Academic Bias Towards Minority Women

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by

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I. Academic Inequalities – A Minority Female Stance

"Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future and renders the present inaccessible."

- Maya Angelou

Academic equality between the sexes was commented on in 1792 by feminist advocate Judith Sargent Murray:

"...I dare confidently believe, that from the commencement of time to the present day, there hath been as many females, as males, who, by the mere force of natural powers, have merited the crown of applause; who thus unassisted, have seized the wreath of fame. I know there are those who assert, that as the animal powers of the one sex are superior, of course their mental faculties also must be stronger...but there are many robust masculine ladies, and effeminate gentlemen...[It is] for equality only, we wish to contend."²

Women have been disputing their treatment in the academic arena for centuries; where they have been forced to play on the sidelines and idly watch their male counterparts excel in the world of academia and then go on to lead satisfying lives – Lives that exist outside of the home. Lives full of meaning. Lives where your options are endless. Lives that can lead you anywhere. This has been the dismal truth and reality that many women have faced in the American educational system – not necessarily lagging behind male students, but treated as if they do.

Now, let’s take this a step further and look specifically at the treatment of minority female students’ scholastic achievements. Why are their test scores significantly lower than Caucasian female students and, even, minority male students?³ What are the hidden causes behind these discrepancies in academic scores that paint an ugly picture of African American and Hispanic female student’s ability
to attain high scores in school? How do we begin to reverse the effects of this
existing stereotype so that female students, of all races, can emerge from our nation’s
schools as strong, thoughtful leaders?

There has been a long standing theory hovering over the education of female
students in America: A kind of “blame-the-victim” rhetoric has emerged to explain
the failings and shortcomings of women students. Educators and students alike, all
players on the educational field, have been force-fed the ideas that consistent failure
of girls in school was the result of their own scholastic choices and misdirection.\(^4\)
This approach to education naturally plays into two academic misconceptions: the
first is that there is a genetic difference between men and women, which would
account for the differences between the gender achievements and second, that there is
a natural discrepancy between men and women when it comes to scholastic interest –
women leaning towards Humanities classes and men leaning the opposite way,
towards more concrete, mathematical thinking.\(^5\) This notion has lead to yet another
issue in education – the lack of women who seek out careers in math and science
fields.\(^6\)

There are several arguments surrounding the lack of success and increasing
number of failures in school for minority female students, especially those who are in
an urban educational setting. Issues such as: social life, academic “self-
handicapping,”\(^7\) the educational environment, biased tests and textbooks, and the
“hidden curriculum.”\(^8\) These issues have made academic success for minority women
increasingly difficult in a very sexist and sometimes, slightly racist, atmosphere. We
will delve deeper into this subject to discover what attention has been paid to and
what progress has been made, in regards, to the issue at hand: uncovering the hidden truths behind academic bias towards minority female students.

Before we begin to examine specific reasons why minority girls are falling far behind their peers in school, we must first look at why this is not a central issue concerning our schools today – it is extremely important and all parents, teachers and administrators should want to be fully aware of the circumstances that plague these girls in school. Nicola Rollock investigates why less attention is paid to the academic success of African American women in school – why are they seemingly invisible? She writes:

"[Black girls] are able to be positioned as less a cause for concern compared with their male counterparts, which, at least partially, explains why black girls are rarely featured in the discussions of school staff...[also] they do not pose the same level of threat." 

Is this the case? Do educators unintentionally neglect and disregard minority female students simply on the basis that they do not require as much attention, either academically or behaviorally, in school as their male peers? In order to keep these girls interested in school we need to make sure that they do not feel slighted in any way. The issue that schools must focus on revolves around how to adequately address the behavior and success rates of all students and not just focus on the ones who are visible on a daily basis for any number of reasons. According to urban teachers, there is an exclusive focus on black male pupils. If teachers and administrators are devoted wholly to the betterment of the African American male student population, it is only fair to assume that this will negatively affect the academic success of African American female students.
In order to fully understand the treatment and expectations of minority girls in school, it is essential that we start at the beginning – looking at early elementary school achievement levels, social predispositions, and academic “self-handicapping.” When we take a closer look at the behaviors that are rewarded and punished at the foundation-levels in school, it is evident that these “early differences in the treatment of girls and boys can result in enduring learning patterns.”

According to Title IX, sex discrimination in school is illegal – but herein lays the problem. Between 1972 and 1991, there were no schools in the U.S. who lost funding because they were found guilty of not upholding Title IX. This means that not one single school in the United States was cited for treating its students differently based on sex for roughly twenty years. Sex discrimination is taking place covertly in America’s schools, hidden from the public’s watchful eye. Studies have shown that early in education, female students are equal to or outperform their male peers in the classroom – in 2006 44.3% of African American boys were achieving more A’s than C’s on report cards and 56.1% of African American girls were achieving more A’s. Something happens to their self-esteem by the time these girls reach graduation, where it is obvious that they have fallen far behind others. It seems to be that female students are rewarded by teachers and other adults for conformity to classroom rules and, therefore, need less monitoring and reminders – this obedience, or willingness to comply with school rules, has greatly contributed to the invisibility of minority girls within the classroom.

A comparison was made of elementary African American girl students to African American boy students – this comparison would have one thinking that there
was no discrepancy at all in academic achievement and that, on the contrary, minority females were actually doing quite well.\textsuperscript{15} This skewed comparison casts the illusion that African-American girls are succeeding, when in reality they still fall far behind white female students. Some of the reasons behind these shortcomings are social factors – abuse, teen pregnancy and low self-esteem. This is a harsh reality that many of our nation’s students are forced to face which, no doubt, makes academic achievement a much more difficult and turbulent task. According to \textit{Failing at Fairness}, by Myra and David Sadker, a staggering 42\% of black girls report sexual abuse by the sixth grade – of this percentage, one-third of those girls claimed they were too distraught afterwards to talk in class or even attend school.\textsuperscript{16} If an estimated 40\% of all African American girls are reporting sexual abuse by the average age of 11 and 12, it is not surprising that this is when their grades begin to dip.

Another topic of the upmost importance in regards to the social reality minority girls must face, deals with teenage pregnancy. Black and Hispanic teen pregnancy rates far exceed white teen pregnancy rates – almost double for the same age group. According to Myra and David Sadker, who have studied sexism in America’s schools for their entire professional careers, “63\% of teenage black girls will become pregnant and one in ten Latino girls, age 15-19, will become pregnant.”\textsuperscript{17} After looking at figures like this, the academic future of many minority girls appears to be bleak, to say the very least. In a subculture where becoming a young, teenage mother in no longer an exception and is now considered the norm – how do we begin to break the cycle?
Academic progress is not a triumph that is always rewarded in African American communities. Education, within black communities, serves as a dividing force: “Anti-intellectualism in Black communities is a weapon used in class warfare.” This is the common struggle between the Have’s and the Have-Not’s, or the educated versus the uneducated. If you are a young African-American female, you are faced with a rather large dilemma – you are stuck between those who cannot move forward because they are not educated and those who are educated, striving to be part of the upper class, but are viewed as traitors.

It seems to be that black and Latino girls have quite a few social obstacles working against them – but yet another hurdle that stands in their way is something scholars have coined as “academic self-handicapping,” which can best be understood as creating fictitious barriers to impede one’s success in school. According to British psychologists, self-handicapping involves the creation of obstacles that directly hinders one’s own academic success. The question now is – why would a student want to fail on purpose? For many students, minorities included, it is simple; the creation of obstacles allows a student to shed any sense of responsibility for their failures. Also, self-handicapping, by casting off all responsibility for one’s actions, allows students to protect their fragile self-esteem. We have already spoken of the drop in the self-esteem of black female students by the time they reach graduation – this is just another way that they are attempting to protect their sense of self-worth. By doing this, they are harming themselves because they are only creating more problems to overcome and setting the stage for their own academic regression.
II. Bias – Textbooks, Curriculum, Learning Environment, and Technology

"Education helps one cease being intimidated by strange situations."

- Maya Angelou

Aside from obstacles created by the students themselves, there are also problems that remain out of their control – for example, the environment in which they learn and the tools that are used to educate them. In the school environment, what is deemed as an acceptable role for a male student and an acceptable role for a female student? Teachers, perhaps unknowingly, reinforce these suitable behaviors for boys and girls and model what a good learning environment should look like. It has been documented that black boys are much more assertive than black girls in their classroom mannerisms. The problem revolves around how to create a much more gender-neutral classroom environment, for all races. Educators have decided that it would be good if female students would "behave less traditionally and develop male-interaction patterns." On the other hand, it would be bad to "change boy’s behaviors and interaction patterns." We want girls to behave more like boys, but we want boys to remain absolutely the same – Why can’t educators encourage girls to excel in the classroom in their own ways, not mold themselves after the opposite sex? The goal for educators should be to create a learning environment where girls are valued as much as boys and they are encouraged to use their own skills to solve problems.

One way, which is being researched, to attain a gender-neutral environment focuses on the activities within the classroom that young boys and girls like to do. The study revealed that boys and girls like to do the same activities, when they are
asked individually. In front of their peers, however, students will choose activities with obvious gender stereotypes. This discrepancy demonstrates the idea that activities within the classroom are not necessarily gender-stereotyped; which is why the success rate of black girls exceeds that of black boys in elementary school. At what point, specifically, do expectations begin to change for minority females?

Learning environment and social issues aside, there are several other factors that remain out of the student’s control that impede minority female academic success. The types of textbooks that teacher’s choose to use are not always the most gender or race-conscious books that could be utilized within the classroom. According to women’s studies textbooks, it would greatly benefit your girls if they were presented with historical female role models. Lack of women in historical texts, according to Katherine Goketepe, just proves that “it is in fact true that history, like everything else, has developed in male-dominated institutions.” As educators, we need to re-focus the curriculum to incorporate the varied experiences of women throughout history. Not only do we need to look closer at women, specifically minority women, in Social Studies textbooks, we also need to examine what role, if any, minority women play in all textbooks across the many curriculums. This is an area where the availability of resources was lacking – for this there will need to be some investigation that takes place to locate existing bias, not only in history texts, but in the texts that are used across the different content areas and across grade levels.

Although there are many educators who are aware of obvious textbook bias, this skewed view can only be deemed as acceptable because it appears to fit, or align nicely, with the state mandated curriculum for a specific grade level and a specific
subject area. As we progress throughout grade levels we move from a very simplistic, exaggerated version of women's roles – pictures that subtly mock women heroes, like women nurses and male doctors, to hidden sexism – why are patents in the United States, for the most part, in the 19th and 20th centuries all registered to men? This was a time in American history when it was assumed that women could not think for themselves, let alone invent a product and then go on to issue a patent. By not addressing these types of sexist subtleties in classrooms, educators are leaving out how a combination of sexism and racism has denied rights to groups of people throughout history.

As we move into the high school years, the curriculum has only slightly broadened to include women. Although progress has been made to make sure women are not excluded from any courses in school, there are still problems that exist – it is mostly men who fill the slots on the classroom roster for advanced math and science courses. A math teacher from Ohio remembers what it was like when girls were streamlined into specific courses. She writes:

“In 1962...I wanted to sign up for physics, but the principal would not allow it. His comment was that a girl had no need for physics...there was only one girl in my high school graduating class who took physics. Her father had interceded.”

Today, it is illegal to keep girls from registering for courses based on their sex, but generations of women were not so lucky. This stigma, though, is still prevalent today when we sit in post-secondary math and science classrooms and look out upon a sea of men.

These ingrained beliefs only serve to preserve the unequal treatment of female students in schools across America. One problem is the state-mandated curriculum,
which overemphasizes men and their contributions and something that has been
termed the “hidden curriculum.”\textsuperscript{33} The hidden curriculum encompasses the
subliminal lessons that children learn day to day in the classroom. These lessons can
present themselves in any number of ways: through teacher feedback, through
behaviorisms, such as inadvertently calling on boys first or asking boys to go to the
board more often, any classroom segregation (are boys given preferential treatment,
such as seating) and any instructional materials that are being used in class.\textsuperscript{34}
Although a teacher in a public school cannot necessarily pick and choose what events
and/or people they will or will not teach in their curriculum, it is a teacher’s job to
supplement the state curriculum with material that includes minorities and females.
This hidden curriculum can be far more dangerous to students – it is the mannerisms,
the habits of teachers and adults, which truly demonstrate to students any sexism or
racism that exists in today’s classrooms – sexism and racism together are a dangerous
combination to find in any atmosphere.

During high school, many teachers and parents have attributed what courses
girls choose or choose not to take to something known as their “option-choices.” In
high school, girl’s option-choice patterns are narrowed down to: factors outside of
school control and factors within school control.\textsuperscript{35} Factors that existed outside of the
schools control deal with family and peer pressure and early childhood socialization.
The factors that were considered within the school’s control center on teacher
attitudes and curriculum content.\textsuperscript{36} One of the problems in school is that, although
girls want to be treated as equals in the academic arena, they still make sex-
stereotyped decisions about what courses to pursue in school. If girls are still making
sex-stereotyped decisions about their education, how does an educator go about convincing minority female students that they can achieve more? That they should not be held down by any pre-existing stereotype of what they can and cannot do with their lives?

Everyday in schools across the nation, girls are faced with sexist discrimination in three specific ways: teacher instruction, appropriate social interaction between the student and teacher and, finally, discrimination that is hidden within the curriculum and found in the materials used within the classroom on a daily basis. Once we set aside the existing stereotypes within the classroom, it is critical that we take a closer look at the specific classes where these stereotypes occur—which leads to discrepancies in test scores and academic achievement levels.

One area of school where bias has been found to dwell is centered on technology use in the classroom. Karyn M. Plumm, who is part of the Department of Psychology at the University of North Dakota, writes:

"Technology in the classroom emerged as an issue for both teachers and students in the 1980’s... Teachers may be using technology in differing amounts based on their own gender and may hold similar expectations for their students." She goes on to write: "Students may have a socially constructed idea of what technology is...and who should be using it. If students are only being taught computer skills by male teachers, [they may] be learning that boys and men are not only better at this type of skill, but that they should be interested in it more than girls and women are."

This form of bias is presented to female students subliminally in the classroom. This supports the idea that females are seemingly driven into Humanities subjects, as discussed earlier in this chapter. It was difficult to uncover any information or studies that had been done on minority girls in school and their abilities to successfully use technology in the classroom. It can only be assumed that minority girls receive the
same bias, perhaps even at a magnified level, in school when it comes to technology use.

It has been documented that girls trail behind boys in science and math classes across the nation. Achievement for the SAT math score consistently reports that male high school seniors outperform female seniors on the standardized test.\textsuperscript{39} The differences in these scores have been accredited to differences in social conditioning between boys and girls and differences in environmental factors.\textsuperscript{40} Some of the differences in social conditioning between the two sexes have already been mentioned – girls are expected to conform to classroom rules and boys are expected to be rambunctious.\textsuperscript{41} Again, it has been proven that early gender socialization has profound effects on the achievement levels of girls in the classroom.

U.S. Psychologists have coined the phrase, \textit{Stereotype Threat}, to explain the gender differences in math scores. According to this widely-accepted belief: [The] "superiority of one group of individuals over another in mathematics creates a threat that directly hampers the performance of individuals in the targeted group."\textsuperscript{42} For example, male test scores consistently outperform women’s test scores in the field of mathematics. Due to this known discrepancy that exists between test scores, women tend to do worse on performance indicators in math class. This ideology cannot always be replicated in trial studies. Therefore; the idea of the existence of \textit{Stereotype Threat}, does not always hold up under scientific scrutiny.

Yet another area where gender bias has been documented, which exists outside of the core curriculum, is in foreign language classes. In foreign language textbooks, bias is accounted for in three main senses: “female exclusion,
subordination and distortion and, lastly, degradation." 43 There is a disagreement that resides among foreign language teachers that textbooks should reflect society as it actually is and, on the other hand, teachers who believe that textbooks should represent a more broad-minded world than the one that actually exists." 44 Will the readers of these foreign language textbooks really take these traditional female roles to heart? Some argue that gender bias in a text cannot make people think in a gender-biased manner. 45 In other words, a bias-free textbook does not equal a bias-free classroom. 46

Although gender bias is an issue within middle school and high school language courses, how much of a problem is it actually? Do the biases that affect white women also affect black women? Many minority girls have been categorized as ESOL students, or English Students of Other Languages. Would these girls still interpret the text and any racist or sexist representations the same way native speakers do? There is very little current information that centered on different interpretations of foreign language textbooks between majority and minority females.

If there is gender bias that exists within the classroom, it is also important that test bias, in regards to gender, is looked at, too. Test bias is best understood as a hindrance on a test, due to phrasing, background knowledge, etc., that prevents a specific group from answering the question correctly. In order to detect any test biased items we must use data to locate any differences between two groups and determine that a specific test item is more difficult for one group than another. Educators can then claim an item to be biased if it is proven that the question was more difficult for one group than another. 47
Now that we have identified what test bias is, we also must look at what it is not. According to Camilli and Shepard, test bias investigation will help to figure out real from artificial bias. Real bias is when a test item is proven to be more difficult for one group. Artificial bias is the realization that the test itself is not biased; it is the outside factors that should be held accountable. For example, women score lower on the math portion of the SAT, but women take fewer math courses in high school. This problem would not be a validity issue with the test, but with the structure and social make-up of high school math classes themselves.48

Psychologists have also used the notion of Stereotype Threat to describe the sometimes negative test performance of minorities and females. Stereotype Threat, or ST, has a negative effect on stigmatized groups (minority females) and no effect on non-stigmatized groups (Caucasian males).49 The reason why the negative effect of ST is placed on minority females is because they are aware of the high academic scores that non-stigmatized groups, Caucasian males in this case, are achieving. The individual abilities of minority women cannot be measured accurately or validly through teacher-made exams or state exams because of the negative impact of Stereotype Threat on this group.
III. Inequalities – Awareness and Correction

"Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends."

- Maya Angelou

We have recognized the various gender problems that occur within the school – now it is time to seek out awareness for the issue. Although many educators are making progressive moves forward in schools to ensure that blatant bias does not occur, it still continues to remain on a subtle level. "Psychologists tell us that at an early age we develop a set of largely unconscious hypotheses about sex differences, called gender schema." This way of thinking leads teachers to have different expectations for male and female students within their classrooms. Different expectations lead to biases surrounding sex and race. As educators, we need to erase the disadvantages that are already set in motion by gender schema. One way to promote gender-balanced education in school is to address linguistic bias, or the everyday language that is used in the classroom. For example, the phrase humanity instead of mankind, or guard instead of watchman. Being knowledgeable about gender schema, will help to alleviate some of the biased terminology that allows bias to persist in our classrooms.

Many teachers receive no training on how to deal with gender bias in the classroom during their student teaching experience. Therefore; it would be very helpful if teachers could take part in trainings throughout the school year via professional development that addresses how to adapt and develop materials for
culturally diverse learners that specifically deal with bias.\textsuperscript{53} During these professional development opportunities, teachers would be able to share ideas about how to create a non-biased classroom and how to deal with the issue when it arises. The language used in class and the types of interactions with students is the first step towards alleviating classroom bias.

In order to truly achieve equality, traditional school curriculums will need to be revamped to include the accolades of women and minorities.\textsuperscript{54} If this is the solution that schools need to undergo, it will take much more than gender-conscious textbooks to change the way we think. Educators will need to completely overhaul and restructure the state standards that our curriculum is aligned with. An upheaval of the state standards is not necessarily a bad thing, but it will definitely take some time. Until then, teachers will need to continuously reinforce the curriculum with outside materials that introduce the contributions of both minorities and females.

There are specific strategies that a teacher can use to encourage a more gender and race-neutral schooling environment. Some of the ideas that teachers can use are: self-assessment – or checking to make sure that a teacher doesn’t inadvertently favor one sex (also known as the hidden curriculum). Teachers need to be mindful of the ways they give feedback to students to ensure that their expectations are clear and fair for all. Teachers need to also be aware of any gender or race segregation taking place in the classroom. For example, if he or she may unknowingly be pitting boys against girls. Educators must also carefully select classroom literature and, perhaps, encourage students to examine materials and find their own roots of bias.\textsuperscript{55}
Yet another option that is being contemplated, is single-sex classrooms — where gender bias, is thought, to be eliminated all together, in regards to any preferential treatment towards one specific sex. The mentality is that single-sex classrooms will allow girls to thrive in an environment where they are not afraid to speak out or break free of pre-existing stereotypes. The benefits of single-sex schooling, though, have not been proven or stood up under closer examination in countries where single-sex schooling is the norm. For example, in countries who utilize this type of educational environment there is not a consistently higher female progression rate versus retention rate and, secondly, these countries do not have higher enrollments in the number of girls taking nontraditional courses (math and science). There are other arguments against gender-separate instruction. First, researchers believe that a majority-female classroom, which was “supposedly more nurturing for girls...would water down the curriculum.” After all is said and done — why bother with single-sex education if there are no known benefits?

Although there is a renewed stress given to female and minority education — how has this impacted the majority white male population? Starting in the mid-1990’s, the focus has been on the quality of female education:

"An overemphasis on serving girls may be having a serious impact on the education of boys...The feminist movement has left boys struggling to ‘determine their identity as men, as students, and as participants in history.’" Has our struggle to bring to light the contributions of women throughout history and the battle for equity that rages on everyday across America’s classrooms really had an adverse affect on male students? This is an issue that many educators are dealing
with today. Have our schools been feminized to the point that boys are beginning to regress?

Some researchers and educators do show resistance towards gender equality. Some believe that there is very little the school can do to achieve a gender-neutral classroom when there is other, sometimes more powerful, factors at work: gender socialization, differences in development, cultural backgrounds. Also, some teachers seemed to believe that it was the girls themselves who are responsible for the gender divisions occurring in school. How are women and minorities supposed to move forward if the very people that are supposed to be helping them, teachers specifically, actually have little faith in what these girls are capable of achieving?

There are several factors that impede minority female success within the classroom – but what factors lead to the success of urban African American youth? By the time adolescents get to the ninth grade, minority students attribute their success to one main factor: social support from their classmates, parents, teachers, close friends and school administrators. Student’s who have these social support systems, have better grades and a better record of behavior. Along with this social support system, a conscious effort to minimize gender bias within the classroom, will greatly allow women, minorities included, to succeed in education.

The purpose of this study is to uncover areas of academic bias, specifically in regards to African American women in the classroom. There are some areas where very little research has been done surrounding minority females academic success; these gaps have been compensated with information about how these issues plague women in general. It is the researchers understanding that if an issue or circumstance
within education affects white female students negatively, the same affect would most likely be multiplied for minority female students. After completing this research, there is much information that will need to be uncovered through field tests and educational experiences with minority students. This research is of the upmost importance in today’s schools, as the number of minority children in America’s schools continues to grow. In 2003, it was reported that minority children consist of roughly 40% of the total number of students attending school in this country. In large urban environments, however; minority students make up over 70% of the population. Through this research, educators will be able to better understand how to support minority females in the classroom.
NOTES

32 Myra and David Sadker, Failing at Fairness: How America’s Schools Cheat Girls (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1994) 120-121.
33 Frawley, Timothy, "Gender Bias in the Classroom: Current Controversies and Implications for Teachers." Childhood Education 81.4 (2003): 221-227
34 Frawley, Timothy, "Gender Bias in the Classroom: Current Controversies and Implications for Teachers." Childhood Education 81.4 (2003): 221-227.
I. Some things need to change!

"You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise."

-Maya Angelou, “Still I Rise” (1978)

Mohandas K. Gandhi, a non-violent spiritual and political leader in India, once said: “We need to be the change we want to see happen. We are the leaders we have been waiting for.” The education of women in this county, especially minority women, has become the stigma, the blemish if you will, on the face of the American education system. As a nation, we have the ability to fix our wrongs and undo the bias educational setting that we have mistakenly (or maybe intentionally) created. After all, we, as Americans, should have nothing to fear over the idea that, by correcting what we have done, we will be empowering minority women and giving them an equal opportunity within the学术 arena.

If we want to see a change in the culture of American education, like Gandhi previously stated, we need to start with ourselves – perhaps by opening up a dialogue within our classrooms about racism and sexism, perhaps through other means. We cannot heal these wounds without, first, addressing the issues surrounding academic bias. Each individual has his or her own Sphere of Influence, or an area in life that we directly control; how, or if, we choose to make a difference in that area is up to us. Helping students to understand their racial and gender identities will help them to become informed students who can become proactive advocates in their own
education. Americans have come a long way since the days of the one-room school house where a teacher could look out over their classroom and soundly rest their eyes on a classroom full of white children. Gone are those days – and good riddance! Today is a new day in American education – We need to embrace it and move forward towards a more racial and gender conscious atmosphere in which our children can attend school and face no bias or intolerance.

In order to take a step in the right direction, it is important to know what obstacles have already been overcome and what still stands in our way. For the purpose of this thesis, the struggles encircling minority education will be traced back to the era of desegregation in the United States – beginning in Little Rock, Arkansas. The integration that happened in 1957 at Central High in Arkansas paved the way for schools across America. Once assimilation among black and white students occurred, a new, subtle bias began to take shape – these new dispositions left African American girls at the bottom; maybe left is not the right choice of words, kept might actually work better. The new attitudes that surfaced in the 1950’s, kept African American female students behind their white peers and, in doing so, has left them at the bottom of the scholastic pool. Today, over 50 years later, we are still conflicted with racial and gender bias within our schools.

We can credit tests, and textbooks and the “hidden curriculum” as being the cause of this academic gap that is occurring in our schools. We can address peer pressure, low self-esteem, academic “self-handicapping,” and teen pregnancy as the culprits behind this injustice. But wait there’s more – we can’t forget socio-economic status, and not being perceived as a “threat” by school officials, if that can actually
have a negative consequence towards young girls. There’s bigotry in race-lingo, sex-lingo and every other kind of jargon that’s spoken within our society. When looking at the grand scheme of things, that’s a lot to have on one’s plate. There are a dozen different reasons why this problem exists. How on earth are educators, teaching at Ground-Zero, supposed to tackle this issue in their own classrooms?

II. Black Identity Development

"It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me."

-Maya Angelou, "Phenomenal Woman, (1978)"

We must, again, revisit Gandhi, forcing ourselves, first, to set an example of the changes we believe must take place. In order to be the change, first we need to educate ourselves as to what is out there. What have others done in this field of study and what conclusions have their findings lead them to? Beverly Daniel Tatum, PH.D., the President of Spelman College, has spent her life researching and studying black children’s racial identity development. As a psychologist and educator, she investigates race relations in our nation’s schools. Because of her work with racism, both cultural and institutional, I have chosen to review the findings in two of her books: Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? and Can We Talk About Race?

One’s own personal identity, who you believe you are and what you truly believe you are capable of achieving, is shaped by the world that surrounds you.
There is no simple answer to the question: “Who am I?” This question gives you the impression that who you are can be broken down into a very straightforward response. “The answer depends in large part on who the world around me says I am. How am I represented in the cultural images around me? Or am I missing from the picture altogether?” According to Beverly Tatum, “identity,” is a very complicated matter, delving deep into topics, such as: the make-up of your family, history and various social contexts. All of these topics plague minority women, especially invisibility. Historical factors work against African American women twofold – first they face prejudice, to some degree, for being black and second, they encounter unfairness for being female. Tatum, through her efforts as a psychologist, has attempted to confront the issues of African American identity, which has been, and continues to be, shaped, by a number of outside issues. Tatum has been researching and testing her thesis for the better part of twenty years – trying to understand racial identity development.

The first chapter of Tatum’s outspoken book, Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? begins with a catchy title that sparks your interest: “Defining Racism: Can we talk?” The book begins in a very straight-forward manner, by correcting misinformation that has circulated about racism and racist terms. By doing this, Tatum presents her case that social and racial segregation, in our lives, still exists. Misinformation is presented to us in a variety of ways on a daily basis, through means that seem innocent enough, such as cartoons that poke fun at racial stereotypes, to levels that reach money lending by nationally well-known American banks. However racism comes across your daily path, blatant or not, these
preconceived notions and assumptions about minorities have gone on largely unchallenged in our nation, an enduring legacy of Jim Crow-thinking in our country.

The first racially-charged term that Tatum defines is prejudice, which can be explained as a “preconceived judgment or opinion, usually based on limited information...an inescapable consequence of living in a racist society.” These prejudices occur in our thinking, probably not because we specifically want to be racist, but because this is something that we have been exposed to throughout our lives. For example, children develop an early understanding of Native Americans based on the skewed images portrayed in Disney’s Peter Pan, a classic children’s movie. It is here, through an innocent childhood film, which has become a staple in American youth culture, where racist and biased assumptions about a minority culture are planted. As stated before, these beliefs, about the ways in which minority cultures dress or talk or the foods that they eat, continue to flood our culture, relatively free of objection.

_Cultural racism_ and _internalized oppression_, two terms which explain how and why racist ideologies take shape, are the next two words that Tatum chooses to define. _Cultural racism_ focuses on the _presumed_ superiority of whites – any cultural images that confirms the inferiority of blacks and other minorities in relation to whites. What attention do the media pay to minorities? And the attention they do give them is it one-sided? For example, as you watch the nightly news, the television is flooded with images of minorities as criminals. If these are the images that Americans are presented with on a regular basis, it should come as no shock that American youth are absorbing these beliefs and that racial bias is playing out in
schools across America – schools, to a certain extent, act as a microcosm, imitating the culture in which they exist. Cultural racism leads to *internalized oppression*, or “believing the distorted messages about one’s own group.” This cyclical pattern of racism appears to be unstoppable, as if it has a mind of its own. The negative images that are presented within our culture, through whatever form, constantly barrage minorities until a point is reached when they begin to believe these false pictures themselves. This is what has happened to black women, among other minorities, that has caused them to fall off of the so-called educational radar screen and disappear into obscurity. Tatum comments on the cause behind the relative invisibility of women: “Survival sometimes means not responding to oppressive behavior directly.” This statement leads readers to believe that because women tend not to be as aggressive or as out-spoken as men when it comes to their education, this has resulted in the acceptance of female students existing at the bottom of the academic pool.

A child’s identity development begins at a young age, during the preschool years. “Is your skin brown because you drink too much chocolate milk?” This comment was an attempt by a white classmate of the author’s son, to try to make sense of his dark skin color. Preschool children, Tatum notes, are very focused on outward appearances. If young children are going to comment on features, skin color is the most prevalent and obvious. The chocolate milk theory was an attempt by a three year old to make sense of a noticeable physical difference. Questions, like the one stated above, are evidence that, even at a young age, children have already learned that to be white is accepted and normal, and to have any other skin color is to
be looked at as “different.” It is during this preschool phase, that children learn that it is impolite to comment on another child’s race. Tatum claims that there is nothing wrong with describing someone by the color of his or her skin. For example, if you are pointing out the only African American girl in a crowd, it is not rude to describe the child by the color of his or her skin. Many White parents want their children to be “colorblind,” where they don’t ask questions about race, but when they are silenced time and time again, their questions don’t go away, they just learn that it is frowned upon to talk about race. It is early on in these classrooms or in these parent-child conversations that children learn to believe that one race is better than the other and that they had better not talk about or comment on race in public. This starts the discovery and understanding of one’s own racial and gender identity development. The ideas that begin here, can pave the way for bigoted thinking later on in life.

As we continue to move through school, racial identity development changes from preschool to adolescence. Tatum notes that racial clustering’s, within the cafeteria, begin to develop around the sixth and seventh grades — she credits this with the onset of puberty. During this time, African American children begin to ask themselves “Who am I?” This, in turn, leads to thoughts about “What does it mean to be black?” More so than white children, black children struggle with racial identity in their teens. According to Tatum, this is a result of messages they receive from the people around them. During adolescence, the racist and sexist messages that students are bombarded with greatly increase. This is why black children think of themselves in terms of their race; these are the signals that they receive from the rest of the world — you are black first, which is not good, and a child second. This
realization has a profound effect on children – often leaving most black children to value the lifestyles of the dominant culture and to devalue their own culture.

For teenage black girls, identity development, attempting to find out who you are as an individual and who you are as a member of society, can be met with some very disheartening answers. The images that are presented to the outside world involve someone who is a high school drop-out, a young unwed teenage mother, perhaps battling a drug addiction and AIDS or someone who suffers from domestic violence. It must be difficult for these girls to resist the stereotypes that are believed about them and not feel underrated as an individual. Tatum contends that for many minority girls who live in majority white communities, they do not become aware of these biases until right around the time of puberty. It is when these young girls begin to take an interest in boys and start to date, usually finding the dating pool nearly empty, that they begin to understand how the world views them. Tatum quotes social scientists Bonnie Ross Leadbeater and Niobe Way, as they counter the typical beliefs surrounding minority women: "...Yet, despite the risks inherent in economic disadvantage, the majority of poor urban adolescent girls do not fit the stereotypes that are made about them." This is the reality that many minority young girls must face – an untrue stereotype that chips away at their self-worth.

Tatum speaks about what it is like to have multiple identities, for example, belonging to a minority group and being female. People in these categories, face even greater forms of oppression, associated with racism, sexism and anti-Semitism. The African American woman is trapped in an identity that the majority culture has created for her. "Dominant groups," Tatum writes, "by definition set the parameters
within which the subordinates operate.\textsuperscript{15} It is not the members of the groups themselves that create and formulate their own identity; it is those around the minority individual that shapes these presumptions. For example, throughout history, whites have been seen as more intelligent than blacks, due in large part to the creation of and the widespread use of the Binet-Simon Intelligence Test. This test, developed at the turn of the Twentieth-Century, favored a Eurocentric model of education.\textsuperscript{16}

The majority group claims that the inferior group is incapable or unable to perform a task; these ideas and beliefs are passed down through generations and they are internalized until the targeted group finds it nearly impossible to escape these presumptions or have any confidence in their own abilities. This is evident today in the scholastic interests of women in schools across America. Young women have been force fed the beliefs that they are inferior in math skills and, therefore; they have been streamlined into humanities-based careers.\textsuperscript{17} This is an example of how people with multiple identities have been exploited to the point of internalized oppression.

It is at this point in a black child’s life, where we can see a shift in behaviorisms. Instead of a need to be accepted by the dominant culture, we see a need to be \textit{understood}, which most often is by peers who belong to the same racial group. This is where we begin to ask ourselves: \textit{“Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?”} Each student has a need to be accepted and have their thoughts and perspectives understood. Minority students rely on other students who share similar histories to provide support. This leads to the creation of what has been termed, an \textit{“oppositional identity.”}\textsuperscript{18} This new adversarial approach helps young black students to protect their fragile identity from racism. This distinct identity,
leads minority teens to emphasize certain forms of speech, dress and music that do not belong to white America – after all, to “act white is negatively sanctioned” [within the African American community]. So what is “Blackness”? Those who fall into this category follow specific styles of dialect, clothing, and listen to certain genres of music and only participate in certain extracurricular activities. What is important in adolescent development is security – Feeling secure in school, with your peers and with your teachers and feeling secure about your race, your identity and who you are becoming. If your teenage years are spent grappling over who you are, your adult years are, to some extent, a continuation of that process.

The black tables in the middle school and high school cafeterias across America, also make an appearance in the adult business world. Even in the workplace, black adults will still cluster together at the cafeteria tables, maybe because they seek a sense of belonging or maybe, it is an instinct that they have carried with them since the need for that first all-black table in their middle school cafeteria. The continuation of this phenomenon supports the ideology that people, throughout their lives, need a support-system which is often times found in those of the same race. Racial identity development follows us throughout our lives and greatly affects the relationships we form and how we view ourselves in relation to the outside world.

In her epilogue, Beverly Daniel Tatum quotes W.E.B. DuBois’ classic text, “The Soul’s of Black Folk” – “The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.” Although this statement was made in 1903, one hundred and seven years ago, there is an unfortunate truth that remains present in today’s world. The “color line” that DuBois spoke of, has morphed into the gender/color line for
African American women in the United States. How, then, do we tackle this color line that is dividing American culture? How do we attempt to undo what has been done, for so many years? A decade after her first groundbreaking book, Tatum is still trying to address the racial forces that are segregating children in schools all across America.

In Beverly Daniel Tatum’s second book, Can We Talk About Race? And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation, she stirs discussions surrounding issues, such as: the resegregation of our schools, how school curricula needs to be developed to include all cultures, the challenges faced by cross-racial friendships, and biased standardized testing. Tatum was born in 1954, just a few months after the historic promise of Brown V. Board of Education, which prohibited the “separate but equal” facilities for blacks and whites. “Separate but equal” made it legal for states to provide higher quality schools for white students, train teachers who taught in white school districts better and offer smaller class sizes to those white teachers. Although the Brown Supreme Court decision was meant to end school segregation once and for all, both state and federal courts quietly worked to weaken and corrode this court ordered desegregation throughout America.

Tatum’s book is broken down into four essays, the first of which is entitled: “The Resegregation of Our Schools and the Affirmation of Identity.” Within the first year of the Brown ruling, the Supreme Court undermined its own decision by instructing all lower federal courts to comply with separate but equal practices with “all deliberate speed.” This can be interpreted as at your own speed, or SLOW. In yet another Supreme Court case, Milliken V. Bradley, 1974, the court began to
overturn some of its previous rulings surrounding the desegregation of the nation’s schools. In this decision, the Richard Nixon-appointed Supreme Court stopped all busing that crossed districts unless it could be proven that there, indeed, existed racial discrepancies between those two school districts. In the Oklahoma City School District a “dual” educational system existed – one for blacks and one for whites, but in 1963 this was ordered unconstitutional. Oklahoma then decided on a “neighborhood zoning plan,” which turned out to be largely ineffective because real estate was racially segregated by state law. Because this desegregation plan was largely unsuccessful, a busing system was then put in place that would help to achieve racial balance (or so they thought). In 1985, the state returned to the neighborhood zoning practices, which was again overturned in 1989. The fickle and tumultuous past of federal and state sanctioned desegregation, which is evidenced by the Oklahoma City School District, proves the unpredictable nature of our nation when it comes to race relations.

Although segregation has been legally outlawed, housing patterns across America would prove an alternative story actually exists. According to the 2004 U.S. Census:

"...Approximately 67.4 percent of the [U.S. population] are non-Hispanic White, 14 percent are Hispanic, 12.8 percent are Black, 4.2 percent are Asian American, 1.2 percent are American Indian and 1.5 percent belong to two or more races." 22

This racial diversity is not emulated in the housing patterns across the nation – racial clustering still occurs, mainly in the Northeast and Midwest. In 2000, blacks and Latinos consisted of roughly 76 percent of people who were living below the poverty line. Although the number of white children who claim that they often have contact
with people belonging to other races, through friendships, conversations, and sports, has risen to about 30 percent, that still means that somewhere in the ballpark of 70 percent of white children do not have frequent experiences with minorities. When students attend a high-poverty school they often times will have an adverse academic experience, students who have a negative educational experience, regularly do not succeed in college or do not continue on with higher education and, lastly, the students who attend these impoverished schools are usually blacks and other minorities. One of the reasons behind this has been termed “white flight” from these impoverish schools. The Boston Public School District, for example, had 59,000 white students in 1970. Thirty years later, only 9,300 white students still remained.

In the New York City School District, the numbers are similar. At several of the area high schools, anywhere from 91% to 96% of the student population is represented by black and Hispanic students. How do we attempt to fix this when neighborhoods are racially segregated and schools, because of zoning laws, remain largely segregated, too? It is a vicious cycle that continues to afflict blacks and other minorities.

The second essay, entitled: “Connecting the Dots: How Race in America’s Classrooms Affects Achievement,” focuses on the racist roots of standardized testing. In schools today, one of the hot topics on the minds of teachers and administrators is closing the “achievement gap,” which is largely defined as the discrepancy that exists between the school performance of white students and minority students. Alfred Binet, who is recognized as creating the first intelligence test, said: “The aim of testing should be to identify children in order to help them improve, not to place labels on them, which in themselves, could become limiting.” However, when the
Binet test arrived in America, it was widely-accepted as an intelligence measuring test. Although it was recognized as an intelligence measuring test, it was universally misused. To start, it was assumed that this exam could be the sole measure of intelligence, not realizing that test scores cannot represent one single standard of aptitude. Second, it was believed that intelligence was inherited and, therefore; racial differences mattered when it came to a person’s intellect. It is important to keep in mind that when the first test was created, it did not apply to the same people who, today, have to take the test. The Binet-Simon Intelligence Test, which was created in 1905 and revised in 1916, had one very serious flaw in its creation – when it was initially tested by students to accurately measure one’s IQ, there were no African Americans or other minority groups, including women, present in the sample. Standardized tests, essentially, were created for white, male, landowning citizens – women didn’t even have the right to vote yet and blacks were still considered three-fourths of a man by the Census Bureau. Thus was born the first American standardized test, replete with racial and gender bias. Knowing this, why do we still use this as the single measure of intelligence when it comes to such things as entrance exams for college?

The third essay, “What kind of friendship is that? The search for authenticity, mutuality, and social transformation in cross-racial relationships,” maintains that the success of interracial relationships depends on “race,” as a topic, being openly placed on the table for discussion and not ignored. As with many other things in a child’s life, friendships change when a child reaches adolescence and puberty. Teenagers have a certain awareness of their own racial group, one that children do not. Feelings
begin to emerge that friends, specifically those who belong to the “other race,” just don’t get it. They don’t understand the development of your own personal identity. When it comes to a cross-racial friendship, “white people and people of color often come to the challenge of this connection with very different perspectives.” Tatum references the work of Troy Duster, a sociologist who studied interracial friendships at the University of California. Duster noted that white students were interested in becoming friends through informal means, like parties. Black students wanted to connect with whites in formal settings, like classroom or workshops. The conclusion that Duster came to was that African American students needed whites to see them as intelligent, hard-working people first, and then make friends second. “[Whites] just wanted to be friends – not realizing the ways that unexamined power and privilege could impede the development of such friendships.” Tatum explains that minority students have confided in her that the reason they prefer highly structured settings is because, intentional or not, racial stereotypes emerge in relaxed situations – this causes for a lot of discomfort that many students choose to avoid, if at all possible. If interracial friendships choose to try and understand racism and its impact on everyone involved, perhaps a middle ground can be met.

How can people actually start to close the gap of racism? How can people change their perspectives? This is the argument of Tatum’s fourth, and final, essay – “In Search of Wisdom: Higher Education for a Changing Democracy.” Higher education needs to be formatted to fit the new diverse student population that colleges and universities are faced with. This change needs to reflect such things as integration, social awareness and “interdependence” within communities.
to practice this on college campuses throughout America; if we are to truly challenge the return of segregation in our schools. Colleges are faced with the enormous responsibility of helping students to question the racial fallacies that they develop as a child in elementary and secondary school.

Today, we can see the trend of America’s schools choosing to resegregate – we can see it in the evidence that we still need the existence of historically black universities, like Spelman College, to nurture and educate minority men and women, who are not receiving a fair education at other schools. According to Tatum, if students are given the chance to interact with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, it is possible to overturn a lifetime of forced segregation. Perhaps through the greater integration of our nation’s universities, we can interrupt the segregation that occurs in schools or the housing patterns that exist across America.

Tatum has created, what she calls “The ABC’s of Creating a Climate of Engagement,” to help minority students, especially women, have a successful post-secondary experience. The first part of the three-step plan is termed, “Affirming Identity.” This is essential because many young black adults feel left out of the whole college experience, largely due to the fact that they are underrepresented on campuses and because colleges and universities lack cultural centers. Minority students need a safe haven, a safe place for them to go when they feel alienated from the rest of the student body. Becoming secure in who you are as an individual and as a student is the first step towards post-secondary success.

The second phase of Tatum’s ABC’s, focuses on “Building Community” – In a diverse setting this can be a difficult task. The primary challenge that most post-
secondary institutions face, is there are not enough "structured opportunities" given for this kind of social interaction. Students are not forced to be around each other or work with one another in class, so if students are purposefully trying to avoid students of the opposite race, it is actually quite easy. Colleges need to create occasions for interracial interaction, where any fears, in regards to the "Other," can be placed on the table for discussion — through open-dialogue, Tatum notes, we can reflect on challenges that are faced and brainstorm ideas to overcome them.

"Cultivating Leadership" is Tatum's final piece to her ABC's plan. The open-dialogue in a student forum should have a student leader, someone who has the ability and know-how to interact with people from all backgrounds — this will enhance any discussions. Courses that are offered, such as the Intergroup Relations Program, or IGR, at the University of Michigan, should offer students successful strategies to think critically and confront varying points of view. Mandated courses, such as the IGR Program, create opportunities for students to become involved in breaking racial barriers. Beverly Tatun's ABC plan, helps minorities to confront the issues impacting their sense of "self" and move forward in creating positive self-images and genuine interracial relationships that will help to benefit both blacks and whites in social and academic arenas, as well as in the work force.
III. Support of Tatum’s Racial Identity Theory

"The caged bird sings with a fearful trill,
Of things unknown but longed for still,
And his tune is heard on the distant hill for
The caged bird sings of freedom."

-Maya Angelou, “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” (1969)\(^3\)

“*We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know,*” written by Gary R. Howard is a personal narrative detailing the author’s work with anti-racist educational practices. Howard reinforces Beverly Tatum’s claim that the oppression that students face today in the classroom is not just the by-product of the language and terminology used by the teacher or other students, or the curriculum that is presented. African Americans face an *internalized oppression* in schools, brought about by the historical legacy of black and white relations.\(^3\)

Whereas Tatum focused on the shared experiences of black identity development and how that, in turn, impacts education and white perceptions of African Americans; Howard took a different route by focusing on white identity development and how this has lead to racist thinking and actions by white teachers within the classroom. Although not specifically focusing on the same race, Tatum’s and Howard’s studies are intertwined – both arguing that the larger outside factors that we experience everyday – language, religion, movies, music, relationships, propaganda, etc. – help to shape *who* we are in our minds, in comparison to the outside world that we come in contact with every day. These external factors help to mold and shape our sense of self and our sense of “Other.” This internalized oppression, or how one develops a sense of *dominance* and
entitlement towards others is a direct result of “prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, racism, sexism...and social identity theories.”

Throughout our lifetime, we are bombarded with both negative and positive ideologies regarding race, which, in turn, shapes our racial attitudes and our sense of identity. White’s need to view themselves as an “ethnic” group, also. All too often, white’s view themselves as a nothingness, believing that ethnic specifically refers to someone else, someone of color. By describing themselves in this manner, whites have systematically cut themselves off from the benefits of multicultural/multietnic education – by believing that white is not an ethnic group. “White people do not see themselves as being white.” Whites ignore their own racial identity, all the while believing that their skin color is superior to other cultures and racial groups.

In explaining the stages of white identity development, Howard cites Beverly Daniel Tatum’s research into black identity development. The stages in black identity development include “pre-encounter, encounter, immersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment.” Whereas blacks learn at a young age that to be black is wrong, early white identity development is based on racism. Howard references Janet E. Helms, a researcher in the field from Boston College, who describes six different stages to white identity development – Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-Independence, Immersion-Emersion and Autonomy. The initial “Contact” phase refers to the initial contact white’s make with “The Other,” this is when whites officially begin the “process of racial identity development.” The “Disintegration” phase is the time when
whites acknowledge that they are white and they begin to question their previous beliefs of people of color and deserved white privilege. The following phase, “Reintegration,” refers to a period of regression, when whites embrace any prejudices or racist beliefs they might have. While many whites never leave the “Reintegration” phase, others enter the next phase – “Pseudo-independence.” During this time, whites begin to acknowledge their role in racism and racist attitudes and begin to question how to be both white and non-racist. Once whites begin to question preconceived racist notions, they move on to the “Immersion/Emersion” phase, which has been described as a movement away from helping blacks and towards helping fellow whites confront their racisms and undertake a mission of self-discovery and identity. Lastly, whites embrace “Autonomy,” where they have created their own racial identity, free of bias or bigoted views of race.40

White identity development confronts racist attitudes long-held by the white majority. For this study, what is important to understand is that white dominance has impacted black identity development and scholastic achievement, more often than not, in a negative manner. However, through the various stages of white identity development it is essential to focus on the possibility of the change that lies at the end of the transformation – in the “Pseudo-Independence,” “Immersion/Emersion” and “Autonomy” stages. Now, one central question looms ahead – What does this mean for education in America’s classrooms? What it means is that, through research on identity development, educators – both white and black – can begin to make sense of the attitudes held by different races
within the classrooms and how this new understanding can lead to more honest, unbiased education. At the beginning of his book, Howard quotes Malcolm X: “We can’t teach what we don’t know and we can’t lead where we won’t go.” American educators cannot move forward against anti-racist educational practices in America until they, first, confront their own prejudice attitudes and beliefs. Racial identity development is crucial to understanding the role of race within the classroom.

Beverly Daniel Tatum is a leader in the area of black identity development. She has published two books, Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? and Can We Talk About Race?, among numerous articles in the field of race identity development and the effects it can have on African American education. One such article, published in the winter of 2008, entitled Engaging the Restless Professor: Building the Pipeline to the Presidency with Campus Talent, addressed the need for higher education facilities to increase the number of racially diverse Presidents in the United States. Another article she wrote in the spring of 2004, Family Life and School Experience: Factors in the Racial Identity Development of Black Youth in White Communities, was cited 28 times in various educator’s research. The research that she was cited in pertains to psychology journals, African American education, segregation, and the inequality of black schooling. Considering that just one of her articles has been cited by 28 different sources shows that she is considered a leader in her field of study and that her research is valuable to the study of black identity development and racism, intended or not, within the classroom. Eleven years after the first
publication of Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?, race remains the central component of her research. Tatum also plays a critical role in the ongoing research surrounding black identity development, as well as race relations in America. Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?, has been cited 1,186 times by authors wishing to contribute to this study since 1998. One of her other popular books, Can We Talk About Race?, a follow-up book to her 1997 Black Kids in the Cafeteria book has been cited by scholars 25 times since 2005. The fact that two of her books have been referenced by other scholars and researchers over a thousand times proves her authority in the fields of racial identity and race relations.

IV. Where to from here?

"I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."

-Robert Frost, “The Road Not Taken,” (1915)

Today’s schools are entering a period of resegregation, where, as a nation, we are returning to our racist roots. Although this phenomenon afflicts all minorities, black women are continuously caught in the undert current and pulled along the bottom of the pool – struggling to reach the surface. When and if they are given the opportunity to emerge successful depends on mainstream America. Are we ready as a nation to give these girls a fighting chance? We are close. People like Beverly Daniel Tatum, who has dedicated her life to the racial identity development of
NOTES

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10 Tatum, Black Kids in Cafeteria?, 5.
12 Tatum, Black Kids in Cafeteria?, 25.
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Beverly Daniel Tatum and her two books, *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* and *Can We Talk About Race?*, were used throughout the entire chapter of this thesis. Tatum is the leading researcher in race relations and racial identity development, specifically with black children. Her insights and her research were referenced continuously by the researcher to help support conclusions on the impact racial identity development has on education.
APPLICATION:
BRINGING AFRICA BACK TO THE CENTER OF
THE WORLD HISTORY CURRICULUM

I. Finally – “Instruction That Works”!

"In white pillared mansions
   Sitting on their wide verandas,
   Wealthy Negroes have white servants,
   White sharecroppers work the black plantations,
   And colored children have white mammys."

-Langston Hughes, “Cultural Exchange”

As America pulls ahead into the Twenty-First century, there are expanding frontiers that we must embrace – technologically, politically, religiously, culturally and academically, just to name a few. It is simply not possible to not adapt to the changes taking place in our country; due, in large part, to globalization. The United States has always boasted our democratic history and diverse population – from the very beginning, American colonists were searching for religious freedom. Freedom. A word found at the core of American society; a belief that we have held on to dearly and that has helped to shape the history of the United States. America celebrates its “melting pot” past, but it is a part of our history that, in some arenas, is pushed aside; we cannot forget it as we move forward into the future.

The Social Studies curriculum in New York State has remained largely unrevised for the better part of 14 years – the Learning Standards were last revised in 1996 and the Core Curriculum was last updated in 2002. It is almost unbelievable that the students graduating high school in June of 2010 have gone through their entire educational career, kindergarten through their senior year in high school, being held to
the exact same Social Studies Learning Standards! Americans have disregarded our multicultural past, especially in schools, where this information should be studied and valued. The problem is not that the American educational system is failing to educate youth; that is not the case at all. It’s the fact that our educational strategies and our academic content falls short of meeting the needs of all of our students. As educators, we cannot overlook female contributions in history; nor can we disregard minority roles in the development of American and world affairs. America needs to take a step backwards, which is sometimes necessary before you can move forward, and look at who our educational systems are servicing today and what exactly we are teaching to these children. By doing this, educators can begin to focus on holistic education, where all of the content is accessible to all of the students – if we can achieve this, we can achieve educational equality.

The book Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement, offers a variety of methods that can be utilized by teachers to help increase student achievement. Chapter Five of the book is dedicated to how to effectively use homework outside of the classroom to maximize learning results within the classroom. Homework is well-ingrained in the habits of both teachers and students in this country, it is a part of education that students become accustomed to starting as early as grade school. Now, the obstacle that lay’s before educators is how to turn homework into a productive and meaningful opportunity for students to learn. Classroom Instruction that Works offers a few ways that will guide teachers to fully make use of homework to increase learning results.
Robert Marzano, Debra Pickering and Jane Pollock, authors of *Classroom Instruction that Works*, have researched criteria to help advise teachers on how to appropriately utilize homework in the classroom. To begin, "the amount of homework assigned to students should be different from elementary to middle school to high school." The reasoning behind this is that studies have proven that students gain relatively little percentile points when they are assigned homework at the elementary level, grades 4-6. As students progress to middle school, they gain roughly 12 percentile points and at the high school level, homework helps to produce a gain of 24 percentile points. These findings have led many educators to conclude that there is no strong relationship between homework given at the elementary level and student achievement. This, of course, does not mean that homework should be overlooked entirely in the elementary grades; on the contrary, it helps students to build the habits that will help them to become good learners later in school. By assigning homework, students develop invaluable skills that establish the necessary routines students need for success in their later elementary years, grades four through six. Teachers need to keep in mind that homework given should not be expected to drastically raise grades at this point, instead it is given to introduce kids to the idea of homework and foster the dispositions students will need to be successful in school.

The second piece of criteria that teachers should keep in mind is that: "Parent involvement in homework should be kept to a minimum." While some school districts follow a policy that requires parents to be heavily involved in their child’s homework, the authors of *Instruction that Works* have researched the effects parents can have on their children when they are expected to be actively involved in nightly
homework assignments. Parents should absolutely be familiarized with the classroom homework policies and notified when their child has received homework, but research indicates that there can be “somewhat negative effects when parents are asked to help students with homework...parents should be careful, however, not to solve content problems for students.”⁶ Out of what may appear to be good intentions, a parent’s involvement in homework may cripple their child’s ability to work independently to solve problems.

Lastly, teachers, as well as students need to be aware of the overall purpose of the homework assignment given and, when homework is given, it is essential that a teacher provide some kind of feedback on the work that was done. There are two very basic reasons for assigning homework, the first is to provide the student with additional practice outside of the classroom and, secondly, to introduce students to new content material that will be clarified in class. Homework; however, is not used as a means of creating “in-depth understandings” of the content. The overall effects of homework can vary greatly depending largely on how it is evaluated by the teacher. The comments a teacher either chooses to include on the assessment, or omit altogether, effects the value a student places on the assignment and how much they, ultimately, get out of it. Homework that is assigned but not commented on yields only an 11 point percentile gain for students. On the other hand, homework that is returned to students with teachers’ comments produces a 30 point percentile gain.⁷ When assigning homework to supplement what is done inside the classroom, it is imperative that teachers and students understand the intention of the actual assignment that it is returned in a timely manner and that teaches give students constructive
criticism and feedback on returned homework assignments. By following these strategies, teachers can help to ensure that the time taken to complete homework assignments will help to produce the greatest results with our students.

A second, equally effective method that teachers can employ in the classroom to help students understand and internalize content is to use a variety of both linguistic and non-linguistic representations as a way of helping students grasp new information. Non-linguistic teaching methods can accompany and help to balance out traditional linguistic education, usually found through lecture or book reading, used as a way to introduce material. Throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s, as non-linguistic teaching became more popular, there were several studies done to showcase the percentile gains of children who were taught using non-linguistic techniques. The percentile gains ranged anywhere from 19 points, from a study completed in 1980, all the way to 40 points, from a study completed nine years later in 1989. Regardless of which percentile figure is most accurate, each number represents a large jump from standard linguistic methods. It seems almost silly as a teacher not to introduce non-linguistic approaches to students as a way to off-set conventional education.

There are a variety of activities for teachers to help “enhance the development of nonlinguistic representations in students and, therefore, enhance the understanding of that content.” One way for teachers to implement non-linguistic methods in the classroom is by using graphic organizers to help record information. Graphic organizers use both a linguistic and non-linguistic approach to help student’s record information and show relationships that exist between different topics and/or ideas. Some of the different organizers help students to label facts about people, places or
events (Descriptive Patterns), put events in chronological order (Time-Sequence Patterns), analyze outcomes (Cause-Effect Patterns), record basic who, what, where, why and when information (Episode Patterns) or basic organizers to help them label general examples that have to deal with different examples or phrases that relate to a main topic (Concept Patterns).¹¹

Yet another non-linguistic representation that can be used in class requires students to build physical models. For example, this is a measure used in many math and science classrooms and is commonly referred to as using “manipulatives.” Students can also be asked to generate mental images, which can help students to place themselves in someone else’s position and can aid in culturally responsive teaching. This is something that is important in social studies education, a student’s ability to empathize or appreciate past cultures. The book offers a very descriptive and detailed example using Native Americans and early European explorers, trying to evoke feelings of puzzlement as these two very different peoples encounter one another for the first time.¹² The chapter offers several other methods for using non-linguistic approaches in the classroom, graphic organizers and mental pictures are two methods that work very well in a social studies classroom, regardless of the specific grade and age of the student.

The strategies offered in Classroom Instruction that Works, give educators a wealth of researched data and findings to help support student learning within the classroom. From how to effectively utilize homework to strategies on how to incorporate linguistic and non-linguistic elements into everyday learning, this book supplies teachers with teaching methods that have been researched and studied by
leading educators. Adopting many of these strategies in the classroom will, no doubt, help to increase the learning of all students within the classroom.

II. Teaching Methodology

"This is brought to us peculiarly when...we face our past as a people. There has come to us...a realization of that past, of which for long years we have been shamed, for which we have apologized. We thought nothing could come out of that past which we wanted to remember; which we wanted to hand down to our children. Suddenly this same past is taking on form, color and reality, and in a half shamefaced way we are beginning to be proud of it."

-Langston Hughes, "Criteria of Negro Art"

After looking at “best practices,” it is important to look at exemplar models of these theories and practices that help to bring education, no matter how inaccessible the curriculum, to all students. It is necessary, as we will see modeled through two teachers, that the curriculum feature, not marginalize minority students14. The book, “The Dreamkeepers,” written by Gloria Ladson-Billings, showcases Ann Lewis and Julia Deveroux, who both teach in inner-city, diverse classrooms, and their successful and varied teaching practices within the classroom. These two women, regardless of race, Lewis is white and Deveroux is black, serve as two exemplary teachers whose strategies help to boost the success rate of the minority students in their classrooms.

Since the twentieth century, progress has often been directly related to literacy levels. Throughout history, a high literacy level is representative of a more advanced civilization, the same is true today. When taking into account the racial and multicultural makeup of today’s urban schools, a “cultural framework for literacy must be considered.”15 The task has fallen upon educators to make literacy education, or any core subject, more worthwhile for African American students. The two
teachers mentioned previously, Ann Lewis and Julia Devereux, have both created very successful, very meaningful classrooms for their students in notably different ways. Each teacher is able to inspire learning in her students and this feat, after all, is what education is all about – forming and building connections with students while at the same time impressing upon them the importance of education.

Ann Lewis, who lives and teaches in a largely black community, did not take a classic route to education when she started teaching. In fact, it was not uncommon for her to be questioned by her peers about whether or not she was truly teaching anything because she had deviated from the traditional rote memorization of content material, supplemented, of course, by a stack of senseless worksheets. Other teachers, as well as administration, were beginning to wonder if education was taking place because it appeared as if the students were not working hard. On the contrary, the students in Lewis’ classroom were being asked to perform far harder tasks, such as making key connections between the course material and real-life matters that affected the children, role-play scenarios, and reference specific sections of the brain, state what each section is used for and relate it back to different taxonomies and learning styles. In Ann Lewis’ classroom, students actively participated in their education and uncovered the long-buried confidence they needed to succeed.

Julia Devereaux is another teacher who has devoted her life, like Lewis, to the success of the students in her classroom. Unlike Lewis, Devereaux has prescribed a “no-nonsense, no-frills approach to teaching and learning.” She employs very classic and very structured teaching methods in her classroom. In her literacy class, she emphasizes phonics education, instead of whole-language learning. Devereaux
engages in a drill-like procedure when it comes to actually learning the sounds and the words associated with phonics education. The class repeats the sounds of the letters after the teacher, tapping on the desk to the rhythm of the drill. Throughout the drill, Devereaux calls on many different students to put into their own words the definitions of the words they are repeating. The observer of this lesson reveals that the student phonics-drill appears to be “scripted,” and is a considerably different approach from Ann Lewis’ classroom. Devereaux’s technique builds student confidence in their ability to sound-out and pronounce difficult words; therefore, heightening their courage to actually read. At 9:00 a.m. everything in her classroom comes to a halt and it is time for independent reading. By stressing the importance of this task over most other classroom business, Devereaux has set the standard for the importance of reading in her classroom—a time that her students take very seriously. By encouraging students to read and increasing their confidence, Julia Devereaux has been able to reach even her most difficult students and curb behavior problems in her classroom.\(^\text{19}\) Although Ann Lewis and Julia Devereaux operate very differently in their classrooms, the “\textit{best practices}” that these two women implement, demonstrate teaching methodologies that work in diverse classrooms.

Vivian Gussin Paley is another teacher whose unique methodologies challenge society’s tightly-held status quo, regarding the limited abilities of African American students within the classroom. In her published memoir, entitled “White Teacher,” Paley confronts existing biases head-on through an examination of her own prejudices and her approach to education is to cultivate a classroom full of students who are able to be successful beyond school, despite racial differences.\(^\text{20}\) While schools across
America are becoming increasingly segregated, Paley is looking to holistically educate students – to teach them traditional academics, as well as to teach students openness, fairness and to be sensitive. Paley’s mission to alleviate racism in the classroom, developed out of an incident at school dating all the way back to 1973. The circumstance in question revolves around a parent-teacher conference in which the parent claimed that the black boys are singled out over the white boys, and that teachers rarely acknowledge the thoughts of black students in the classroom. The teachers at the meeting claimed that all students were treated fairly at the school; however, this affirmation of an existing prejudice in the school by the parents, stuck with Paley. The teachers retreated from this meeting, feeling defeated, and Paley began to ask herself – “Am I fair to the black children?”

Instead of focusing on the believed deficiencies of African American students, Vivian Gussin Paley began to focus on herself as the primary culprit behind this existing discrimination. By evaluating herself, her own beliefs and prejudiced practices, Paley was able to tackle the hidden curriculum within her classroom. It is not easy, she writes, to conduct a study of oneself and point out your own shortcomings as an educator. However, it is a necessary step to take to challenge your own practices to help create a fair environment for all students. As Paley surveyed her teaching career, she noticed a reoccurring theme in her classroom, that she wanted all of her students to be “colorblind” – ignoring race completely. In an effort to show respect to all races, Paley completely ignored race and treated her black students as if they were white students and made no connections to their lives outside of school. She was the white teacher who was viewed as an “outsider” by her students.
and their families, the white woman who was afraid to acknowledge that there were actually different races in the classroom. Paley was able to come to terms with the idea of race in her classroom through discussions about what it’s like to be “different.” Through open-dialogue she was able to prepare herself and her students for the differences that existed among the students within her classroom.

III. Curriculum Development

Tell Me
Why should it be my loneliness,
Why should it be my song,
Why should it be my dream
Deferred
Overlong?

-Langston Hughes (1958)

It is imperative that we, as educators, begin to look at specific ways in which to move beyond Eurocentrism in Social Studies education. In a nation that has created and sustained a very European slant on history, it is difficult to break the mold of education that has serviced all Americans for the better part of fifty-five years. Let’s just say that an overhaul of the curriculum was possible and Americans were receptive to the idea – How would social studies education look different if it actually featured Africa as a starting point? One thing is for sure, a task like this is asking educators to step outside of their comfort zone, to address racial topics and give credit to world civilizations that existed outside of, and before, the time of European domination. The undertaking of this mission has been steadily gaining steam throughout academia for the last few years.
One such article, “Putting Africa in World History and Vice Versa,” written by Erik Gilbert and published in World History Connected in mid-2009, makes the argument that the African perspective is absent from the study of world history and that African scholars have left out of African history the larger, global issues taking place. In each of these cases, historians are failing to connect the influence Africa had on broader world issues and, from the opposing viewpoint, the impact the world had on Africa, to global curriculums. Africa is being treated as a completely isolated continent, existing outside of the larger global happenings. In a similar article published in the same volume of World History Connected, “So Many Africa's, So Little Time: Doing Justice to Africa in the World History Survey,” Jonathan T. Reynolds examines the reasons for Africa’s minimal inclusion in world history studies. A popular belief is that Africa wasn’t really part of the historical world and, as such, has been left out of broader global comparatives. In any of these circumstances, Africa is excluded from the larger scope of global history.

African scholars, Gilbert writes, are faced with the “problem [that] Africa’s exclusion from world history has become an uncontested, a priori assumption in the field.” The reason’s behind Africa’s omission from global studies has been neglected; Africa remains unmentioned, except for the opening chapters of the first unit when students discuss early human origins during the Paleolithic Age. Africans are also left out of the sweeping globalization taking place across the world during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that Africa, like the European continent, developed such characteristics of a civilization as states, empires, trading routes, and major religions. Why then, is Africa increasingly
removed from historical literature? Or, as Gilbert argues, the argument is not whether Africa is excluded from history; it is what parts are left out? For example, "Putting Africa in World History" writes that many topics surrounding Africa are, in fact, included in the curriculum. Topics such as: African origins of humanity, Bantu expansion, Nile River Valley civilizations (most often overlooked as being a part of Africa), the rise of Ghana and Mali, Great Zimbabwe, the slave trade, European imperialism and African resistance to colonization. If these are the primary topics that schools are teaching about Africa, what are students actually learning about Africa’s diverse past? The answer is, little to nothing.

Another book that sheds light on the absence of Africa in American curriculums is Molefi Kete Asante’s book, "An Afrocentric Manifesto." Afrocentrism is a tricky topic to incorporate into social studies education; however, it is nevertheless imperative that it is done. Asante clearly outlines the foundation of Afrocentrism, how it is misunderstood in relation to multiculturalism, and the challenges it faces in both schools and the broader American society. Afrocentrism, Asante explains, allows historians to present history from the perspective of Africans, their history and their culture. The development of the principles of the idea of Afrocentrism first came into place in the 1930’s in Carter G. Woodson’s book, "The Miseducation of the Negro." Woodson argued that blacks had been educated into believing that Africa only existed in history through the lens of Europeans, void of their own customs and traditions. The problem revolves around how to appropriately bring Africa into the curriculum, especially in predominantly white America.
At the risk of the “cultural death” of the African American, black students cannot assume that they were ever in the same historical positions as the Europeans, to assume this or be taught this would be to grossly misinform students of the realities of history. A complete restructuring of the social studies curriculum, to one that aligns more to an Afrocentric ideology, would be difficult, but not impossible. The first step should be to examine teacher pedagogy, which more often than not, overlooks minority values and interests, and focus on how to teach holistically so that no culture or race is devalued in the process. “What is necessary,” writes Asante, “is a pedagogy that has interrogated African cultures and experiences for best practice. As far as I am concerned, ‘centricity,’ is one avenue for seeking best practice.”

There are many different ways to incorporate African history into the curriculum, by creating a curriculum where Africa is placed at the center, is just one way Asante suggests to educators to tackle the problem.

“An Afrocentric Manifesto,” argues that the majority of society clutches onto a white supremacist attitude and; therefore, white supremacist education has developed in America. The Eurocentric academic content taught in schools across the country serves to help protect the advantage that whites hold in politics and education, which in turn, leads to an economic superiority, too. White children have already surpassed African American children by the end of the first grade, due in large part to the “safety shield” created by the curriculum and, because of this, blacks are developing an inferiority complex. In order to challenge ignored and overlooked racist education, as traditional history told from a white perspective can be viewed, schools should begin the shift towards Afrocentric education, which can help to alleviate the
marginalization that blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans, to name a few, often face.

IV. Returning Africa to the Center of World History Classes

“Nkosi Sikelel’i Afrika”
(Lord, Bless Africa)

-African National Congress (1925)36

Africa has been slighted in world history, there is no doubt about that; now the question revolves around how to incorporate an African perspective into global history classrooms? This might be a difficult task, considering that even as late as the 1960’s, it was taught that Africans still lived in tribes and were mere hunters and gatherers. These tribes, it was believed, survived unchanging and inactive. The sources of early African history that anthropologists relied on were primary documents written by Arabs and Europeans. Herein lies the problem. Early accounts of Africans are based on foreign writings and interpretations, people who discredited African civilizations and peoples. Historical education is based off of these interpretations; in order to include a different perspective of African history, educators need to search out other ways to teach the topic of Africa. First, scholars need to examine and use “other, non-documentary types of evidence” and second, “they [need] to begin to see Africans as historical actors rather than passive recipients of change from external sources.”37

It is simply not enough to focus on African interactions with the non-African world, historians and educators need to take it a step further by shedding light on the various African innovations and accomplishments, such as early development of iron
making, African involvement in the Atlantic slave trade and early colonial
encounters.\(^{38}\) By taking the emphasis off of African relationships with non-African
peoples, which is the point of view the curriculum has always assumed, educators can
move towards an emphasis on African \textit{achievement}. One way to tackle this problem is
to sub-divide the unit on Africa. Instead of teaching Africa in its entirety as a single
unit, we can highlight these cross-cultural achievements and interactions by treating
the topic as if there are multiple Africa’s – \textit{East, West, Central, Southern, Northern}
and \textit{the Horn}. This will bring an end to disputes over whether or not the Egyptians are
truly African and this will ensure that the cultural and historical importance of \textit{all of}
Africa is fully incorporated into the curriculum.\(^{39}\) Jonathan T. Reynolds makes a
similar argument, he writes: \textit{There are...what appear to be several different ‘Africas’
that compete for attention in world history classrooms.}\(^{40}\) The distinct Africa’s that
Reynolds references are different from the African regions that Gilbert presents. First,
Reynolds believes that when addressing the different “notions of Africa,” a teacher is
responsible for educating students on any misconceptions that exist. According to
Reynolds, there are five different Africa’s worthy of study within the classroom –
\textit{Primitive/Static Africa} (most enduring African stereotype), \textit{Exotic Africa} (What is
unique about African settings and societies?), \textit{Environmental Africa} (modification of
the environment), \textit{Broken Africa} (a conflicted region of the world) and \textit{Utopian Africa}
(the assumption of an African unity).\(^{41}\)

There are two methodologies Gilbert proposes that will help to bring Africa
into a global light; the first is a focus on intra-African comparisons. By comparing
empires and kingdoms that existed within Africa, such as when and how an empire
was founded and its expansion, historians can make the case that comparisons between African kingdoms can be history too, not just comparison between African and foreign empires. The second method is to view Africa “as a historically and culturally diverse” place. If historians and educators can emphasize that Africa is as culturally diverse as Asia, specifically the Mongols and the Chinese, for example, than intra-African comparisons between different groups of people would be legit in the eyes of the global curriculum. By utilizing these two methods, teachers could help to make Africa a better fit within the expansive global curriculum.42

V. Pilot Study – Bias towards women & minorities in the classroom

“Pile on the black man’s burden,  
His wail with laughter drown,  
You’ve sealed the Red man’s problem,  
And will take up the Brown.”

-H.T Johnson (1899)43

A. Applications and Evaluations

The primary goal of this research was to uncover any existing biases in the classroom and state-mandated curriculums that would indicate reasons as to why girls are falling behind, specifically minority female students in high school, and to determine how qualified and/or comfortable educators felt in addressing this problem within their own classrooms. Any prejudices in the classroom can greatly impact the education, social hierarchy and socioeconomic status of a specific group of people. In order to achieve the goal of detecting academic bias in schools, teachers were administered a survey in which they were asked to assess bias in the classroom.
Participants

The participants in this study are five teachers who currently teach at an urban high school situated in Western New York. Of the five teachers taking part in this study, four are white and one is African, having immigrated to the country from Sierra Leone approximately twenty years ago. There are two female teachers and three male teachers, four of which teach a general education student population, with no identified learning disabilities and one who teaches social studies in a self-contained, special education classroom. All of the teachers have students in their classrooms who have been labeled as English-Language Learners, or E.L.L. students. The educators also range in levels of teaching experience – two of the teachers have three years of teaching experience and are not yet tenured, two teachers have between five and ten years teaching experience in urban education, and one teacher has over ten years teaching experience. Three of the teachers have Master’s Degrees in History Education and are certified to teach students in grades nine through twelve, one teacher has a Master’s Degree in Minority Studies and History Education and is certified to teach students in grades nine through twelve, and one teacher has a Master’s Degree in Special Education and is certified to teach students ranging from kindergarten to twelfth grade and is also certified in social studies, grades nine through twelve.

The high school the participants work at is an urban district in Western New York, servicing students grades seven through twelve, with a current enrollment of approximately 800 kids; the district as a whole educates approximately 32,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten through twelve. This specific school is unique in
that it is the location of the district's sole International Program, making up roughly forty percent of the school's total population. This program was designed to accommodate the district's growing ESOL population, or the English for Speakers of Other Languages program. There are thirty-five different languages spoken at the school, many of the students having immigrated to the United States from foreign countries, mostly located in the Middle East and Africa. There are not, however, interpreters for every language spoken at the school, so many times teachers must rely on other students for translations. This particular school was chosen for the study because of its high level of diversity.

Data Collection Methods

In order to obtain the information for the study, the researcher administered a ten-question survey to the participants listed above. The survey was provided to the teachers on a Thursday morning and they were given the entire day to complete it. Teachers were informed that their answers to the survey would be used in a Graduate research project and that, although their names are not placed on the survey, the demographic information would likely reveal their identity. The teachers were not given the survey to fill out under the assumption that it was an optional survey; all of the selected teachers had previously agreed to take part in the study. The survey was then collected at the end of the school day by the researcher.

A survey was chosen as the best way to collect data on the research topic because it helped to pinpoint specific beliefs, biases, and classroom instructional styles. By choosing not to use open-ended research questions, the teacher responses to the questions were much narrower and did not stray from the research question at
hand. The responses from the five surveys were then interpreted on a much larger scale, assuming that the responses of the five teachers could serve to represent the entire population of teachers at this specific urban high school.

**Instruments of Study**

The data for the study was collected solely through a quantitative survey. The survey was teacher-created; however, the teacher who created the survey was not a part of the sample of participants in the study. The sample size was five teachers and the survey consisted of ten close-ended questions that were designed to test teacher beliefs and reveal any gender/racial classroom biases. It is important to note that because the survey was administered at the beginning of the school day but was not collected by the researcher until the end of the school day, any events that happened during the course of the day, positive or negative, may have affected the participant’s responses. A sample of the survey has been attached to Appendix A.

**Data Analysis Methods**

The data collected from the surveys was analyzed by the researcher to locate any overarching themes that emerged through the computing program *Statistical Products & Service Solutions*, or SPSS. For example, the researcher made comparisons between the results from the survey and the varying beliefs and teaching practices, in regards to classroom bias, and attempted to draw a connection between the number of years teaching, gender/ethnicity, and time spent incorporating women and minorities into the classroom. A histogram, based on the survey, was created to showcase the frequency, mean and standard deviation results.
B. Findings

The gender and ethnicity of the teachers who were chosen to take part in the survey played an important part in this research by providing the researcher with demographics information which could then be used to compare whether or not one’s own gender and/or ethnicity affected teaching methods and course material taught to students. Of these teacher participants, 40% were white males, 40% were white females and the other 20% were minority males; minority female teachers were absent from the study. It is important to note that the researcher did not intentionally leave out the input of minority females; there were no minority women social studies teachers employed at the school where the study took place.

All of the participants, however, taught social studies in one form or another – be it through a self-contained special education class or in grades nine through twelve general education history courses. It is also important to note the number of years each participant had been teaching, in order to detect any correlations between years teaching and subject-area confidence. The teachers indicated that 40% had been teaching less than four years, another 40% had been teaching between five and ten years and only 20% had been teaching for longer than ten years. This information is displayed in Figure 1. All of the teachers identified that the racial composition of the classroom they taught in was made up of a majority of minority students, or students who are not white, and 60% of the teachers identified that the majority of these students were female. This information is located in Table 1. This is a school in which 80% of the participants in the study were either white men or white women,
80% of the participants had been teaching for less than ten years and 100% of the teacher’s reported that the school consisted primarily of minority students.

Figure 1

Participants: Years Teaching

The urban school situated in upstate New York where the study took place is currently going through the first year of a two-year mandatory redesign program for schools that have been placed on the New York State Schools Under Registration Review, or SURR, list. The redesign program is requiring all teachers to implement
and utilize the inquiry method of teaching, where students learn through self-generated questions and discoveries and apply general understandings to other areas of content. Knowing that this is the focus of the school, it was essential for the researcher to ask the participants how many of them were appropriately utilizing this model in the classroom. Perhaps because the school is still in the initial phases of the redesign, only 20% of the participants felt they were teaching through the inquiry method, whereas 80% felt they used a mixed methods approach in their classroom, relying on standard teacher-centered and student-centered instruction. A frequency chart showcasing these results is located in Table 3. The survey also revealed that 40% of the teachers in the study identified male students as scoring consistently higher in class, whereas 60% of the teachers felt that female students consistently scored higher grades in class. This frequency table is referenced in Table 4.

Table 3

Participants: Instructional Practices

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<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<td>Total</td>
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Table 4

Scoring Consistently Better Scores in Class

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<td>Female Students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After revealing that 100% of the teachers were fully aware that the environment in which they taught consisted of a majority of minority students, it was then essential to disclose the worth they placed on these groups in the everyday curriculum. One of the questions the survey focused on was whether or not women were incorporated into the curriculum and, if they were, to what extent. All of the teachers indicated that women were included in their social studies classrooms and state curriculum; however, when asked to what extent women and their contributions were actually incorporated into the lesson plans on a day to day basis, the researcher received a very different answer. According to the survey, when given the choices *seldom, sometimes* and *always*, in regards to including women in the classroom curriculum, 40% of the participants revealed that women were seldom included in the daily lesson plans, 60% reported that women were sometimes incorporated and not one single participant made the claim that women were always included in the curriculum. This information is located in Table 5. The data is very interesting given that 40% of the participants felt male students scored higher than female students and
60% of the staff felt girls performed better, even when their gender is more often than not, absent from the curriculum. This information was included previously in Table 4.

Table 5

*Are Women Incorporated into the Curriculum? To What Extent are they Included?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women and the curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent are they included?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information surrounding minorities inclusion in the curriculum turned out relatively the same as the data on women, with 100% of the teachers reporting that minorities were, indeed, present in the curriculum. Using the same rating scale as before, 20% of the teachers reported that minorities were seldom included and 80% claimed that they were sometimes included. These results are located in Table 6 and, like before, there were no participants that said minorities and their contributions were always incorporated. These results indicated that in an environment where female students traditionally scored better than their male counterparts and that consisted mostly of minority students, there is very little attention actually given to women and minorities in the daily curriculum. Even more interesting is that the results seemed to contradict what teachers claimed about the value of women and minorities in the
curriculum, with 100% of the participants believing that the contributions of women and minorities throughout history were important to the social studies curriculum.

Table 6

Are Minorities Incorporated into the Curriculum? To What Extent are they Included?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minorities and the curriculum</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent are they Included?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Seldom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Knowing the deficiency this study has revealed in the New York State Social Studies curriculum in regards to women and minorities, it was necessary for the researcher to delve deeper into whether or not the participants were actively trying to supplement the shortcomings of the curriculum with any outside information. Using a scale of seldom, sometimes and always, the teachers reported in the survey that 60% of them seldom tried to incorporate any outside information into the curriculum, 20% disclosed they sometimes tried to include extra material and 20% said they always enriched the curriculum by adding in outside information. This data is shown in Figure 2. As stated above, 100% of the participants in the survey indicated that women and minorities contributions were valuable and that they should be
incorporated into the curriculum, however; the survey clearly shows that only 20% of those people actually follow through with this belief. This is a startling finding – given that 80% of the social studies teachers at this particular school do not seek out additional resources to compliment an obvious flaw in the curriculum.

The researcher then entered the data into an Excel spreadsheet to uncover the statistical difference between the number of years teaching in the classroom and whether or not the participant is supplementing the curriculum. The participants for the study were lumped into three different groups based on the number of years teaching: Group One was those who had been teaching between zero and four years, Group Two consisted of those that had been teaching between five and nine years and Group Three were the participants who had been teaching for ten or more years. When the results of the survey were compared between Group One and Group Two, the P-Value that was generated was 0.25, showing that there was no significant statistical difference in answers given by the participants of each group. There was only one participant who had been teaching for over ten years; therefore no P-Value could be calculated for this group. The participant reported that he or she sometimes supplemented the curriculum, which is significantly different from the other two groups, but not highly significant.
C. Conclusions and Recommendations

Discussion of the findings

The research questions for this study focus on the extent to which women and minorities are incorporated into the daily curriculum, whether or not there is an obvious discrepancy between men and women and the grades that are achieved in class, and the degree to which these teachers are attempting to supplement a curriculum which has been identified as biased. A qualitative survey, focusing on the issues stated above, was administered to select teachers at an upstate New York urban high school.

The researcher interpreted the results of the survey to convey four central findings. First, based on the prior literature reviews that were done for this study, it was suggested that minority female test scores are significantly lower than minority males and white students, altogether. In a study performed by Owens, Smothers and Love minority girls’ scholastic achievements, or lack thereof, were presented as an
increasingly widespread problem. According to the survey results for the current study, of the participants at the high school chosen to take part in the survey, 60% reported that girls are actually scoring higher in class on a regular basis, as oppose to the 40% who disclosed that boys were consistently scoring higher. These results present conflicting data, when compared to previous studies surrounding the topic which state that boys are actually outperforming female students.

The second key understanding that the researcher was able to conclude based on the results of the survey revolved around teaching strategies utilized in the classroom. Although the chosen school had been deemed a New York State SURR school and was being forced to undergo a redesign program that favored the implementation of an Inquiry-based approach to teaching, 80% of the staff admitted to not fully committing to solely this teaching strategy; the participants were, instead, using a mixed-methods approach based in both teacher-centered and student-centered practices. This finding was crucial to the researcher because it offered insight into teaching methods that may have varied effects that are dependent on either male or female students. If 80% of the staff used mixed-methods techniques in the classroom, the researcher, in turn, related this back to the 60% of participants that reported girls had higher scores in class. The researcher was able to conclude that these statistics were the result of the Inquiry Method of teaching, by incorporating this into standard teaching practices, the staff at the school was able to raise the achievement levels of minority girls who may favor a non-traditional approach to education. Also, this data lead the researcher to believe that the underperformance of boys at this particular school was due in large part to the trends leaning away from the usual teacher-
centered methods of teaching which, the researcher notes, have been in place since the inception of the American educational system that was essentially designed for an all-male student population. The researcher found that there has been no previous research done linking African American success to implementation of the Inquiry method in the classroom.

A third principle understanding to emerge from the research was the unanimous belief held by the participants that both women and minorities are underrepresented in the curriculum. This finding supports Beverly Daniel Tatum’s claim that blacks are ignored in the curriculum altogether. Based on the survey, the participants revealed that the curriculum is more likely to incorporate the contributions of minorities, rather than the significance of women. The study disclosed that about 60% of the time women’s studies are “sometimes” integrated into the curriculum, whereas minorities are “sometimes” included in the curriculum 80% of the time. This data confirms the findings of Nicola Rollock’s 2007 study, which concluded that the education of black girls has fallen by the wayside, having been positioned behind white men, white women and black men, in terms of importance. This data reinforces the researcher’s thesis that the absence of women and minorities from the general curriculum is a problem in schools today.

The final major theme that transpired through this survey was that all of the teachers claimed that women and minority contributions to history were valuable, but only 20% of the teachers followed through with their beliefs and supplemented, what the curriculum appeared to be lacking, with outside information. The researcher’s initial response was that this was due, in large part, to the inexperience of novice
teachers, which so often urban districts resort to hiring. The survey, on the other hand, exposed that there was no significant number difference between teachers who supplement the curriculum in the zero to four year range and the number who aid the curriculum in the five to ten year range. This lead the researcher to believe that regardless of the number of years teaching or the experience of the teacher, educators at the upstate New York high school where the survey was administered were not using any additional information to support the lack of coverage that both women and minorities receive. The researcher also believes that this is an ongoing problem throughout the entire district, not just this specific school, and that in order to better help teachers across all disciplines to alleviate this problem, perhaps content directors need to address the issue through professional development opportunities.

**Implications for teaching**

The results of this study reveal a deficiency in the New York State social studies curriculum regarding women and minorities and a lack of knowledge and action on the part of staff to supplement the curriculum with additional resources. To help lessen the invisibility of these two groups, the researcher suggests that the school district take part in a series of professional development workshops aimed at anti-racist and anti-sexist teaching practices. These professional developments should, first, address the issues surrounding the portrayal of women and minorities in the core curriculums. One of the ways that women and minorities roles in history have been silenced is evidenced in their depictions in the curriculum. Usually, these two groups are presented as “victims,” sitting idly by as history happens both to them and around them. If teachers can present women and minorities as integral participants in history,
then students will begin to view them as active contributors to the development of history. For example, if teachers begin to highlight African American and women resistance movements in American and world history courses, these two groups would be presented in a new light; as oppose to typical gender and racial stereotyping that occurs all too often in social studies curriculums.48

Another option, often times hotly contested between educators and politicians, is the notion of how and whether or not multiculturalism and multicultural education should be incorporated into preservice teacher training. As a nation striving for betterment under No Child Left Behind politics, educators are left grappling with how to raise the consistently low standardized test scores and achievement levels of minority students. Educators are fighting this problem – multicultural educators, on the other hand, attribute this phenomenon to teacher preparation programs that do not properly train teacher candidates how to best service racially and ethnically diverse students. Teacher education programs, like the original standardized tests which were designed to serve as a viable measurement of knowledge, are designed to service the needs of white, middle-class students. The changes that need to take place in teacher training courses across America require more than just a quick fix. Instead of merely stating that diversity and multicultural education are important, teachers need to be instructed how to actually change their current classroom pedagogies and practices to reflect diversity. Teacher education courses with a multicultural emphasis need to address teacher’s ethical principles and whether or not they hold different expectations for minority children versus white children, instill in them the courage to set up culturally diverse classroom discussions that help to minimize the effects of racism.
and sexism in the classroom, and reflect a high quality of education that will help them to teach the curriculum to all students in a very meaningful way. Multicultural education, although not being fully embraced by all educators, is a necessary step towards successfully implementing culturally responsive education and moving away from institutionalized racism.

**Limitations and Improvements**

According to the researcher, there were both limitations and improvements that can be made to the study that was conducted. The instrumentation used to conduct the research, the teacher survey, is one possible threat to the validity of the study. The survey was initially supposed to measure the perception of bias in the classroom from a teacher perspective. Upon studying the results, the inexperience of the researcher generated different results than were originally intended. Perhaps, this issue could have been avoided had the researcher taken into account variable description, or not clearly defining the topic being tested. For example, the researcher did not clearly explain what was meant by the terms “bias” or “minority.” It was assumed that the participants would know who and what the researcher was referencing. Also, before the survey was administered to school staff, it was not checked for validity. If this survey is chosen to be used again by the researcher in a subsequent study, some of the key words in the study will need to be defined for clarification at the beginning of the survey.

Secondly, the selection of the teachers who were asked to participate in the study may prove to be a limitation of the study. A threat to the external validity of the study is that the participants were part of a convenient sample, chosen because they
worked at the same school as the researcher. Also the participant selection consisted of only five teachers and there were no black women who were a part of the study. In fact, of the teachers surveyed, there was only one black male and the rest of the teachers were white. There was only one participant who represented the entire group of teachers who had been teaching for longer than 10 years. It is also important to note another limitation to the study, the Hawthorne Effect. This refers to the selected group of participants not wanting to appear bias in the eyes of the researcher and, because of this, not being completely honest on their survey, which may have been the case because the researcher knew each of the selected participants. For future research studies, it would prove necessary for the researcher to diversify the teacher participant selection – in terms of race, gender, subject-level, and number of years in the district teaching in order to gain a more valid outcome.

*Future Research Recommendations*

Future research should target specific teaching strategies that have proven to be successful with African American children. Many educators have spoken out against resorting to standardized testing regarding this population; if this is one method that has been proven *not to work*, than what *will* enhance and support the education of minority students, specifically women? Future research should also focus on how to reinforce the contributions of these two groups in the curriculum through professional development options for teachers. Through this research, all participants claimed that the contributions of women and minorities in social studies education are important to include. However, the study also revealed that very few teachers are actually using outside materials to supplement the flaws in the curriculum. Teacher training courses
in these areas are vital to the successful inclusion of minorities and women in the curriculum and to assess what strategies, if any, are being used to bring to light the contributions of minorities and women in the social studies curriculum. Also, future research should be used gain a further understanding as to the effect of Inquiry-based educational practices on black students.

The urban school, situated in western New York where the study took place, serves as a reminder to all educators that when teachers allow the curriculum to deemphasize the value of specific groups in history, then the credibility of the entire curriculum has been compromised. What else has been chosen to be left out of our history? Who else have the politicians that heavily influence the curriculum decided is inconsequential to history? Educators cannot allow this marginalization to continue. Research proves that people are starting to take notice of the apparent invisibility of certain races, ethnic groups and of women in schools today. How much longer will students have to wait for real action that will alleviate the obvious biases in state-mandated curriculums and classroom practices across the nation? The process can be expedited through social reform activism and through the efforts of thoughtful educators who push for true *multicultural* education in our nation’s schools.
Appendix A
Teacher Survey

Directions: for each of the questions listed below, please circle the response that best suits you.

1. Gender and Ethnicity –
   Male White
   Male Minority
   Female White
   Female Minority

2. How many years have you been teaching?
   0-4 years  5-10 years  10+ years

3. Generally speaking, who scores better in your class?
   Male Students  or  Female Students

4. What is the racial make-up of your class?
   Majority (over 50%) white students  or  Majority (over 50%) minority students

5. What is the gender make-up of your class?
   Majority male students  or  Majority female students

6. Which of the teaching styles below best fits your instructional practices?
   Direct Instruction (teacher-centered)
   Inquiry (student-centered)
   Mixed (part teacher-centered, part student-centered)

7. Are women and their contributions incorporated into the classroom curriculum?
   Y or N

86
If yes, to what extent?
Seldom		Sometimes		Always

8. Are minorities and their contributions incorporated into the classroom curriculum?

Y or N

If yes, to what extent?
Seldom		Sometimes		Always

9. Do you bring outside materials into the classroom to support women and minorities?

Seldom		Sometimes		Always

10. Do you feel that information surrounding women and minorities in history is valuable to the social studies curriculum?

Y or N
Notes

4 “Instruction that Works,” 61-64.
5 “Instruction that Works,” 63.
6 “Instruction that Works,” 63.
7 “Instruction that Works,” 64.
8 “Instruction that Works,” 96.
9 “Instruction that Works,” 73-74.
10 “Instruction that Works,” 73.
11 “Instruction that Works,” 75-77.
12 “Instruction that Works,” 82.
16 Ladson-Billings, Gloria, 106.
18 Ladson-Billings, Gloria, 112.
29 Gilbert, Erik, “Putting Africa in World History,” 2.
30 Gilbert, Erik, “Putting Africa in World History,” 3.
39 Gilbert, Erik, “Putting Africa in World History,” 4-5.
40 Reynolds, Jonathan T., So Many Africa’s, So Little Time: Doing Justice to Africa in the World History Survey,” 3.
42 Gilbert, Erik, “Putting Africa in World History,” 5.


