The Need and Justification for All-Black Male Academies in Urban Areas

Nimrod Malik Shabazz

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THE NEED AND JUSTIFICATION FOR ALL-BLACK MALE ACADEMIES IN URBAN AREAS

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Masters of Education in the Graduate School of Langston University

By

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* * * * * *

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To the memories of Antonio Cheers and Darren Alexander, I dedicate this study.
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BACKGROUND OF PROBLEM

Perhaps a genesis of substandard education for African-Americans in the United States was marked when the first Blacks were brought to the New World as chattel slaves. Throughout the African slave trade, Euro-American slave masters maintained low cognitive development in Blacks because it was believed that learning ruined slaves. It was also believed that learning made slaves more rebellious. The result was a systematic ideology which fostered the belief that Blacks should be kept as ignorant as possible. Consequently, despite efforts by Black slaves to orally educate themselves, the Slave Codes established by Euro-Americans during the 17th and 18th centuries made this seemingly impossible (Nash & others, 1992). Slave education, in virtually any form, was strictly prohibited by almost all states legislating slavery.

Though Black women suffered from the affects of slavery (albeit, sometimes in a different form), slave states frequently focused more on mentally manipulating and oppressing the Black male than the Black female. The primary reason for this was that the Black male was deemed to be more of a threat to the stability of slavery than the Black female. Thus, during the "seasoning process" in the Caribbean, more emphasis was exerted on the Black man to make him servile than
on the Black woman (Brock, 1989). One sees, therefore, that ever since his beginning in America, efforts to stagnate the Black male have been paramount.

The effects of chattel slavery were further fatalistic to Black men because it destroyed an essential part of their educational process, the "rites of passage". Useni Eugene Perkins (1986) stated that the "rites of passage" was essential to an Black boy, who would later become an Black man, because it, "....not only indoctrinated him with the spiritual and cultural manifestations of his people's traditions, but was the catalyst that consummated his manhood" (pg. 3). Without this particular educational aspect, manhood for an African boy was all but lost. Moreover, without the attainment of manhood, the African boy was intellectually and socially stagnated.

Yet, as some Blacks gradually attained their freedom through various means, and as some abolitionists fought zealously to end slavery, a few Black slaves and freedmen were taught how to read and write. In various cities during the mid-18th century, particularly Philadelphia, schools were established by abolitionists and freedmen to educate Blacks. Indeed, in Boston in 1787, Prince Hall and other free Blacks petitioned the city for funds to start a school for Blacks (Wesley, 1977). The appellants logically deduced that since
freedmen were taxed at a rate equal to that of Euro-Americans, Blacks should have access to secondary schools established by the city. Though the petition was denied, years later, Hall, along with Prince Saunders and other associates, gathered their resources and started a school for Blacks in his son's house, from 1798 until 1803. Ultimately, many schools for Blacks would be established this way—through the organization and resources of freedmen and abolitionists.

After the end of the Civil War in 1865, Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau to aid in the advancement of freed Black slaves and to deal with the issue of reconstruction in the South. Originally, the Freedmen's Bureau was not established to deal with the education of freed Blacks (Atlanta University, 1911). In light of this though, "...the funds derived from the rent of abandoned property were used for education and government buildings were turned into school houses" (pg. 19).

Several years later, after $521,000 had been gathered from the sale or lease of property which had belonged to the Confederacy, Congress appropriated $500,000 toward the education and asylum of freed Blacks. By 1868, the notion of a general system for public education was secured and state-supported secondary schools for Blacks sprung up throughout the South (Atlanta University, 1911). Without a doubt, the
first of these were of a mediocre quality. Yet, as time passed, the institutions improved.

This improvement, however, did not put secondary schools for Blacks on an equal par with secondary schools for Euro-Americans. Funding for both was distributed unevenly. Later, the Supreme Court Case of 1896, Plessy v. Ferguson, which upheld the "separate but equal" doctrine, reinforced this practice so that, by 1909, readers were told, "...there is open and acknowledged discrimination in the distribution of the school funds between white and Negro schools" (pg. 29).

One of the first mass migrations of Blacks out of the South took place during 1915 to 1920 (Nash & others, 1992). The migrations led many Blacks North, to cities such as Detroit and Chicago, where there was a supposed lure of better economic opportunities and less racial strife. Surely, some Blacks' lives improved considerably by openings in the North, but even these advancements were not met without adversities. "The presence of Blacks led to the development of black ghettos and increased the racial tension that occasionally flared into violence" (pg. 480).

Far too often, Euro-American abhorrence of Blacks in the North forced many Blacks to live in dilapidated housing and neglected communities. In fact, White hatred in the North was so great that the Chicago Tribune advised, "...Black men [to]
stay South” (pg. 480). The Chicago newspaper even offered free transportation to any Black male who wanted to leave the area. Years later, after the ending of legal apartheid in the United States, White racism and isolation in neglected communities became some of the catalysts for the underachievement of Blacks.

In 1954, the Supreme Court Decision of Brown v. Board of Education led many Blacks to think that they had arrived—insomuch as equality was concerned. The monumental decision had finally led to the integration of white schools. Alphonso Pickney (1984), however, states that equality with Euro-America, educationally or socially, was still little more than a dream.

"Public support for black progress virtually disappeared, and blacks were once again blamed for their plight in a society where racism has historically been an integral part of all of its institutions and has served to maintain and protect white privilege" (pg. 1).

To a large extent, the desired results of Brown v. Board of Education have not taken place. While the United States government may be able to make separate facilities unlawful—especially as it applies to education— it does not have the ability to regulate where people live. School districts in cities, which decades ago boasted of majority white
populations, now tell of areas where non-whites are the majority. Detroit, for example, once majority White, now contains a school system in which approximately 85% of its students are non-white (Smitherman & Watson, 1992).

Jonathan Kozol (1991) observed urban school districts in East St. Louis, Chicago, New York, and Camden that were approximately 95% to 99% nonwhite, while their suburban counterparts contained the same ratio in White students.

"The Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education 37 years ago, in which the court had found that segregated education was unconstitutional because it was 'inherently unequal,' did not seem to have changed very much in the schools I saw, not, at least, outside the Deep South" (pg. 3).

In addition, Kozol noticed distinct differences in schools where non-white students were the majority and schools where white students were the majority. In most cases, he found schools where non-whites were the majority, to be disintegrating, underfunded, understaffed, and deficient in materials and resources for students. At times, Kozol noted that the average per pupil expenditure rate in these schools was sometimes almost twice as less as that of secondary institutions where Euro-Americans were the majority.

Kozol found that there were enormous differences in
academic achievement between urban schools where non-whites were the majority and suburban schools where whites were the majority. Besides non-white pupils in urban areas scholastically scoring lower than their Euro-American contemporaries in the suburbs, non-white students were more prone to drop out of high school. Still, Kozol argues that even if inner city schools where non-whites were the majority and predominantly white secondary suburban schools were equally funded, the gap in achievement would not necessarily be shut. One of the reasons for this is that the environment that surrounds non-white students in urban areas often is not suitable for the positive inducement and nurturing of cognitive skills. A case in point is East St. Louis, Illinois.

"Among the negative factors listed by the city's health director are the sewage running in the streets, air that has been fouled by the local plants, the high lead levels noted in the soil, poverty, lack of education, crime, dilapidated housing, insufficient health care, unemployment" (pg. 20).

At the very least, Kozol believes school funding should be based on the needs of the students. If students from a certain area are prone to enter school with deficient cognitive skills, then that area should receive more money per pupil than an area whose students' cognitive skills aren't as
deficient. In spite of this belief, one main justification 
not to increase per pupil expenditure rates to urban schools 
is that money alone does not make a difference. Another is 
that urban students would still have to return daily to the 
same environmental conditions which hinder the development of 
their cognitive skills.

Unfortunately, some of the most affected by the 
adversities of urban schools are Black males. They constitute 
8.5% of the public school population, but represent 36% of the 
special educations students (Kunjufu, 1991). Black males are 
also 50% of the drop-outs in urban school systems (Smitherman & Watson, 1992). Indeed, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 90% of 
Black males have an aggregate G.P.A. of less than 2.0 
(Kunjufu, 1991).

Although the list of harrowing statistics for secondary 
Black male students is much longer, the above sheds some light 
on the gravity of the problem. Moreover, it has led some 
Black scholars, like Jawanza Kunjufu (1983), to state that the 
secondary public school system has a definite conspiracy, 
either maliciously contrived, or unconsciously put together, 
to intellectually destroy Black boys. This conspiracy, some 
say, takes place mainly during the elementary grades so that, 
by high school, Black male students are effectively prevented 
from achieving academically because they have not achieved
levels similar to those established at the upper end of Maslow’s (1986) Hierarchy of Human Needs.

Yet, assuming there is such a conspiracy to destroy Black male students, questions are in order. Why this conspiracy? Where did it come from? In which ways does it affect Black male students?

Of the first question posed, Drs. Julia and Nathan Hare (1991) point to the racism in America. Like Euro-American racism during the African slave trade, contemporary racism in America is directly aimed at the Black male. "Hence a white oppressor must take special pains to suppress the black male. If you kill the male, you do not have to worry about the female and the children, as they are bound to whither away. This is not sexual chauvinism but a biosocial reality" (pg. 9).

Though these statements by the Hares may harbor some truths, Black male substandard academic achievement in the classroom cannot be blamed totally on Euro-American racism. Kunjufu (1983) and Patton (1981) pointed to the lack of motivation and self-esteem in Black male students as a major contributing factor of Black male substandard scholastic progress. Due to the overwhelming number of secondary public school teachers who are white, middle class, and female, both Kunjufu and Patton believe that there are very few, if any,
Black male role models for Black male students to identify with and emulate. Also, because the majority of these teachers come from a culture and background completely different than most students in urban schools, many teachers are rendered educationally impotent when instructing Black male students.

Furthermore, the adverse conditions of many inner-cities, as mentioned by Jonathan Kozol (1991), are more major factors in hindering cognitive development in Black male students. Many Euro-American suburban students do not face the detrimental circumstances that non-white urban students do. They, therefore, are less likely to encounter undesirable influences which may impede cognitive development and cripple scholastic development.

In analyzing the questions posed previously, this author has come to some conclusions which may clarify the problem of Black male substandard academic achievement: the patriarchal structure of Euro-America dictates that Black males are to be prime targets for White racism and oppression; in spite of this, however, African-American male substandard academic achievement is not the total result of Euro-American racism; lack of self-esteem, motivation, and societal factors in urban areas are some of the contributing factors to substandard scholastic progress among Black males.
Statement of the Problem

During the 1980's, the concept of an all-Black male academy was strongly pushed as a panacea for the seemingly systematic, scholastic downfall of Black males in secondary institutions. Though said academies have received strong community support, opposition against them has also been equally staunch. All-Black male academies have also fallen under question because of their supposed discrimination against females and the belief that their existence would return the system of education in the United States to segregation.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze historical factors which have affected Black male academic achievement on the secondary level in urban America so as to support the needs and justifications for the implementation of all-Black male academies in urban areas.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer three questions. First, has Euro-American intervention, during and since the advent of chattel slavery in the United States, caused substandard academic achievement among Black males in urban areas?
Second, is there a relationship between substandard academic achievement and the level of self-esteem among Black males who are in urban secondary schools? Lastly, to what extent (if any) do all-Black male academies significantly improve academic achievement among Black males at the secondary level as compared to other secondary school-aged Black males?

Limitations of the Study

This study will be restricted to Afrocentric curriculums, public and independent schools, studies of Black family life, sociological variables in the urban area, economic stratification between White and Black students, and "White flight". Additionally, this study seeks only to justify the need and existence of all-Black male academies. It also compares the performance and discipline of Black male students in mainstream secondary schools with all-Black male academies.

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into four chapters. Chapter one addresses the background of Black male education in America and Black male substandard academic achievement in secondary institutions. Chapter two reviews facts, issues, and opinions about the history of chattel slavery and Black education in America. Chapter three examines Afrocentric curriculums, all-
Black male academies, variables which cause substandard scholastic progress in Black males in secondary schools, and compares Black male academic progress in Afrocentric secondary schools to those in mainstream public secondary institutions. The study ends with summary remarks on Black male students in all-Black male academies.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter one was an introduction which consisted of five parts: the Statement of the Problem, the Statement of the Purpose, Research Questions, the Limitations of the Study, and the Organization of the Study. Chapter two will be a literature review also consisting of five parts: Chattel Slavery in the Antebellum South, the Freedmen’s Bureau, Reconstruction and Public School, Booker T. Washington versus W.E.B. DuBois, the Aftermath of Brown versus Board of Education and Integration, and the Realities of Black Male Social Status and Academic Achievement.

Furthermore, Chapter two will, to a large degree, show that Blacks in the United States have always held education in high esteem. To them, it has been a pre-requisite for the American success story, a means of upward social mobility. Additionally, while Blacks have not always been able to legally educate themselves, the belief that education would provide an outlet of social, political, and economic freedom has not deferred them from pursuing some form of instruction, even in the face of horrifying punishment. Blacks, for the most part, have always held firm to their ideology; education is synonymous with growth. Without education, one withers and
Chattel Slavery In The Antebellum South

To say that Euro-American slavemasters did not want their slaves to receive any education is only telling part of the story. If Black slaves in the Antebellum South received any form of education from their slavemasters, it was probably given to them only to make them better slaves (Clarke, 1973). Additionally, slavery in the United States was a clandestine institution which could only survive on established myths. Perhaps one the biggest of these were that Blacks were too ignorant to be educated (Nash, 1992). Education was also thought to make a slave more rebellious. Notwithstanding this, the Slave Codes which were established during chattel slavery, making it illegal to teach a slave how to read and write, served a twofold purpose. It prevented Black slaves from becoming defiant and a threat to the establishment of the South and it perpetuated the myth of Black ignorance.

Because Euro-America was established on a patriarchal design, Black male slaves often became the center of attention for slaveowners (Brock, 1989). The rationality behind this was that if the Black male was taught obedience, then the Black woman would be obedient as well. It was also hoped that
Black women would pass this obedience onto their children to prevent them from becoming possible rebels in the future.

The seasoning process was one of the main modes through which Black male slaves learned obedience (Brock, 1989). During this ritual, oftentimes the most rebellious Black male would be put in front of the other slaves for display. The subsequent brutality taken out on the hapless slave by the slavemaster, or slavetrader, was an omen and lesson to the captive slave audience as to what would happen to them if they were not obedient. "At times, the floggings were so severe as to inflict wounds so large that a man's finger could be inserted in them" (Franklin, 1974, pg. 52).

The seasoning process also frequently involved the dismemberment of vital parts on the slave's body. Othertimes, depending on the number of the incoming slave population, some Blacks in the rite were tortured for a time and then killed.

On slave plantations in the Antebellum South, slave youth were frequently discouraged from mingling with older slaves (Perkins, 1986). This was due, primarily in part, to Southern paranoia which stemmed from the belief that older slaves made younger slaves defiant through the exchange of their knowledge and experiences.

"If the slavemaster could control the minds of his young slaves, to become more resigned toward slavery and fearful of
him, incidence of escapes and even insurrections would be greatly minimized. The older a slave became, the least his slavemaster had to worry about the slave retaliating against him. However, most older slaves were held in high reverence by the young who seldom challenged their wisdom" (pg. 11).

Curtailing the mingling of older and younger slaves destroyed an essential part of the intellectual development in Blacks, for part of the informal education in many African tribes had dictated that youth would learn certain customs and values from their elders.

The Freedmen's Bureau, Reconstruction, and Public School

Though initially denied the right to fight in the Civil War (Nash, 1992), Blacks embraced the Union’s struggle with the rebelling Southern states with much optimism. Since most of the states at war with the Confederate South were not slave states and had no need for slavelabor, it was hoped by freedmen and abolitionist alike that if the North won the war it would somehow grant more freedom to Black slaves, or end their bondage altogether. Ironically, the political leader of the North, President Abraham Lincoln, who later "emancipated" the slaves, was not an advocate of Black equality (Bruner & others, 1992). Indeed, in 1862, Lincoln, in response to a letter written to him by Horace Greely, editor of the New York
Tribune, wrote:

"If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because it helps to save the Union...." (Zinn, 1990, pg. 186).

Nevertheless, on January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, opening the door for Blacks to fight in the war, and tipping the balance of power in favor of the Union. To a large degree, the Emancipation Proclamation was a skillful military move (Zinn, 1990) that had adverse economic repercussions in the South (DuBois, 1963). By instilling in the minds of Southern slaves that they were free, which induced them to runaway, the Confederate productive powers, which were based on slave labor, were put in a precarious dilemma.

As desired, the Emancipation Proclamation increased the number of Black fugitives coming into the North from the South. Throughout the Civil War, there were about half a million slaves to run away, a high number, Zinn (1990) states, particularly if "...one considers that there was great difficulty in knowing where to go and how to live" (pg. 189).

In some cities, such as Philadelphia, Boston, and
Washington D.C., the incoming tide of fugitive Blacks produced many problems for the Union army because the slaves were either too old or too young to provide for themselves (Bullock, 1967). As early as 1862, W.T. Sherman, a general in the Union army, was one of the growing number of influential leaders to become concerned about the plight of Black fugitives in his area. On February 6, 1862, Sherman, talking about the plight of Blacks in his territory, "....called for the immediate action on the part of a highly favored and philanthropic people" (pg. 18). Sherman believed that those able to do so should help the incoming tide of Blacks to become educated and self-sufficient, relieving the government of their physical wants (Botume, 1893).

Out of this emergency situation, benevolent, nonsectarian societies formed to educate the Black fugitives (Bullock, 1967). Soon, church organizations joined the effort. Among some of the biggest of these institutions were the American Missionary Association and the Home Mission Society. In March, 1862, General Edward L. Pierce and the New England Freedmen’s Society helped to start the Port Royal Experiment. This was one of the major efforts to organize schools, modeled after the New England style, for Blacks.

Following the Port Royal Experiment, there was an increased desire to centralize the task of helping Black
fugitives to become self-sufficient (Bullock, 1967). From January 12, 1863 to March 5, 1865, the Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission made proposals on the effort. The result, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly known as the Freedmen’s Bureau, was started sometime around the ending of the Civil War (Bruner & others, 1992).

The Freedmen’s Bureau was an agency designed, in part, to help those newly freed Blacks in the South relocate, become reunited with lost ones, and become economically and politically stable. Originally, however, it did not provide for their schooling (Atlanta University, 1911). Yet, as many Northern politicians discovered, it was hard to deal with the objectives of reconstruction without giving Blacks access to mass, formalized education. The agency's first commissioner, General O.O. Howard, set up schools for Blacks (Bruner & others, 1992).

After the Freedmen’s Bureau started to organize institutions of learning for Blacks in the South, myriad college educated women in the North, particularly from the New England area, went to the South to teach freed Blacks. "These were referred to as New England School Moms" (Clarke, 1973, pg. 21). As in the Port Royal Experiment, the education these women brought to the South would be modeled after the New
England style.

From 1866-1870, Congress appropriated $5,145,124 to freedmen schools (Bullock, 1967). Consequently, the myth that Blacks were lazy and non-contributory in this period is dispelled after one sees that approximately $672,989 in taxes and tuition was paid to the Bureau by Blacks shortly after the Thirteenth Amendment set them free. Church organizations also donated over $500,000 (Bullock, 1967) during this time.

Traditionalists view reconstruction as the North’s attempts to humiliate Southerners "by placing them at the mercy of former slaves" (Bullock, 1967, pg. 23). While revisionists disagree with this ideology, most Southerners probably saw the Freedmen’s Bureau’s attempts to help freed slaves through traditionalist eyes. To say the least, there are many cases where Southerners staunchly resisted Northern intervention in the South (Zinn, 1990). In the end, it would take Union soldiers and military might in the Confederate states to make the South comply to the objectives of reconstruction.

On March 2, 1867, the Military Act of 1867 was enacted (Bruner & others, 1992). Its stipulations provided for Black suffrage and enabled Blacks to register as voters and to aid in constitutional conventions to make new state constitutions in Confederate states. Euro-Americans who had held public
office before the Civil War and had supported the Confederacy would not be allowed to participate in the political process. After the voters had approved the constitution and the Fourteenth Amendment, the state could then apply for readmission into the Union. Similar reconstruction acts like this produced twenty Black Congressmen, and two Black U.S. senate members, Hiram Revels and Blanche Bruce, both from Mississippi, throughout the South (Zinn, 1990).

Yet, DuBois (1963) asks, "What else could it [the Military Act of 1867] have provided for? If it had confined the vote to whites, not only would the anti-Negro legislation be confirmed, but the gift of additional political power to the South to be used against Northern industry and against democracy would be outright and irrevocable" (pg. 329).

Despite the above, however, Zinn (1990) states that President Andrew Johnson, who had succeeded Lincoln as President of the United States when he was assassinated on April 14, 1865, "...vetoed bills to help Negroes; he made it easy for Confederate states to come back into the Union without guaranteeing equal rights to blacks" (pg. 194).

By the early 1870′s, Southern states were gaining momentum in national politics (Clarke, 1973). This spelled certain doom for Blacks in the South, most of whom had come to depend on Northern protection for their social and political
advancements. Dunning (1967) contends that between 1868 and 1870, "there developed widespread series of disorders with which the name of the Ku Klux is associated" (pg. 67). The time was coming when Blacks' social status would be reduced slightly higher to that of a slave (Zinn, 1990).

In 1876, the presidential election was surrounded by scandal and chaos. Some twenty electoral votes were in dispute (Nash, 1992). Given to either side, the Democratic nominee, Samuel J. Tilden, or the Republican nominee, Rutherford B. Hayes, would become President. In a compromise, Hayes was elected President in exchange for the removal of Union troops from the South. The compromise also enabled the Southern states to deal independently with their "race" problems. Clarke (1973) states that after the Compromise of 1877, "The Freedmen’s Bureau and other agencies that had been set up to assist the former slaves were dismantled. Some southern politicians actually attempted to re-establish slavery" (pg. 22).

Almost twenty years later, another significant blow would be driven against Black progress in America. Homer Plessy, in a scenario arranged by the prestigious Black Republicans, known as the Comite', and other influential leaders in New Orleans, Louisiana, would test the civil rights of Blacks (Medley, 1994). On June 7, 1892, Plessy obtained a first-
class train ticket and sat in a coach reserved for whites only. Afterwards, Chris Cain, a detective hired by the Comite', arrested Plessy for violating the Separate Car Act. Ironically, this case, staged in New Orleans, the only Southern city to experiment with integrated public schools (Medley, 1994), would reach the Supreme Court, only to reinforce the separate, but equal doctrine.

"While legislation made things 'separate,' the 'equal' treatment of the Supreme Court ruling seldom materialized. The greatest disaster would come in education. The South spent very little money on black schools" (pp. 116-117).


The death of Frederick Douglass in 1895 left Black America without one of its most powerful political and social voices. Filling this void seemingly overnight was a former slave and Hampton Institute educated Black male by the name of Booker T. Washington. At the Atlanta Exposition, a forum put together by the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, which ironically took place during the same year of Douglas' death, Washington appealed to, and was widely accepted by, the mainstream society. This primarily came about because of his non-confrontationalist's position toward Euro-America. Yet, although Washington implied to prominent
whites in the audience that Blacks should take a subservient position to white Americans, he also believed that the two races could be as separate as "....the fingers, yet as one hand in all things essential to mutual progress" (Guess, 1992, pg. 25).

Though the above statement has left the door open for considerable debate, it helped to make Washington the preeminent Black voice in America- insomuch as Euro-Americans were concerned. For the most part, it would not be until 1903 that Washington would be seriously confronted for his philosophies concerning the type of education Blacks should receive and the role they would play in shaping the nation's future (Henry, 1992).

With his book, "The Souls of Black Folk", W.E.B. DuBois, born two years after the end of the Civil War and the first Black to graduate from Harvard with a doctorate of philosophy, refused to take a submissive position to white America. Indeed, DuBois was "...very much in the Douglass tradition of pushing for full civil, political and social rights" (pg. 13). This contrasted sharply with Washington who thought that Blacks could only obtain social and economic salvation if they received an industrial education and did not seek to confront the power structure of Euro-America. Additionally, DuBois believed in a "Talented Tenth", a movement to increase the
political and social viability of Black America which would be led by the Black intellelegensia who would undoubtedly receive their education from liberal colleges and universities. More than this though, DuBois believed that the industrial education of Blacks meant nothing if they did not have the political power to protect themselves from the oppression of the Euro-American society (Franklin, 1974).

Although he had originally congratulated Booker T. Washington on the speech he had given in Atlanta in 1895, DuBois would later come to call Washington’s oration the "Atlanta Compromise" (DuBois, 1989).

"So far as Mr. Washington preaches Thrift, Patience, and Industrial Training for the masses, we must hold up his hands and strive with him, rejoicing in his honors and glorying in the strength of Joshua called of God and of man to lead the headless host. But so far as Mr. Washington apologizes for injustice, North or South, does not rightly value the privilege and duty of voting, belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinctions, and opposes the higher training and ambition of our brighter minds,- so far as he, the South, or the Nation, does this- we must unceasingly and firmly oppose them" (pg. 57).

However, even in another aspect DuBois distinguished himself from Washington. In The Souls of Black Folk, DuBois
saw himself as embracing Blackness, as wanting to go back to the traditions of African peoples. Charles P. Henry (1992), states that "...the conflict between Washington and DuBois was more fundamental than the type of training blacks were to receive. It was a conflict of values and vision" (pg. 15). He goes on to say that in The Souls of Black Folk "...DuBois is suggesting that blacks must strive for something higher than simple material comfort. This spiritual striving, DuBois argues, must be grounded in black culture" (pg. 15).

Such an embracement of Black culture could not be encouraged in Booker T. Washington’s philosophy because its very tenants dictated total compliance to white culture. It also dictated that anything which threatened the established order was to be strongly discouraged. A movement toward Black culture, then, would have hindered Washington’s efforts for Euro-America would have most assuredly viewed it as confrontational and combative. Perhaps this, Washington’s seemingly obvious rejection of Blackness, is what made him so appealing to white America.

Despite this mainstream appeal, though, "Toward the end of his life, Washington’s grip was weakening due to the failure of his accommodationism to produce results. ‘Jim Crow’ and the lynching of blacks continued unabated during his reign" (pg. 13).
The Aftermath of Brown versus Board of Education and Integration

Perhaps no other civil rights legislation has had a bigger impact in the 20th century than the Supreme Court's ruling of the Brown v. Board of Education case. The appeal, which was actually four separate legal disputes which dealt with public school segregation "from the states of Delaware, South Carolina, Virginia, and Kansas" (McKenna, 1990, pg. 108), overruled the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court case, which made separate but equal facilities legal. Aiding the plaintiffs' litigation in the Brown v. Board of Education case was an examination, conducted by Kenneth and Mamie Clark, of Black children between the ages of 3 and 7. The study observed racial identification and racial preferences in dark and light-skinned Black children (Farrel & Olson, 1983). Findings from the Clark's study showed that a majority of those children in the study selected a white doll (65%) when asked questions about racial preference, or which color, black or white, held a positive meaning.

Based on this, the Supreme Court ruled that separate facilities were inherently unequal because they generated a feeling of inferiority. As a result, civil rights battles became more inflamed (McKenna, 1990) and contests to integrate other public facilities started earnestly. Many minorities,
particularly Blacks, lauded the Brown v. Board of Education case as a major achievement in their struggle for equity. However, mainstream America furiously fought the Supreme Court's decision to integrate all public schools. To circumvent this, mandatory busing was started ten years later to ensure equality to all students, but even this was challenged. Again, all eyes turned toward the highest court in the land.

Alphonso Pinkney (1992) tells us that, "The Supreme Court did not rule on the constitutionality of busing to eradicate dual school systems until 1971, when in Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, it ruled that school 'desegregation plans cannot be limited to the walk-in school,' and that busing was an appropriate tool to use in desegregating the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (North Carolina) schools" (pg. 138). As time progressed, however, busing was seen as falling short of providing full integration and equity (Cowden & Green, 1992). Today, many school systems, such as the Kansas City School District in Kansas City, Missouri, have adopted different approaches to implementing full equality and integration (The Economist, 1993).

However, in many contemporary urban Black communities, Blacks frequently look at the adversities caused by desegregation. "Today, 40 years later, the euphoria of Brown,
has been supplanted by a sense of resignation, a feeling that the ruling was extremely helpful at that time but did not anticipate or do anything to correct the modern problems..." (Wiley III, 1994, pg. 32) In the South, desegregation has led to the demotion and termination of many Black school staff or administrators (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1974).

Additionally, some scholars, such as Jonathan Kozol (1991), question whether desegregation has ever taken place. In his latest book, *Savage Inequalities*, which is an examination of various school systems throughout the United States, Kozol states that, "Like most Americans, I knew that segregation was still common in the public schools, but did not know how much it had intensified" (pg. 3) Moreover, the author says, "Most of the urban schools I visited were 95 to 99 percent nonwhite. In no school that I saw anywhere in the United States were nonwhite children in large numbers truly intermingled with white children" (pg. 3). Also, "Even in those schools where some ‘restructuring’ has taken place, the fact of racial segregation has been, and continues to be, largely uncontested" (pg. 4).

**Realities of Black Male Social Status and Academic Achievement**

The reality of Black males’ social status is both astonishing and alarming. In this aspect, Black men have
virtually been rendered impotent. In 1991, there were more African-American men incarcerated (609,000) than there were in college (436,000) (Kunjufu, 1991). In most cases, Black males are overrepresented in the prison system (Blumstien, 1982), and many who are not incarcerated fall prey to violence and drug addiction.

Notwithstanding this, Black male homicide is the leading cause of death for Black men aged 15-24 (Smitherman & Watson, 1992). Moreover, it is predicted that by the year 2000, if current trends continue, only 30% of the Black male population will be accessible (Hare, 1989); that is, only 30% of the Black male population will not be incarcerated or addicted to drugs.

Academically, the scenario differs little. Though Black males and females are overrepresented in special education classes, and are twice likely as whites to be labeled mentally retarded (Shapiro & others, 1993), it are Black males who are usually placed in lower-track classes and classified as learning disabled. In the New Orleans schools system, "Though black males represented 43 percent of the public school population in the 1896-87 academic year, they accounted for 57.5% of the non-promotions, 65% of the suspensions, 80% of the expulsions and 45% of the dropouts" (Garibaldi & others, 1988, pg. 3). Furthermore, a 1985-86 study (Bridges, 1986) of
6th and 9th grade students in the Wake County Public School System, using the California Achievement Test, showed that, "In all cases, black males attained the lowest scores within the study sample" (pg. 6).

While the two above paragraphs do not convey the full spectrum of national Black male social status and academic achievement, Holland (1991) states that they are applicable to many communities and school systems in the urban United States. Also, while social status and academic achievement may seem unrelated, Pickney (1992) states that academic achievement plays a substantial role in what one’s social position will be.

"Black people frequently lack access to quality education, thereby regulating them to low occupational status and consequently low incomes. These three variables—education, occupation, and income— are interwoven in American society, and although some manage to advance themselves in one or two of these, it is usually education that determines one’s status in the larger society" (pg. 135).

Many Black males who have been, and are being incarcerated, did not achieve academically or dropped out of high school. Unable to attain a viable living because of this, they turned to illegitimate methods of obtaining economic livelihoods. Eugene Pincham, a judge in Chicago,
Illinois, has stated that 95 percent of the Black males who have appeared in his court "could not read beyond a sixth grade level and were high school dropouts" (Kunjufu, 1991, pg. 44). Additionally, in an examination of Black inmates in North Carolina’s Central Prison and the Triangle Correctional Institute, most of the responders interviewed had not distinguished themselves academically and had viewed education simply as a failing experience (Bridges, 1986).

In lieu of this, one must address what the ramifications are to the Black family and community. Gibbs (1991) states that the annual median family income for single-parent African-American households (the majority of which Black females headed) is just 57 percent to that of whites, $17,604 a year as compared to $30,809. One can assume that this disparity will increase if the academic achievement of Black males is not elevated because their inferior schooling will regulate them to low status jobs or help to incarcerate them. Too, the presence of positive role models and mentors, already at a dismal low in urban Black communities, will undoubtedly suffer if this problem is not addressed (Kunjufu, 1985).
CHAPTER III
THE AFROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE CONSIDERED

Introduction

Chapter two consisted of five components: Chattel Slavery in the Antebellum South, the Freedmen’s Bureau, Reconstruction and the Public School, Booker T. Washington versus W.E.B. DuBois, the Aftermath of Brown versus Board of Education and Integration, and the realities of Black Male Social Status and Academic Achievement. Chapter three will consist of four components: Afrocentricism versus Eurocentricism, Afrocentricism and Self-Esteem, the Make-up of Afrocentric curriculums, and How Afrocentricism Helps/How Eurocentricism fails.

Moreover, chapter three will show that culture is essential to any race because it provides a reference point and framework for existence. In the United States, the dominant cultural structure of society has always been European-based, or Eurocentric. To some, this may seem rather ironic in view of the fact that this nation is a proverbial "melting pot" of diverse nationalities- many of which are non-European and highly melanized people. Many times, however, those peoples not adopting or differing from Eurocentric thought are castigated and treated as pariahs.
Afrocentricism versus Eurocentricism

Afrocentricity as an organized term was started by Molefi Asante (1980) in his book Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change. Yet, Afrocentricity as an ideology can be found in earlier 20th century works such as Carter G. Woodson’s (1933) The Mis-education of the Negro. According to Asante (1991), "Afrocentricity is a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person" (pg. 171). This perspective is imperative to African peoples, or peoples of African descent, for it allows them to cope with outside stimuli—many which are sometimes adverse. To not have a centric outlook confuses and controls the individual, for they have no established basis for interpreting data and reacting to external conditions. "Culture provides the blueprint that determines the way an individual thinks, feels, and behaves in society" (Boateng, 1990, pg. 73). Additionally, centrism, "provides a people with a general design for living and patterns for interpreting their reality (Nobles, 1982, pg. 44).

Regardless of this, however, many people in the United States often find themselves engulfed by a world which is highly Eurocentric. This is detrimental to nationalities not of European descent, for "Eurocentricity is based on white supremacist notions whose purposes are to protect white
privilege and advantage in education, economics, politics, and so forth" (Asante, 1991, pp. 171-172). Thus, those not of the European culture frequently find themselves surrounded by abrasive conditions and effectively neutralized when differing in ideology or action than the mainstream society.

Whereas Eurocentricism emphasizes individuality, competition, and survival of the fittest, Afrocentricism emphasizes group thought, cooperation, and survival of the tribe (Nobles, 1982). This, then, is why some Afrocentric scholars deny that Afrocentrism is a Black version of Eurocentricism for the Eurocentric view is oppressive and dictates "Eurocentric realities as 'universal'; i.e., that which is white is presented as applying to the human condition in general, while that which is non-white is viewed as group-specific and, therefore not 'human'" (Asante, 1991, pg. 172). This establishes another contrast between Afrocentricism and Eurocentricism. Since Eurocentricism is hegemonic- meaning that it seeks to establish itself as the supreme centric ideology- it differs from Afrocentricism because of Afrocentricism's pluralistic position toward other cultures (Asante, 1987).

In terms of pedagogy, Eurocentricism displaces non-white students in the context of the curriculum for the curriculum in the United States secondary public schools is written from
the perspective of European peoples (Lomotey, 1990). Hale-Benson (1986) examined how culture helps to shape cognition in students. However, those non-white students who are immersed in an entirely Eurocentric curriculum may be deprived of certain cognitive skills because the school does not utilize a multicultural pedagogy. Additionally, non-white students must instructionally seek identity, and find the relevancy of that instruction through a European perspective- a centric stance that is not intrinsic.

Eurocentric pedagogy is further detrimental to non-white students because it perpetuates established boundaries of power for certain political or ethnic sectors of society (Shujaa, 1993). In lieu of this, pedagogy may be divided into two categories: education and schooling. While schooling is an inferior form of pedagogy, education explained "...as a process that locates the member of a culture within their cultural history, facilitates the transmission of cultural knowledge, and affirms the cultural identity" (pg. 11).

Thus, due to the highly Eurocentric nature of U.S. public secondary school curriculums, most Euro-American students are educated, whereas most non-white students are schooled. This has not only helped to hamper non-white student centric identity, it has also maintained the social and political status quo of power in the U.S., creating an uneven
distribution in the favor of Euro-American peoples. Despite this, the call for Afrocentric or multicultural pedagogy has frequently come under attack as being anti-white or racist. Yet, "this form of education is not anti-American or anti-white; it seeks to provide balance in an unbalanced educational system" (Kunjufu and Vann, 1993, pg. 490).

Another criticism of Afrocentric curriculums has been that they do not adequately prepare students to compete in the Euro-American, or mainstream society. However, this castigation is erroneous and misplaced. Since the Afrocentric view is pluralistic, it encourages the student to have knowledge or share the perspectives of other cultures. So, while the Eurocentric student could not adequately relate to Afrocentric ideologies- because his culture is not pluralistic- an Afrocentric student could effectively relate to Eurocentric ideologies because his centric stance dictates the understanding and appreciation of other cultures.

**Afrocentricism and Self-esteem**

There has been much written on the positive affects that Afrocentric curriculums have on Black students. It has been suggested that one of the main outcomes of these is an increase in self-esteem (Kunjufu & Vann) (Asante, 1991). According to Drs. Julia and Nathan Hare (1991), self-esteem
may be categorized into two parts: psychological self-esteem and sociological self-esteem. Psychological self-esteem refers to individual or personal feelings about one's self. Sociological self-esteem refers to the feelings one has about one's race. Yet, because of the cultural nature of Afrocentricity, when dealing with self-esteem many ascribe to the sociological definition.

It is believed that Black student self-esteem is increased when implementing an Afrocentric curriculum because it enables Black students to see the full spectrum of historical contributions that their race has given to the world. In Eurocentric or non-multicultural curriculums, Black students do not examine the contributions of their race. Therefore, "The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and almost every book he studies" (Woodson, 1933, pg. 2). This may further be detrimental to cognitive development in Black students for "...to handicap a student by teaching him that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless is the worst sort of lynching" (pg. 3).

Many, though, are skeptical and even reluctant to endorse the affects that Afrocentricism has on self-esteem in Black students (Traub, 1991). Some have even gone as far to say that the reports of an increase in self-esteem, as attributed
to Afrocentricism, are made-up or exaggerated. Indeed, Drs. Julia and Nathan Hare (1991) state, "...we are not saying that self-esteem can play no part in a child’s performance...We are merely saying what is usually ignored, denied or left unsaid: that self-esteem is too much exaggerated as a panacea, or even a necessary ingredient to high-level academic performance among Blacks" (pg. 37).

To a lesser extent, the author here agrees with the statements of the Hares. Left alone, self-esteem cannot be the cure all for the adversities facing Black students. Unfortunately, many proponents of Afrocentric curriculums often fail to include other variable besides increasing self-esteem when seeking to raise the scholastic success of Black students. However, to deny that self-esteem is not an important factor in academic achievement is perhaps a greater error. It puts one on the bandwagon of Euro-Americans who either do not see the need for an increase in self-esteem among Black students or take it for granted. This may undoubtedly be easy for Euro-Americans to do since Eurocentric curriculums provide self-esteem for Euro-American students.

Evidence shows that Black youth still suffer from poor levels of sociological self-esteem (Toufexis, 1987) and, while there may not be a direct relationship, it can be said that there is a correlated relationship between self-esteem and
scholastic success. The Black student who reads of Christopher Columbus, but not of Benjamin Bannecker, may begin to wonder about the importance of education since his race is never mentioned. Worse, he may attempt to imitate the mainstream culture, but since this culture is not intrinsic his "whiteness" may prove to be his undoing. "...even if the Negroes do successfully imitate the whites, nothing new has been accomplished....The unusual gifts of the race have not been developed, and an unwilling world, therefore, continues to wonder what the Negro is good for" (Woodson, 1933, pg. 7).

**Make-up of Afrocentric Curriculums**

The Afrocentric curriculum can be defined as two parts: comprehensive and the rites of passage. Comprehensive Afrocentric curriculums in the United States secondary public schools, like those in Detroit, Michigan (Staff, 1994), or Kansas City, Missouri (Bullard, 1993), have a structured pedagogy that not only immerses students in African history and ideologies, but seeks to show students African contributions in the math and sciences. In some comprehensive Afrocentric schools, students are required to wear uniforms which might consist of the African colors: red, black, and green.

Discipline at comprehensive Afrocentric schools is often
strict, yet not without its rewards for good behavior. In Kansas City, Missouri, at J.S. Chick African-Centered Shule', students are rewarded for appropriate demeanor by receiving Khufu cash (Bullard, 1993). Bi-weekly, those who have exhibited good behavior are able to go to the Village Market to use their Khufu cash to buy candy or games. Other students are given individual African beads for good conduct and, as the beads are collected to make a complete necklace, are given special privileges.

Above all, however, both comprehensive and rites of passage Afrocentric curriculums are grounded in the seven principles of Nguzo Saba- a practice derived from the Black American holiday of Kwanza. It is through these ideologies that students learn Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith).

Moreover, some comprehensive Afrocentric curriculums may include a morning meditation session called Harambee- a Kiswahili word for coming together. "This is followed by a brief meditation with eyes closed and uplifted palms to help the students relieve stress and concentrate on their studies" (Staff, pg. 19, 1994). Usually, comprehensive Afrocentric institutions require strong community and parental support.
Indeed, before their child can be admitted, sometimes parents are required to sign contracts which commit them to volunteer service to the school for several hours each month. Consequently, Paul Robeson Academy in Detroit, Michigan, "...goes as far as issuing parent report cards to let parents know how well they’re doing- a move that has sparked national attention" (pg. 21).

Though most comprehensive Afrocentric schools have a rites of passage program designed into their curriculums, few rites of passage programs are comprehensive. In fact, some are not implemented through public secondary schools, but through community, fraternal/sororital, or church organizations. Too, the rites of passage program sometimes requires less monies to carry out than comprehensive Afrocentric curriculums and may be a way to get around much of the political or social controversy surrounding Afrocentricism. However, many of the rites of passage programs which are carried out by public secondary schools are probably done on an after-school, volunteer basis (Trotter, 1991).

Simply put, the rites of passage is a ritual which symbolizes an adolescent’s journey from puberty to adulthood. At the Ethan Allen School in Wales, Wisconsin, as in many areas throughout the nation, the rites of passage program is
In rites of passage programs, Black youth, as in comprehensive Afrocentric curriculums, utilize the seven principles of Nguzo Saba. Tasks designated to each adolescent may include developing family logs, becoming involved in the community, adopting a mentor, researching family and black history, or developing an economic awareness. Additionally, these tasks may be carried out by role-playing, group discussions with "elders" (mature adults), field trips, or written assignments (Lewis-Moses, 1992). After certain stages have been completed and the adolescent has made satisfactory progress, the rites of passage program culminates in a ceremony which usually includes family members of youths participating in the program and other "elders" or participants who have been active in the process. Andrew Trotter (1991) observed a rites of passage ceremony:

"Two youths clad in African costumes pound out a thudding rhythm on ceremonial drums as a column of boys advances toward the front of the crowded auditorium. A matching column of girls moves down another aisle. The boys wear colorful vests and hats called 'kufis'; the girls
wear black-patterned wrap skirts and white head cloths. Then, one by one, the boys and girls step across a symbolic threshold, accept a colorful kinte cloth around their shoulders, and speak into a microphone their new African names, a symbol of achieving a new state. 'My name is Lezia,' says one girl, 'and the rites of passage has taught me hope' (pg. 48).

While the length of rites of passage programs vary, some may last from three to eighteen months (Warfield-Coppock, 1992). Too, while the age of the participants may also vary (in the Ethan Allen School, the age for participants in the rites of passage program ranges from 12-19), Drs. Julia and Nathan Hare (1985), in *Bringing Black boy to Manhood: The Passage*, state that, "We have set the age for completion of the Year of PASSAGE at 12. In addition to psychological and sociological principles, the age 12 is supported by both sacred and secular tradition. Moreover, the boy is poised to enter physical puberty where we are able to catch him prior to the point of no return" (pg. 26).

How Afrocentricism Helps/How Eurocentricism Fails

In light of what has already been mentioned, one may still wonder whether the conditions facing Black students
warrant such a drastic deviation from traditional curriculums in some urban U.S. secondary public school systems. Because this work focuses on Black male students, it is now necessary to show how Afrocentricism and all-Black male academies can remedy some of the adversities hindering their cognitive and scholastic achievement. In doing this, the reader will gain a greater scope as to how traditional Eurocentric curriculums are causing substandard scholastic academic achievement in Black male adolescents.

Because socioeconomic status has been shown to play a significant part in academic achievement (Levine, 1992), Black households on a whole are at a disadvantage to Euro-American households since the aggregate Black family income is $21,548 compared to the $37,783 median income of white families (Wiley III, 1994). This is even more adverse in the urban domain where there are a greater number of single-parent households. As was stated in Chapter 2, the median income for single-parent African-American families was 57 percent to that of single-parent households (Gibbs, 1991).

Consequently, because approximately 60% of Black families are headed by females, Black males born into the urban domain must frequently face not only the hinderance that their families' income has provided, but must also cope with the absence of any immediate positive Black male figures. Spencer
Holland (1991) says that compared to Black boys, Black girls "...enter school more prepared... for activities that characterize early schooling" (pg. 41). This may be due, in part, to the absence of Black fathers in many Black households, gender expectations of our society, and contrasting expectations of Black single-parent females for Black girls and boys (Kunjufu, 1986). "In addition, inner-city Black girls are exposed very early in their academic careers to positive, consistent, literate, Black females who offer alternative role models to those encountered in their non-school environments" (Holland, 1991, pg. 41).

Jawanza Kunjufu (1983) (1985) examined the dilemma of the Black male adolescent and the consequences it afforded to public secondary schools. Because only approximately 6.9% of public school teachers are Black and about only 1.2% of these are male, Kunjufu believed that many urban public schools failed to raise the cognitive development of Black male adolescents since they provided few, if any, positive role models for them to emulate. Moreover, Kunjufu postulated that since the majority of public school teachers were white middle class females, and since many of these had little -if any- comprehensive contact with Black ideology and culture, they could not effectively teach Black males, either due to intimidation or ignorance. Consequently, this may lead Black
male students to be erroneously placed in learning disabled classes, of which they are a gross disproportionate statistic.

However, when analyzing Black male students in Afrocentric, all-Black male classes or schools, many of the adversities facing Black male students have lessened or have disappeared altogether. Indeed, such institutions and classes have demonstrated a marked improvement in the discipline and the academic achievement of Black male students (Traub, 1991) (Staff, 1994). Some scholars have concluded that this is due to the presence of more African-American male teachers with which Black male students can look upon as positive role models (Gibbs, 1991). Additionally, through Afrocentric curriculums, Black male students can academically relate and see the relevance of scholastic success from their own centric view.

Project 2000, a mentoring experiment started by Dr. Spencer Holland at the Stanton Elementary School in Washington, D.C., focuses on providing positive adult Black role models for Black male elementary students (Gibbs, 1991). Several hours each week, prominent adult Black men from the Washington, D.C., area speak to Black male students about their experiences. Through using parts of the Nguzo Saba-Ujima (collective work and responsibility)- Black male students see that their future dreams of economic and social
viabilities are not far-fetched. They are also encouraged, by a Black male, to academically succeed. During the past several years, test scores at Stanton Elementary have risen for Black male students, with attendance improving accordingly.

A similar program that was started in the Dade County Public Schools in 1987 also enhanced class attendance by Black male students by more than 23 percent above mainstream Eurocentric classes and improved class conduct (Holland, 1991). "The overall esprit de corps improved significantly and gave the boys a sense of pride and feeling of being special" (pg. 42). Yet, because it was believed that the classes conflicted with the Title IX of the Federal Civil Rights Act, they were discontinued several years later.

The differences in the above mentioned classes and institutions and traditional Eurocentric schools and curriculums is that the latter do not provide enough positive historical and gender references for Black males to emulate (Kunjufu & Vann, 1993) (Holland, 1992) (Asante, 1991). Thus, in the urban domain one of the major problems for Black males is that "...the Black boy is likely to see in the role models reflected there a damaged 'looking-glass self.' There is no lack of ambition but a stark discrepancy between ambition and hope" (Hare, 1989, pg. 31). This, coupled with the
overwhelming presence of white, middle class female teachers who are not likely to understand the values and ideologies of the inner-city, make for a devastating combination for Black male students.
CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY REMARKS

Introduction

Chapter three consisted of four parts: Afrocentricism versus Eurocentricism, Afrocentricism and Self-Esteem, the Make-up of Afrocentric curriculums, and How Eurocentricism Helps/How Eurocentricism Fails. Chapter four will consist of five parts: Why Focus on the Black Male?, Criticisms of Afrocentric, All-Black male Academies, Do Afrocentric, All-Black Male Academies Work?, and Conclusions.

Moreover, chapter four will discuss why the subject of Afrocentric, all-Black male academies, while still relatively new, is deeply controversial. These challenges have come in the form of legal and community disputes to which some all-Black male academies have overcome and others have succumbed. Despite the mire of criticism surrounding them, however, Afrocentric, all-Black male academies seem destined to be around for some time, if not in actuality, at least in ideology, given the deteriorating conditions of public secondary schools in the United States and Black America’s growing skepticism of public Eurocentric mainstream schools.

Why Focus On The Black Male?

Maslow (1986) stated a prescribed set of basic human
needs that must be met before man can advance to another stage of development. Yet, if a similar set of basic educational needs for cognitive development exists, as it pertains to the Black male they have never really been fulfilled since his debut in America. Indeed, one of the basic cultural educational needs of African males, the rites of passage, was destroyed (Perkins, 1986) hindering cognitive and cultural development. Yet, in many urban communities, today’s rites of passage for Black males has become "...how much pain or violence you can inflict on another person...how many girls you can impregnate...how much reefer you can smoke...how many times you can go to jail and come out 'unrehabilitated'..." (Kunjufu, 1983, pg. 11).

This writer has chosen to focus on Black males, in part, because he is a Black male and seeks to better understand the complexities facing them in order to find some solutions. This writer was further interested in studying an educational and social system seemingly designed to ensnare Black men (Brock, 1989). This is not to say that Black women do not face racism. It is also not meant to say that a separate study should not be done on Black females. Both Black males and females have faced racism and had their cognitive development hindered as a result.

Yet, when dealing with a society that is highly
Eurocentric and, thus, male dominated, it is the male who, in the mainstream society's eye, is the primary threat to their rule (Hare, 1989). If one, therefore, neutralizes the male, that race will ostensibly suffer since the male is nullified. Too, while the women of that ethnic group may make important social, political, and economic strides, the race on a whole will continue to suffer since a male-dominated community will only allow a woman to make social and economic advances before certain social/political barriers are erected. "To destroy or neutralize Black men creates a critical void in the Black family structure and forces Black women (without men) to assume the role of women (mother) as well as men (father)" (Madhubuti, 1989, pg. 39).

In a lot of adverse public educational categories, Black males are a gross, overrepresented statistic. They are twice likely to receive corporal punishment and to be suspended as Euro-American males, and twice likely to be placed in special education classes (Dent, 1989).

Since many Black male students have failed to produce academically, their economic futures are frequently unstable. This instability has not only affected Black men as individuals, but the race as a whole (Hare, 1989). Whereas Black females may be ready to establish permanent contact with a Black male who can monetarily contribute to a permanent
relationship, they may be reluctant to consummate a commitment if he is not financially stable. This latter sentence has helped many Black women to distance themselves from Black men. Worse, it has aided in producing the single Black female parent. Yet, in playing the dual parent role (mother and father) to the Black male adolescent, "The Black boy...may gain a distorted image of his role as protector and provider, rejecting the occupational world which rejects him, shunning or at least disdaining his possibilities in the marketplace and its routinized, time-clock demands" (pg. 29). Thus, the cycle of contortion for the Black male continues because even the next major socializing institution, the traditional Eurocentric school, fails him. It fails him because it does not provide an alternative for a system of problematic machinations designed to hinder his scholastic and social progress.

One way out of this dilemma may be the Black role model. Yet, even these are so few and far between that many Black adolescents must try to be like "Mike" to have any hope of economically and socially achieving. Unfortunately, this form of emulation in itself provides problems. Recent athletic collegiate rules, such as the NCAA’s Proposition 48, have helped to curtail and limit the number of Black males entering comprehensive universities and professional sports.
This, then, provides the Black male with few choices of gaining social recognition and economic livelihood (Tollet, 1989). Yet, this narrow range of options produces another deadly scenario, entrapping many young Black male adolescents in a world of illegal drugs, drive-by shootings, car jackings, armed robberies, or jail.

To reiterate and summarize, the above has led this writer to focus so much on the Black male because, although education alone cannot rectify all of the precarious situations in which Black men have been thrown, it can make a difference. Consequently, if current trends do not reverse themselves, by the year 2000 it is predicted that "...70 percent of Black males will be either unemployed, in jail, on dope, or dead; with obvious consequences for their women, children and for society in general" (pg. 26). Already, only 38 percent of Black families have a father present in the household (Kunjufu, 1991) and Black males represent in excess of 50 percent of those who drop out in urban schools systems (Smitherman & Watson, 1992).

If the school must be changed from its traditional form of Eurocentricism, which provides few historical and material role models for Black boys, so be it. The Black community can ill-afford to let the status quo continue to aid in the destruction of Black men. Moreover, Euro-America can ill-
afford to let the "Frankenstein" it has helped to create to run rampant; in the end, even the storybook Frankenstein turned on its creator.

**Criticisms of Afrocentric, All-Black Male Academies**

One of the main criticisms of all-Black male Academies is that they would return the educational system to segregation (Smitherman & Watson, 1992) (Holland, 1991) (Chiles, 1992). Indeed, Johnathon Kozol, in an interview in *Essence Magazine* says that the push for all-Black, all-male academies "...is heartbreaking..." because "...they are operating under the assumption that they we will always have separate and unequal schools" (Chiles, 1992, pg. 106). Yet even Kozol, in his books, *Death at an Early Age* (1967) and *Savage Inequalities* (1991), is forced to admit that while one can outlaw de jure segregation, one cannot outlaw de facto segregation.

Many school systems which have pushed for Afrocentric, all-Black male institutions or classes, such those proposed in Detroit and Baltimore, already have non-white populations of 80 percent or more (Hayes & Moses, 1992) (Smitherman & Watson, 1992). Therefore, to say that Afrocentric, all-Black male schools would return the educational system to segregation is asinine. One cannot return something that never was. If not
by law, much of the educational system is already segregated. After lauded landmark Civil Rights court cases, such as Brown versus Board of Topeka, many Euro-Americans fled the cities for the suburbs.

In lieu of this, though, some social scientists, such as Kenneth Clark, believe that all-Black schools or all-Black programs would "...reinforce negative stereotypes and reduce opportunities for educating children" (Holland, 1987, pg. 6). However, this belief is erroneous in two ways.

First, Afrocentric, all-Black male academies do not seek to perpetuate negative stereotypes; they dispel them by allowing Black male adolescents to see the full spectrum of historical contributions of their race and to learn from their own centric perspective. Second, only through a traditional Eurocentric curriculum are educational opportunities reduced and negative stereotypes reinforced due to the racist ideology and absence of non-white historical contributions (Asante, 1991). Indeed, one of the premises that Asante (1991) makes is that "...a White supremacist-dominated society will develop a White supremacist educational system" (pg. 170). Since Eurocentricism, therefore, is based on White supremacist notions, it is a Eurocentric, and not an Afrocentric, curriculum or school that promotes negative stereotypes and limits educational opportunities for students not of the
mainstream culture.

Despite this author's rejection of Clark's and others' assessment of all-Black male institutions, one parent who had enrolled her son in Detroit's African-centered, Malcolm X academy withdrew him because she said the curriculum was extreme and racist (Staff, 1994). "'I didn't think I would have to deal with the kinds of questions my son was coming home asking about, such as why the white man did certain things,' Thorton said" (pg. 20). However, the writer here, while not agreeing with the parent, believes occurrences like this to be normal. Many people, even those who are non-white, when presented with something from their own centric perspective, will object to it because they have assimilated their thinking to the mainstream ideology (Woodson, 1933). So, while the forementioned statement by the parent- as it pertained to the curriculum at Detroit's Malcolm X academy-may not have necessarily been true, it might have stemmed from her lack of centric knowledge and ability to effectively respond to questions her child was asking.

Another major criticism of Afrocentric, all-Black male academies- one surely to play a crucial role in deciding whether they will be able to receive public funds in the future- is that they discriminate on the basis of sex and race (Hayes & Moses, 1991) (Smitherman & Watson, 1991). Detroit's
proposed all-Black male academies- Marcus Garvey, Paul Robeson, and Malcolm X- encountered this dilemma when a suit was filed for this reason by the National Organization for Women Legal Defense and Education Fund (NOWLDEF) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), August 22, 1991, four days prior to their opening. To prevent their opening, Federal Judge George Woods granted an injunction. In a compromise with the ACLU and NOWLDEF, the Detroit School Board, "...agreed to reopen admission to the academies and to admit approximately 136 girls as of September 9, 1991, to what are now termed 'African-centered academies'..." (pg. 90).

To date, however, Black males account for approximately 90 percent of the enrollment at Detroit’s African-centered academies, with several Euro-American male students also attending (Staff, 1994).

While similar programs that place Black male students in same-gender, Afrocentric classes have escaped the Detroit School System’s fate- due to the fact there was no need for additional public funds (Holland, 1992), it raises some ethical, if not legal, questions. In many urban communities, there are special schools for pregnant female students that are funded and endorsed by the public. Since there was an evident need to create a special school for pregnant students (which was probably justified through statistical analysis’
and testing), a school was developed to satisfy that need. Yet, it might be seemingly asinine for anyone who is not pregnant, particularly a male student, to attempt to go to a school that was not designed for them.

In addition to this, "...legal comparisons with the racial segregation of American schools and the historic Brown vs Board decision are both ahistorical and unfounded. There is no basis in fact or intent whereby a case can be made for a pattern of gender discrimination against girls in the Detroit Public School District" (Smitherman & Watson, 1992, pg. 91).

**Do Afrocentric, all-Black male Academies Work?**

Since the previous mentioned legalities has forced many public funded, Afrocentric, all-Black male academies and same gender classes to become either co-ed, multiracial, or both, many of the institutions examined by this author do not fully fit his description of a true Afrocentric, all-Black male academy. In this author’s opinion, a true all-Black male academy should not be altered to accommodate Black female students, nor should it be altered to accommodate non-white students or students of European descent. Accordingly, the academy should be composed primarily of Black male teachers at the primary grades (Holland, 1992) (Kunjufu, 1983), with more
leeway given to the upper secondary grades.

Despite this, however, those organizations and institutions examined by this author do have several components which makeup true Afrocentric, all-Black male academies:

1. An Afrocentric curriculum
2. Strong administrative support
3. Strong community support
4. Strong parental support
5. An assertive disciplinary code which students are not allowed to deviate from
6. Cultural rewards for appropriate behavior
7. An internal, established rites of passage program
8. Uniqueness in establishing parental responsibility
9. A strong presence of assertive Black male teachers, particularly at the primary grades

Separated from any of the above collective, the components of Afrocentric, all-Black male academies may not be as affective in raising cognitive development and scholastic achievement. Yet, perhaps two of the most crucial are number one and number nine. These two, maybe more than any of the others, work together in unison.

An Afrocentric curriculum, together with assertive Black male teachers who may serve as role models, may give those adolescents in urban areas self-esteem, an identity of self, and a viable role model to emulate and establish future political, social goals. Consequently, one of the most unique components of some of the Afrocentric institutions studied is their ability to hold some of the parents directly responsible
for their involvement with the school and the academic achievement of their children.

Though mentioned in Chapter 3, Detroit’s Paul Robeson African-centered Academy’s idea of issuing parent report cards has led some parents to put more emphasis on their child’s education (Staff, 1994). As Debbie Levingston, a parent with two students at that academy discovered she could improve on spending more time with her children’s academically. "The report card was definitely a motivator," Levingston said. "I used to drop my kids off in the morning and see them at night. You have to make the time." (pg. 21).

Conclusion

This study has shown that Afrocentric, all-Black male academies in urban areas are a needed entity. It is the urban area that is the most precarious and destructive for Black male adolescents. However, Afrocentric, all-Black male academies are not a panacea to the educational woes facing Black male students. Like the old adage, "Rome was not built in a day," the educational plague of Black men, wrought over centuries, cannot be solved over night.

Since Afrocentric, all-Black male academies are such a radical departure from traditional Eurocentric schools and curriculums, they represent a threat to the established
mainstream order. While this may automatically erect certain barriers for said schools, they may best serve Black communities if they were private (Hood, 1991) (Raterray & Shujaa, 1991). Though this might mean soliciting donations— or even charging tuition—it would curtail any outside political, administrative, or legal interference from the mainstream community. It would also silence those critics not of the mainstream culture, but who refuse to adopt an Afrocentric perspective, nonetheless.

In doing this research, this author has uncovered several other alternatives to improving the academic achievement of not only Black males, but the United States public educational system as a whole. Some of these include tuition tax credits and corporate-run schools. Yet, while these options to public educational improvement open the door for much debate and criticism, they do not adequately respond to the needs of Black male students. Indeed, this writer would warn those who would so freely adopt any alternative to education to pay close attention to the bigger picture. Providing tuition tax credits may not improve scholastic success if it only provides access to schools which are still traditionally Eurocentric. Moreover, when dealing with corporate-run schools, one must remember what is economically feasible is not morally feasible.
This author does not suggest that Blacks should reject any alternative to traditional education if it is offered by the mainstream society. He is saying, however, that a study of the past history of the United States should dictate to non-whites to examine institutions or ideologies offered by Euro-America before embracing it.

A recommendation by this author is that there be quantitative research done of the affects that Black male teachers have on Black male students. This may lead to a better understanding as to how Black male teachers improve sociological self-esteem and academic achievement. In addition, this author also recommends that a legal study be done on how Afrocentric, all-Black male academies may use public funds without running into sex or racial discrimination disputes.
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