggressive, defiant, and disrespectful when trying to have her needs met  
  • discipline data from the Office for Civil Rights  
  • the disconnect in the perceptions of teachers and Black girls in my study                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Build a guiding coalition                      | Members of the guiding coalition will include:  
  • state education leaders  
  • district leaders  
  • principals  
  • teachers  
  • Black girl high school graduates  
  • current Black girl high school students                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Form a strategic vision and initiatives       | The vision will:  
  • be reflective of current practices that are successful and  
  • increase additional strategies to engage instructional practices to enhance instructional settings inclusive of the Black girl.  
  • Include a timeframe to help establish professional development and mentor coaching                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Enlist a volunteer army                        | Members include:  
  • educational leaders  
  • mentors  
  • teachers  
  • coaches  
  • parents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Enable actions by removing barriers | Barriers removed:  
- limited teacher knowledge of the needs of the Black girl  
- the lack of culturally responsive materials  
- lack of teachers understanding the social/emotional needs of the Black girl |
| Generate short-term wins | Short term wins include:  
- Disciplinary rates decreasing  
- Teachers using instructional practices leading to positive relationships  
- Increase in academic achievement |
| Sustain acceleration | Acceleration will be achieved by:  
- Keeping focus on long term issues that still need to be addressed  
- Inviting more people to be members of the volunteer army |
| Institute change | Instituting change will happen by:  
- Expanding professional development and preservice instruction for teachers throughout the United States  
- Retaining teachers who are enjoy working with the Black girl and make her successful  
- Building community partnerships |