Shallonda Bush-Daniels

Examining the Overrepresentation of African-American Males in Special
Education

May 2008

Examining the Overrepresentation of African-American Males in Special Education

Abstract

This literature review focuses on the overrepresentation of African-American males in special education. The most prevalent factors that contribute to this epidemic are poverty and the perceptions of teachers, their attitudes towards African-American men and the lack of their cultural understandings. Not only does this literature review focus on identifying the problem, but it also includes various intervention and solution strategies which will improve the equity of placement and ultimately increase the overall attendance rate of African-American males in areas of higher education and give them the opportunity to attain prominent positions in the work force. In my opinion, this will inevitably solidify the state of the black family structure.

Introduction

Kill them before they grow (Porter, 1997). Unfortunately that is the attitude many members of society have regarding African-American males. Not in the literal sense of death perhaps, but if you kill a black man's spirit and opportunity for success when he's a boy, you ultimately destroy the chance for him to become a productive member of society.

For over ten years I have been employed by the New York City Department of Education. During those years, I have witnessed that within the special education population of the school, the majority of students were Black and/or Hispanic. I am generally concerned with the huge disproportionality when it comes to African-American males being placed into special

education classes.  What is the problem when it comes to African-American males regarding their academic achievement?  Is the problem based on a genetic factor?  Are African-American males genetically inferior to their European counterparts in regards to academics? Are African-American males being misdiagnosed?  Are teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards African-American males taking the place of a proper evaluation?

The problem lies within many different factors.   I plan to examine credible factors that contribute to the overrepresentation of African-American males in special education settings. According to the article, *Unproven Links: Can Poverty Explain Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education,* Russell J. Skiba, et.al.(2005) states that an underlying factor to the overrepresentation of minorities, black males in particular, is poverty.

> Researchers say socioeconomic factors contribute to a students' increased likelihood of needing special education.  A child in poverty has greater risks of having low birth weight and of being exposed to lead paint and other environmental poisons, factors that could inhibit mental development.  In addition, students who live in atypical family structures and come from poor neighborhoods may not be as well prepared for school (Fine, 2002).

Another factor that contributes to the overrepresentation of African-American males in special education is teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and reactions to their behavior.  According to the article, *The Effects of African American Movement Styles on Teachers' Perceptions and Reactions*, La Vonne I. Neal, et.al.(2003) performed  a study based on how teachers perceive African-American males.  According to the study, many teachers view African-American males as being aggressive and are pegged as being learning disabled solely based on their movement styles.

 I honestly believe that the overrepresentation of African-American males in special education is linked to the low attendance rate of African-American males in areas of higher education as well as the high attendance rate of African-American males that are currently

incarcerated. "There are an estimated 1.5 million Black men in prison and another 3.5 million on probation. Black males make up more than 70 percent of the total prison population, even though they make up only 6 percent of the U.S. Population" (Nealy, 2008). The problem is clearly evident when you walk on a college campus. The City University of New York (CUNY) has recently established the *Black Male Initiative* (Task Force, 2005). The *Black Male Initiative* is a program CUNY has implemented to successfully recruit, retain and graduate more black men by helping young black males.

The purpose of this study is to identify the problem and find some ways to solve the problem. If we, as educators, alter the way we teach will that lower the placement rate of African American males into special education settings? Once a child is placed in special education, it is hard for that child to come out. In my opinion, special education is a temporary situation. Once the child has received the additional help and services they need, they should be able to go back into a general education setting. What happens that is damaging to the child placed prematurely in special education from my personal observation, is that they sometimes mimic the poor behaviors that are evident in some special education settings. That is where the breakdown begins. They continuously get into trouble and that hinders their academic progress. When the time comes for their annual review, it is recommended that they remain in special education based on their poor academic performance and their poor social interaction skills.

**Background Information**

I am currently a general education teacher in an eighth grade inclusion class (CTT-Collaborative Team-Teaching). The class is composed of 60% general education students and

40% special education students. In addition, there is a special education teacher that I team-teach with. Within the special education population, we have students that are "labeled" emotionally disabled and learning disabled. I honestly feel that many of the children in my class were placed in special education without exhausting all other remedies of academic and social improvement. Sadly, what I find most common is if a black male child is constantly "disruptive" or shows low academic achievement, they are immediately evaluated for special education without figuring out other ways to have them achieve academic excellence. Many times parents are so intimidated by the jargon used at these conferences, they succumb to the pressures. Also, financially speaking, children that are placed in special education receive social security benefits (Herrera, 1998). So imagine a parent, or parents, that are experiencing financial strain and stress regarding their child. They probably feel that there is nothing else to do. They start to believe the hype and they need the money, so what happens, their child is placed in special education.

I have had a parent request that her child be evaluated for special education. I assured her that he was doing fine and that he did not display any signs of being emotionally or learning disabled. Then I realized that his two younger siblings were in special education, and an older sibling. That was intriguing; was she interested in the financial aspect of it or did she honestly believe her child needed to be in special education? He was basically an average student, but I did not see the need for him to be placed in special education.

Overall, the purpose of this study is to examine the overrepresentation of African American males in special education and what are the contributing factors. Once we have identified the problem, we can find some ways to remedy it. If African-American males were given intervention strategies to improve their academic success, will this lead to a decrease in

their placement rate into special education?  What instructional strategies for African American students be implemented to improve the equity of placement into special education?

There seems to be some light at the end of this long, dark tunnel.  There have been many recent studies which focus on intervention strategies for African-American boys and they have proven to be successful.  With the implementation of early intervention strategies for at-risk students at the elementary school level, this might decrease the amount of African-American males in special education and ultimately increase the attendance rate for black males in areas of higher education as well as decrease the number of black males that are being incarcerated.

Contributing Factors

**Socio-Economic Status**

An underlying factor to the overrepresentation of minorities, black males in particular, is poverty (Skiba, et.al, 2005).  The fact is that a high percentage of minorities are living in poverty.  Socio-economic status plays an important role in how a society functions as well as how education is viewed within that community. "Adolescents from disadvantaged neighborhoods are likely to be exposed to a number of risk factors that can derail positive adolescent development and thereby lead to oppositional culture that tolerates deviant values and behaviors" (Stewart, Stewart & Simons, 2007).

Poverty has been known to cause tremendous amounts of stress and frustration within the population. People who live in poverty know that they do not receive the same resources as people who live in a middle or high-class neighborhood (Gorski, 2007).  When people who live in poverty feel that the government does not care about their needs, they become frustrated and

bitter.  Due to these extenuating circumstances, many black males find it hard to function inside a classroom setting.  It is hard for a child to focus when they have not eaten.  It is also hard for a child to focus when there is turmoil within the household.  Also, when a child lives in poverty, they sometimes have adult responsibilities.  Many children must tend to their younger siblings. They must make sure they are feed-if there is adequate food in the house. Some of them have to pick up jobs after school to help make ends-meet.   It is not that black boys do not care about their education.  In this case, it is that they do not have the time to focus on their studies because they have to focus on the adult responsibilities that they have (Malveaux, 2006).

As an educator, knowing the backgrounds of the students in which you teach is beneficial to the ways in which you help them reach their academic goals.  Many teachers are unaware of the circumstances in which many of the children that they teach are undergoing.  The teacher education curriculums should include a program in which teachers visit the communities of their prospective students (Delpit, 2006).  School administrators that service children that live in low socio-economic areas, should also implement this program in their school (Smith, 2005).  Doing so, will enable educators with the valuable information they need to understand the needs of the children in which they teach.  However, teachers must realize that just because a child lives in poverty, that doesn't mean that they are incapable of learning.  This has been proven to be true with my own professional experiences.  Mid-year, a student entered my class because he had stolen $20 from his previous teacher.  My co-teacher and I had a hard time with his antics.  He was very bright but he did not want to follow the rules of the classroom.  He was also very belligerent.  His mother wanted him evaluated for special education because she was at her wits end in regards to how to reach him.  He has gotten into other situations that have gotten him into trouble with the law.  He has a probation officer.  At the evaluation meeting I have learned that

since the first grade he attended about five to six different schools.  His mother is involved in a relationship with a man who is in-and-out of jail and he is also abusive towards her.  From the meeting, I could tell he had a lot of love for his mother but he did not respect her.

Learning this information gave me a sense of empathy towards him.  It made me understand him better.  Once learning about his situation, which he was very open about, we began to give him a lot more positive reinforcements for the good work he was doing.  We give all the students some sort of verbal praise, but knowing that he did not receive much praise for anything else he was doing at home made him feel more comfortable in the classroom.  We still held high standards for him and we still continued to let him know that poor behavior was not tolerated or allowed.

Many teachers think that they must be lenient on the children they teach just because of their conditions outside of the classroom.  They do not hold them to the same high standards that they would their wealthier counterparts. Many teachers feel they are not bright enough to handle certain academic challenges.  Students know when their teachers are giving them "baby work" and they grow to resent a teacher who thinks they cannot learn sophisticated materials.  Hence the acting out begins.  Not because they are emotionally disabled, but because the teacher is not meeting the academic needs of the child and not teaching with their learning styles in mind.

Also, you will find the most inexperienced teachers teaching in low-income areas.

Teachers working in poor urban schools tend to have less experience and less preparation than do those schools that serve primarily white and middle-class students.  In addition, poor urban districts are more likely to hire teachers out of field than are suburban and middle-class schools districts.  These situations would be deemed unacceptable in more affluent districts (Nieto, 2003).

**Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes**

8

A teachers' perception and attitude toward a student or in this case a group of students can be, in my opinion, the most detrimental factor which contributes to the overrepresentation of African-American male students.   Many teachers have preconceived notions regarding the black male to begin with; what Nancy Henley refers to in *Body Politics* as the self-fulfilling prophecy. "Whites react to blacks in a stigmatizing way, leading to the blacks reciprocating their behavior, with the end result of whites devaluing black performance." (Henley, 1977)  You cannot teach a child whom you do not understand or do not respect (Kunjufu, 1992).  We live in a world full of stereotypes.   No matter how hard we try to conquer and overcome them, they are still evident in the society in which we live.  "A primary source of stereotyping is often the teacher education program itself.  It is in these programs that teachers learn that poor students and students of color should be expected to achieve less than their 'mainstream' counterparts" (Delpit, 2006).   As educators, we must be adequately trained to teach children of various cultures, and we must be knowledgeable of all learning styles that children of various cultures possess.  "If we do not have some knowledge of children's lives outside of the realms of paper-and-pencil work, and even outside of their classrooms, then we cannot know their strengths" (Delpit, 2006).

According to the article, *The Effects of African American Movement Styles on Teachers' Perceptions and Reactions*, La Vonne I. Neal, et.al. performed a study based on how teachers perceive African American males.  According to the study, many teachers view African-American males as being aggressive and are pegged as being learning disabled solely based on their movement styles.  Many of the movement styles of African American males derive from West Africa.  One example of stylized movement is often referred to as the 'cool pose'.  "The cool pose is 'a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing,

impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control'" (Neal, et.al, 2003).

However, throughout the course of time, the media, particularly the film industry, has associated African-American males' movement styles with that of degradation. Within the content of many films, the Black man's "stroll" is associated with that of a pimp or drug dealer. Therefore, twisting and deceiving the mindset of society. Many continue to perpetuate the stereotype associated with the movement styles of African American males, hence bringing forth the problem discussed in this article. The teachers within the study watched a video which included middle school African American students and their European counterparts. The overall outcome of the study was that teachers' believed that the African-American male students were more likely to be referred to special education, were labeled by the teachers as being highly aggressive and lower achievers. When teachers' possess a lack of knowledge of a culture, this is where the breakdown begins.

I found that unbelievably disturbing and I thought to myself what can be done to educate teachers about the culture of African Americans? Negative teacher perceptions have dangerous long term effects on students. Teachers may unknowingly not give as much academic attention to black male students based on their own personal perceptions. Therefore, something needs to be done in order to ensure equality of educational performance standards for African-American males.

Another misrepresentation of African-American males is the way they communicate with their peers. "African-American children employ different communication codes because they are more actively and openly expressive than European American children" (Sherwin & Schmidt, 2003). According to a study performed by Gary H. Sherwin, Ph.D. and Stacy

Schmidt, Ed.D., African-American males consistently greeted each other with aggression that was referred to as "mock-battle greeting posture". "Mock-Battle" is when African-American males engage in play-fighting. They are involved in physical contact that looks like a real altercation. However, they do not intend to harm the other individual. I have seen this type of communication being displayed on the school playground and it could be easily misunderstood by others as hostility and volatile interactions. This further perpetuates the stereotype that African-American males are hostile and violent individuals.

In order to be an effective teacher you must know the cultural backgrounds of the children that you teach. For example, as a child I was told to look at my mother or father when they were speaking to me. However, in Asian cultures, it is a sign of disrespect for a child to give direct eye-contact to an adult when being reprimanded. Many teachers are unaware of the cultural differences that are evident in the classrooms in which they teach. This is where the problem lies.

In no way am I saying that Black teachers should teach Black children. I have come into contact with good European-American teachers of African-American students and poor African-American teachers of African-American students (Delpit, 2005). Teachers of all races should receive sensitivity training in order to better understand the needs of their students whatever cultural background they possess.

**Role of the Social Worker**

The role of the social worker is to provide a clinical perspective to the evaluation of placement into special education. They provide analysis and expertise on a different level than an educator. Based on my current observations, social workers and guidance counselors are at a

disadvantage because of a lack of adequate funding in lower socio-economic schools. Currently the social worker at the school in which I teach is not there on a full-time basis. Her time is split between two schools. She has huge case loads and it is virtually impossible for her to adequately evaluate a student when she is not available to be there for the student

The role of the social worker is to develop behavior modification plans to ensure that teachers exhaust all possible solutions before the final step of placement into special education. The role of the social worker is to develop a functional behavioral assessment (Clark, 1998) of the student in question. The functional behavioral assessment consists of identification and definition of behavior(s) of concern, data collection and analysis of the information. Identification and definition of behavior(s) of concerns include a specific definition of the behavior of concern. Data collection is information that includes the students' strengths or areas of competence, student interviews, family interviews, direct observation, and behavior checklists. Data collection must also include data collected from multiple settings; i.e. school, home, and community. The analysis of data includes the setting(s) in which the behavior(s) occur, student traits including personal characteristics, and the individual's social, emotional and behavioral functioning in relationship to expectations (Clark, 1998).

In addition to the functional behavioral assessment, the social worker must implement behavioral intervention plans.

> Behavioral intervention plans should emphasize the use of positive, inclusive, and least intrusive approaches to changing behavior. Behavior change efforts should emphasize the use of positive behavioral intervention strategies that seek to support adaptive and pro-social behavior, and build on the strengths of students and their families. The use of punishment and exclusion should be avoided, as well as unnecessarily intrusive assessment and interventions (Clark, 1998).

All possible measures must be taken in order to ensure equity of placement. But what happens many times is that novice or even an experienced social worker is pressured by

principals and teachers seeking to have a "problem child" removed from the classroom (Mills, 2003). They then succumb to the pressures of administration and teachers in the removal of a child, particularly African-American male students.

<u>Solution Strategies</u>

Now that we have identified the problem we need to strategize on ways to remedy it. Once you become an educator, you must conquer the myth that teachers should be colorblind (Brody & Ross, 1998). It is impossible and unethical to believe that you must not notice race and ethnicities inside your classroom. Doing so, you will be creating a huge disservice to your students. Being a good educator includes acknowledging the different cultures that are present inside of your classroom. Each child must feel comfortable and accepted for who they are, not made to feel ostracized for who we think they should be.

**Classroom Design**

The design of the classroom can be the first step to reducing the overrepresentation of African-American males in special education. Classroom organization and techniques can be dramatically beneficial to the academic success of African-American male students. A beginning-of-the-year inventory (Monroe, 2006) can be used as a tool to get to know your students. When you acquire the learning styles of your students and find out what they like and dislike you gain the opportunity to meet the needs of your students. You can also give the parents a beginning-of-the-year inventory. This will give parents the opportunity to feel a sense of community with you, the educator, and the school. Parents can also give some insight to their

child's learning styles.  At the beginning of this school year, my son's fourth grade teacher sent home an inventory at the beginning of the year.  Included were questions regarding what my sons' learning styles were, what were his strengths and weaknesses and some of the things he enjoyed doing outside of school.  I thought this was a wonderful technique to use in meeting the needs of your students.

"Adopting a proactive stance toward discipline" can contribute to the academic successes of African-American males (Monroe, 2006).  Educators must have appropriate management and discipline policies which focus on the positive behaviors that you want displayed within the classroom.  Taking the time to go over rules and policies in a positive light is essential.  In my observations, doing so will give African-American males and all children a sense of pride and accomplishment.  When students know you hold them to a high standard and respect them, they will be less likely to disappoint you, hence, giving you the opportunity to meet the educational and social needs of your students, particularly the African-American male.

Incorporating physical movement in the classroom as well as implementing relatable literature inside your classrooms' library can help the academic needs of the African-American male student (Monroe, 2006).  Once appropriate classroom policies and rules have been established inside the classroom, teachers will be able to allow proper movement inside of the classroom.  This technique is beneficial for African-American boys because boys, by nature, need to able to move around.  Creating "boy friendly" environments and limiting teacher-talk brings a sense of value to self-directed learning.  Also, including literature within your classroom libraries that reflect the diversities of cultures within the room give the students a sense of pride, they feel valued as human beings and they feel accepted.  Popular authors among African-

American boys include Walter Dean Myers, Gary Paulsen, Christopher Curtis, Mildred Taylor, Louis Sachar, Carol Greene, and Patrick McKissack (Monroe, 2006).

In the article, Bring in *"Da Noise": Race, Sports, and the Role of Schools*, Edward Taylor states how teachers should use the same praise and motivating techniques used by athletic coaches. Many times, African-American males excel in sports. However, they do not do as well in academics. A way to even out the playing field is to use strategies implemented by coaches. A coach can drive an African-American male towards excellence in sports with the use of the following techniques:

> - A firm belief that athletes can perform at a high level if their motivation and encouragement remain focused.
> - A collective agreement and sustained effort by teachers, leaders, community members, and families.
> - Emphasis on progress and demonstrable outcomes.
> - Clear rules and rationale for participation.
> - Assessment of performance.
> - Tangible and intangible reinforcements for outstanding performance (Taylor, 1999).

The above mentioned techniques can be used inside the classroom to improve the academic success of African-American males. If it works on the court, it can work in the classroom!

**Staff Development**

An in-house approach to educating teachers on cultural diversity is for administrators to develop and implement appropriate staff development in their schools. Teachers can learn new strategies in order to successfully meet the needs of their culturally diverse students (Sparks, 1997). Asa Hilliard states that the best way to provide teachers with adequate training is to have them visit "master" teachers. If they are not able to visit, they should be provided with videos in order to take a look inside of a culturally diverse classroom with a "master" teacher at work.

**Recruit More African-American Men**

The profession of teaching is predominately female. The overrepresentation of African-American males in special education can be reduced if more African-American males were teachers (Task Force, 2006). In the *Task Force on the Education of Maryland's African-American Males*, many of the male students in Baltimore stated that they would like to see more African-American male teachers inside of the classrooms. Many of the boys were from single-parent homes and they rarely came into contact with positive black male role models.

Intervention Strategies

**Single-Sex Classrooms**

Many programs have been developed in order to meet the academic and social needs of African-American males. 100 Black Men, a 39 year old organization, created a program to help diminish the overrepresentation of African-American males in special education. The program, *Wimberly Projects*, was developed by the members of 100 Black Men, because they grew tired of what they were seeing in their communities. They implemented the program in Briarwood Elementary School in Charlotte, North Carolina.

In order to determine placement into the program, students had to have certain risk factors which might lead them into special education. The factors were as follows:

➢ Family structure; particularly atypical.

➢ Issues with attendance.

➢ Exhibited problems with behavior.

➢ Academic difficulties.

Students had to display at least two of the risk factors in order to be considered for the program.

Once the students were in the program, they were given an academic tutor. This would give them the extra academic help that they need. They were also paired with a mentor that would help them work out the social dimensions of their lives. The *Wimberly Program* also highly encouraged parental involvement which tends to decline as children get older.

During the programs' first year of implementation in 2000-2001, 24 black male students were identified as being at risk for special education. However, only 3 were referred at the end of the year. By the end of the second year, 27 students were involved in the program and none of them were referred into special education.

**Religion**

Unbeknownst to me, Black boys in the U.K. are experiencing the same underachievement problems as young Black boys in the U.S. A qualitative study was performed to see if religion was a contributing factor in achievement. The study showed that when religion was a major factor, and the students' church organizations played a major role in their lives, it showed that religion was a significant contribution to the black males' academic achievement. I know that according to educational law there *is* a separation of church and state. Even though this study was performed in the UK and it was successful, maybe private organizations can use this data and include religion into their private programs to help African-American males. I believe it will give African-American males a sense of pride, dignity, and cultural awareness.

<u>Discussion</u>

Even though the Wimberly Project has proven to be successful, the program focused on the separation of black males from their European-American counterparts as well as their African-American female counterparts.  There are many benefits to teaching in single-sex classrooms:

> ➢ Single-sex classes are staffed with same-gender teachers who act as role models.
> ➢ Gender bias in teacher-student interactions is reduced.
> ➢ Sexist behavior in peer interactions is eliminated.
> ➢ Single-sex classes are generally smaller than co-ed classes (Task Force, 2006)

However, even with the benefits listed above, there needs to be a way to integrate those types of programs into co-ed classrooms.  Ultimately, African-American males need to be able to interact with their female counterparts as well as their European counterparts both male and female. Keeping them separated gives them a false sense of reality.  However, if they are already being singled-out and being placed into special education classes, they are *already* being separated.

In my opinion, I think it will be more beneficial to place these types of programs in co-ed environments.  The single-sex classrooms helped them to achieve short-term goals, but what about the long term aspects of higher education and their presence in the work force?  Hopefully further studies will implement the aspect of integrating black boys into society.  There has to be some sort of intervention strategies that can prove to be beneficial *and* integrate them into society.

The big picture here is something must be done in order to improve the academic and social success rates of African-American males.  We, as a society, need to do away with the ongoing stereotypes plagued by African-American men as a whole.  It is evident in many

societies that the presence of strong Black men is deteriorating. The African-American family structure needs to be solidified again.  Hopefully, if something can be done to help African-American boys when they are youngsters, it will inevitably increase the attendance rate in areas of higher education as well as decrease the incarceration rate and death toll of young African-American males.  "There are more resources to save black males at 9 than there are when they are 29" (Kunjufu, 1992).

# Bibliography

Bondy, E., Ross, D.  (1998)  Confronting myths about teaching black children: A challenge for

    teacher educators.  *Teacher Education and Special Education, 21*(4), 241-254.

Byfield, C.,  (2008) The impact of religion on the educational achievement of black boys: A UK

    and USA study [Abstract].  *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 29*,189.

Clark, J.  (1998) Functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention plans:

    Implementing the student discipline provisions of idea'97 . A technical assistance guide

    for school social workers.  *The School Social Work Association of America*.

Delpit, L.  (2006).  *Other people's children.* (Rev. ed.)  New York, NY: The New Press.

Fine, L.  (2002) Disparate measures.  *Education Week 21*(41) 30-35.

Gorski, P.,  (2007) The question of class.  *The Education Digest 73*(2) 30-33.

Hawkins, D.  (1996) Gender gap.  *Black Issues in Higher Education 13* 20-22.

Hayes, M. & Price, V.  (2000)  Curriculum reform to address multicultural issues in special

    education.

Henley, N.M., (1977).  *Body politics: Power, sex, and nonverbal communication.*  New York:

   Simon & Schuster, Inc.


Herrera, J.  (1998)  The disproportionate placement of african americans in special education: An

   analysis in ten cities.  Unpublished dissertation.


Kunjufu, J.  (1992).  *Countering the conspiracy to destroy black boys* Vol. II. Chicago, IL:

   African American Images.


Malveaux, J.  (2006) Culture and context: The plight of black male students.  *Diverse Issues in*

   *Higher Education 23*(5) 27.


Mills, C. (2003) Reducing the overrepresentation of african american males in special education:

   The role of school social workers.  *Race, Gender, and Class in Social Work 10*(2) 71-83.


Monroe, C.R.  (2006) African american boys and the discipline gap: Balancing educators'

   uneven hand.  *Educational Horizons  84*(2) 102-111.


Neal, L.I., et.al. (2003) The effects of african american movement styles on teachers' perceptions

   and reactions.  *The Journal of Special Education 37*(1) 49-57.


Nealy, M.J., (2008) Black men: Left out and locked up.  Diverse: Issues in Higher Education,

   24(26) 20-22.

Nieto, S. (2003) Equity and opportunity. *Educational Leadership, 60*(4) 6-82.

Porter, M. (1997) *Kill them before they grow. Misdiagnosis of african-american boys in american classrooms.* Chicago, IL: African American Images.

Sherwin, G.H. & Schmidt, S. (2003) Communication codes among african american children and youth-The fast track from special education to prison? *Journal of Correctional Education 54*(2) 45-52.

Skiba, R., et.al. (2005) Unproven links: Can poverty explain ethnic disproportionality in special education? *Journal of Special Education, 39*(3), 130-144.

Smith, R.A. (2005) Saving black boys. *School Administrator 62*(1) 16-18, 21, 23, 25.

Sparks, D. (1997) Maintaining the faith in teachers' ability to grow: An interview with asa hilliard. *Journal of Staff Development 18*(2).

Stewart, E. B., Stewart. E. A. & Simons, R. (2007) The effects of neighborhood context on the college aspirations of african american adolescents. *American Educational Research Journal, 44*(4), 896-919.

Task Force on The City University of New York Black Male Initiative: Final Report to the

      Chancellor.  September 12, 2005.


Task Force on the Education of Maryland's African-American Males.  December 2006.


Taylor, E., (1999) Bring in "da noise": Race, sports, and the role of schools.  *Educational*

      *Leadership 56*(7), 75-78.