

(RE)INSCRIBING MEANING: AN EXAMINATION OF THE EFFECTIVE
APPROACHES, ADAPTATIONS AND IMPROVISATIONAL ELEMENTS IN
CLOSING THE EXCELLENCE GAP FOR BLACK STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy Temple University, May, 2013
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From great African nations like the Ancient Kemites, Akan and Gikuyu, the world witnessed the development of the most powerful social structures, governance systems, ground breaking innovations in science and technology, and systems of thought that still exist today. Hence, in looking at the low performance levels of Black students today, the question becomes, how do the descendants of those who created writing, mathematics, and science; and then in the face of episodic disruptions laid their lives on the line to read, write, and built public schools, Sabbath schools, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, close the excellence gap between their actual performance and deeply rooted cultural expectations? The present study reviews the essential questions and proposed solutions for closing the excellence gap that have been offered by previous generations of scholars. Africana Studies methodological framing questions were used to examine the long-view experiences of African people as well as a three tier critical ethnographic research methods approach. The study revealed that Black students gained a level of excellence in the face of disruption through: (1) Collective Training, (2) Spiritual and Moral Balance, and (3) Content Mastery. The prerequisite for sustaining educational excellence was found to be in the individual roles female and male representatives play as

the primary educators of Black children. Secondly, nurturing a sense of identity through a spiritual understanding of social order and moral responsibility to the collective is also a requirement. Nevertheless, what unites and emerges as the chief element is content mastery. The ability to retain and keep content through listening and reading; and present a level of mastery on that information through speaking, writing and action to solve problems, completes the reciprocal process of educational excellence.

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To the Creator, who goes by many names, Sun, Ra, Onyame, A dani wa ye, NGAI...

“Now to Him who is able to keep me from stumbling. And present me faultless, before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To God my Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.” Jude 1:24 -25 You truly looked beyond all my faults, to get this far. I give all glory and honor to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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In the Department of African American Studies at Temple University under the leadership of Dr. Nathaniel Norment and Dr. Abu Abarry, the fellowship of Anyabwile Love, Heru Setepenra Heq-m-Ta, Josh Myers, and Stephanie Tisdale, the support of Tammey Abner and Stephanie Tschanz LeVan, and the love of the graduate and undergraduate students, I was truly allowed to grow. As we celebrate 25 years, let us remember, “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

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Through this entire process, I have endured to maintain my integrity, and not compromise even the smallest representation of who I am as a child of God, daughter, sister and scholar. I am not perfect, nor is my work. Yet, like Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” 2 Timothy 4:7.

If I please God, it doesn't matter who I displease.
And if I displease God, it doesn't matter whom I please.
— Rev. Carmen C. Marshall

Dedicated to

Nana Salome Amoakaa

Nana James Kwame Oduko

Nana Kwame Frimpong

Deacon Herbert Holmes, Sr.

Willis “Cuz” Nanka-Bruce

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Background: African Antecedents

Gather ‘round my people, gather ‘round and hear the voices of our ancestors in narratives of courage, strength, sacrifice and healing; for wisdom...for humanity! We are an African people from the Nile to the Niger, and deep like a river with systems of training, learning and mastery present in every culture.¹ For African people, the proper Kemetic education consisted of developing Good Speech (*mdw ntr – Medew Nefer*) through listening to the “divine, universal and intergenerational conversations among God the creator, the cosmos, nature and the creatures of the earth, especially human beings.”² Scribal schools and universities set global standards of excellence. In Ancient African societies, the foundational collective model of parents and the community teaching their children with mothers playing the primary role was the norm. An educated Akan man was one who had both *sunsum* (spirit, personality and character) and *nyansa* (skills and practical knowledge).³ As a community, the Gikuyus believed young children were taught that their “present comforts and their future prospects depend[ed] on

¹ Black, African American, Africans in America, African, and Africana will be used interchangeably to denote cultural unity for people of African descent in America. “We” and “our” also denotes the culture of the writer and the intended audience.

² Kemet is what the Egyptian people called their fertile land. For more information on Kemetic philosophy see Jacob H. Carruthers, *Mdw Ntr Divine Speech: A Historiographical Reflection of African Deep Thought From the Time of Pharaohs to the Present* (New Jersey: Karnak House and Red Sea Press, 1995), 44-45.

³ Kwadwo A. Okrah, *Nyansapo (The Wisdom Knot): Toward an African Philosophy of Education* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 39, 62.

knowing their place, giving respect and obedience where it is due.”⁴ It was even believed that until death a Gikuyu man’s education still continues.⁵ From great African nations such as these, the world witnessed the highest levels of content mastery, the development of the most powerful social structures and governance systems, groundbreaking innovations in science and technology and systems of thought that still exist today. It can be understood that, “The education of the African before the coming of the European was an education that prepared him for his responsibilities as an adult in his home, his village and his [entire community].”⁶

Unlike the West, one’s level of performance was not isolated to biological representations of knowledge, or the abstract score you receive on an intelligence (IQ) or standardized test. Performance was a person’s presentation of character intellectually, spiritually, politically and socially. Having a high level of performance was not about how much you know, have or believe, but about your attitude about what you know, have, believe and how you act. Excellence was not about the number of white mustard seeds that filled your skull or the appropriation of knowledge credentials.⁷ Excellence was a level of perfection; an attempt to be godlike on a human level over the totality of your life. It was understood that God gave wisdom, and speech was divine. As a result, excellence on a human level was a verb, a journey and a process of saying what the

⁴ Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (New York: Random House, 1965), 103.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁶ David G. Scanlon, *Traditions of African Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1964), 3.

⁷ For a history of American craniometry see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1981).

Divine says, thinking the way the Divine thinks, moving how the Divine moves and being in a relationship with all things like the Divine was. On a day-to-day level excellence was the quality of what you did—rooted in your level of training, spiritual and moral balance, and content mastery.

Approaches, Adaptations and Improvisational Elements to Episodic Disruptions

Europe ruled but Africa governed.

— Kwame Ture⁸

Seldom do we hear about the dynamic systems of education that African people created that predate the Greco-Roman Empire. In general most individuals are unaware of African systems of learning and use fragmented narratives exuviated by European scholars as a representation of “ancient and indigenous” models. Isolated exemplars of African universities, libraries and rites of passage rituals make it seem as if educational excellence for people of African descent was a happenstance occurrence of the past that cannot be replicated in the present or future. However, these structured and advanced legacies out of Africa become critical in the conversation about the disparities in the academic performance of Black students today. As European scholars elusively agree on creating a false impression of a non-existent genealogy of African excellence and blame Black youth as if children can teach themselves, this work looks to shift the conversation.

⁸ Stokely Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael* (Kwame Ture) (New York: Scribner, 2003), 41.

Nonetheless, when the phrase “educational gap” is discussed scholars instinctually reference the difference between the test scores of African and European Americans.

African Americans currently score lower than European Americans in vocabulary, reading, and mathematics tests, as well as on tests that claim to measure scholastic aptitude and intelligence. This gap appears before children enter kindergarten, and it persists into adulthood. It narrowed since 1970, but the typical American black still scores below 75 percent of American whites on most standardized tests.⁹

From the Nile to the Niger, and from the Niger to the Mississippi what happened? Where the disruption for people of African descent? In order to answer that question one must retrace our steps.

The acknowledgement of the level of academic performance Black students in America are presenting today is instructive because it not only speaks to the nature of a problem which is constantly being debated, but it also reveals the type of lens American society uses to define performance and achievement. This perspective points to America’s agreed upon question to Black people, “How does it feel to be a problem?”¹⁰ In other words, in urban cities like Philadelphia where district leaders are closing schools because of budget deficits, but increasing funding for prisoners, students are sent the

⁹ Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips, “The Black Test Score Gap: An Introduction” in Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips edited text *The Black-White Test Score Gap* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998), 1.

¹⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Signet Classic, (1903) 1995), 43.

message that the state would rather put you in a suitable jail cell than a classroom.¹¹ Consequently the question is not why the descendants of those who created writing, mathematics and science are performing at such low levels, but how they got to this point.

In order to understand what some modern social scientists and education theorists would call an issue with the Black child, Black family, Black communities or Black schools, when asked the right questions, the answer is in the forms of disruption Western societies come into conflict with African systems of learning. In other words, if you look back far enough you'll see that African people were doing well until Europe viciously entered the conversation.

This episodic disruption¹² from the West first came about when trading knowledge and resources would turn into what Michael Gomez contextualizes as a “birth” and “death canal” —the Maafa.¹³ Through the Maafa “the African died [partially]

¹¹ In the spring of 2013, the School District of Philadelphia announced the closing of over 20 schools. Yet in 2010, “the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC) had almost \$1.6 billion in prison expenditures...\$463.8 million in prison-related costs outside the department’s budget. The total cost of Pennsylvania’s prisons—to incarcerate an average daily population of 48,543—was therefore almost \$2.1 billion, of which 22.6 percent were costs outside the corrections budget.” In 2010, Public schools and higher education received education funding, at \$9.8 billion, sustaining a cut of more \$1.2 billion. See Vera’s Center on Sentencing and Corrections, “The Price of Prisons: Pennsylvania What Incarceration Costs Taxpayers” (New York, NY: Vera Institute of Justice, 2012), 1.

¹² Greg Carr, in the original text uses the term “Episodic horizontal disruptions.” Episodic horizontal disruptions refer to the events or challenges Africans are subject to in the face of exigencies of White Supremacy. Improvisation refers to the ways Africans address episodic horizontal disruptions connected to functionally ways African people have done things in the past. For further details see Greg Carr, “Inscribing African World History,” in *The African Word History Project: African Historiography Project* (forthcoming).

¹³ Maafa is Kiswahili for “disaster.” The term has been used and popularized largely through the efforts of Marimba Ani in “Let the circle Be Unbroken: The Implications of African Spirituality in the Diaspora.” The notion of an African *holocaust* gives way to the notion of MAAFA, which affords a larger conceptual frame in which to view the processes of human aggression visited by European upon African people globally over the past half millennium.

to what was and to what could have been.”¹⁴ Through these episodic disruptive phases of the slave trade the function and process of learning for African people would also be impacted. Yet, from the initial capture, to the barracoon (slave-pen), through the transatlantic trek (Middle Passage) and the seasoning process,¹⁵ African people took hold and developed approaches, adaptations and improvisational ways to educate their children to strive for excellence.

When we go back and retrace our steps, we can connect the cultural continuity and form a plan to address low academic performance in the face of episodic disruptions. A Hema, Democratic Republic of Congo—DRC proverb states, “Wisdom is like fire. People take it from others.” For the Congolese-Angolan Africans in South Carolina, they governed themselves to collectively learn more than each other’s native tongues, but also the English language. They created new social structures to unite as Africans in South Carolina, re-conceptualized their ways of thinking to understand their enslavement and then developed a method of movement out of their present situation. In a news article it reads,

South Carolina, September 9, 1739: A band of [enslaved Africans] march[ed] down the road, carrying banners that proclaim "Liberty!" They shout[ed] out the same word. Led by an Angolan named Jemmy, the men and women continue[d] to walk south, recruiting more [enslaved Africans] along the way. By the time they stop[ped] to rest for the night, their numbers [had] approached one hundred... The [enslaved Africans] stopped in a large field late that afternoon,

¹⁴ Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 13.

¹⁵ Ibid.

just before reaching the Edisto River. They had marched over ten miles and killed between twenty and twenty-five whites.¹⁶

When confronted with resistance the enslaved Africans organized themselves with wisdom, which gave speech, power and fire. Similar to the fire in the proverb, the power and fire of wisdom allowed them to solve their problems of captivity. The ability to educate themselves collectively helped develop a level of performance in character intellectually, politically, spiritually and socially that pushed them toward the journey for excellence. Long before Malcolm had uttered “by any means necessary” the Stono Uprising had marked a period where African people had learned the master’s tools and demanded liberty. Their enlightened state of mind and resulting activism caused laws such as South Carolina’s 1740 Slave Code: XLV to be enacted, which prohibited whites from teaching enslaved Africans to read and write.¹⁷

As Africans were striving collectively, individually they were also doing the same. After the Akan were brought across the waters into dwelling spaces on the plantation, often times they were lined up across from one another like Akan compounds

¹⁶ The term enslaved is used instead of slave, because the term “slave” is a reductive noun created under the assumption that there is a place where you go get slaves. Nobody is born a slave or slaves. “Slave” is not a racial, ethnic or cultural defining category. Enslaved speaks of a social condition people of African descent faced. People of African descent were enslaved individuals, with a culture and genealogy that extended behind their condition. The news article was taken from PBS Online, “The Stone Rebellion 1739,” PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1p284.html> (accessed July 12, 2012).

¹⁷ XLV states: And whereas, the having of slaves taught to write, or suffering them to be employed in writing, may be attended with great inconveniences; Be it therefore enacted by the authority aforesaid, That all and every person and persons whatsoever, who shall hereinafter teach or cause any slave or slaves to be taught, to write, or shall use or employ any slave as a scribe in any manner of writing whatsoever, hereafter taught to write, every such person and persons, shall, for every such offense, forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds current money. See South Carolina transcription of 1740 Slave Code. For Malcolm X’s speech see *Malcolm X February 1965 The Final Speeches*, ed by Steve Clark (New York , Path finder, 1992).

and mothers were forced to work all day and night.¹⁸ Yet, these women improvised and adapted ways to teach their children. Through sweet songs, mothers utilized systems of cultural meaning making and educated their children on how to take care of themselves and each other: spiritually, emotionally and physically. From childhood narratives, we read of,

Many a [enslaved African's] oldest and fondest memory was that of lying on his mother's lap, being "warmed in her bosom in the cold night of winter," and hearing her sing him to sleep with a lullaby.¹⁹

Josiah Henson remembers his mother... "I remember seeing her often on her knees," and hearing her praying with "constant ejaculations, and the repletion of short phrases which were within my infant comprehension, and have remained in my memory to this hour."²⁰

Black mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sisters taught children how to cook, sew, spin, iron, clean, but perhaps the most important lessons taught were ways of knowing and systems of thought that ingrained a longing for excellence, freedom, the desire to learn, and the thirst for spirituality. Betsey, also known as Mau-mau Betty, taught her daughter Sojourner Truth to ask God for help, instruction and protection whenever she needed it. Pati Delany went against the law making sure her son Martin Delany was educated. Hannah Greer instilled the power and importance of the pen in her grandson, Bishop

¹⁸ It has been estimated that of the Akan people, "close to 10 percent of the total number – a little more than 1.2 million – of the Africans shipped to the Americas between 1520 and 1865 came from the Gold Coast (contemporary Ghana), but the vast majority, were carrying a composite Akan culture." See Kwasi Konadu, *The Akan Diaspora in the Americas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). The *compound* in Akan societies consists of a central courtyard, which serves as the center of household activities, surrounded by a multi-room rectangular building. The style reflects the *Akan* concept of private and public space. See Steven Salm J and Toyin Falola, *Culture and Customs of Ghana*. (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2002), 97.

¹⁹ Extracted from narratives in Thomas Webber, *Deep Like the Rivers: Education in the Slave Quarters Community, 1831-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 160.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

Henry McNeal Turner. Furthermore, Harriet Bailey walked twelve miles in the middle of the night to pass on the love of knowledge to her son Frederick Douglas. In the face of episodic disruptions, Black female representatives of the collective held strong to their authoritative role as primary educators of their children.

As much as Black women played a role, so did Black men. George Garnet decided while his son, Henry Highland Garnet was born into a system that viewed him as a slave, he would grow up as a free African in America. After running away and reaching the entrance to their freedom in a familiar African ritual George thanked God, changed the names of his entire family, and started his liberated journey. James Wells would have his daughter Ida Bell Wells read newspapers about the Ku Klux Klan to him and his friends before she even knew what the Ku Klux Klan was. On the heels of the Emancipation Proclamation, Samuel McLeod and his sons would purchase acres of land and build the house on which their family would live in after gaining their freedom. Martin Luther King, Sr. was organizing protests against Jim Crow, leading a congregation and the president of the NAACP alongside being a father and a husband. Individually, in the face of episodic disruption African people unified and created social structures, ways of knowing, and methods of movement and memory to continue on the journey of excellence for their children.

Faced with episodic challenges to convene collectively in certain spaces, in the area of science and technology, Black people improvised. In secret places, caves, pits, deep in the woods, under a tree, in the basement of churches or in creating their own

spaces, Black people have always found innovative ways to educate themselves.²¹ The community developed areas for children to gather around, play games, sing songs and listen to elders in the community tell stories. By 1744, communities of Africans in the South began creating public funded education systems before it was ever on the American agenda.²² Sabbath schools located in many Black churches provided more than just biblical instruction. As Booker T. Washington recalls, “the principal book studied in the Sunday-school was the spelling book.”²³ As a Joint Committee meeting on Reconstruction was held in Washington D.C. under the impression that “[Black people] cannot educate themselves,”²⁴ Alabama State University (ASU) was founded in 1867 in Marion, Alabama. The Historically Black College and University (HBCU) started as the Lincoln Normal School with \$500 raised on July 18, 1867 by nine freed enslaved Africans named Joey P. Pinch, Thomas Speed, Nicholas Dale, James Childs, Thomas Lee, John Freeman, Nathan Levert, David Harris and Alexander H. Curtis—now known as the “Marion Nine.” The Lincoln School opened its doors on November 13, 1867, with

²¹ Heather Williams, *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 7 – 30.

²² In the estimation of W.E.B Du Bois, public education was “a Negro idea” and it has been document that free Africans had been supporting the education of their children since 1744 in Charleston. See W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1998; 1935), 642.

²³ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 642; James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 13.

²⁴ In a report by the Joint Committee on Reconstruction in Washington D.C. on February 10 1866, General Oliver Howard raises a follow-up question of Negro education to B.R. Grattan, delegate of the House in Virginia, “Question. But the condition may be changed by education and enlightenment? Answer. You are to recollect, as to that, that they are a people who now have no property, who are not accustomed, from their former condition, to any sort of providence for themselves; that they are not accustomed to take care of themselves; that they are a people who have always depended upon others; and, therefore, unless there is some power or person who is give them wealth and to educate them, you can never expect that they will be in a condition to rise. They cannot educate themselves; they are not disposed to educate themselves...” *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, 162.

113 students and is still open today with the vision and mission of educating Black people.²⁵ By 1870, Black politicians and leaders had organized to legalize state-funded public education in every southern state.²⁶

Moving forward, our attempts to adapt and improvise proved no different. Henry Highland Garnet formed a study group of schoolmates between the ages of thirteen to sixteen who resolved not to celebrate the Fourth of July as long as slavery existed. During the late 1800s, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois would attend Sunday School and as a teenager hear a negro spiritual that lead him to Fisk University. In 1914 at the tender age of seven Ella Baker would begin to give speeches in church, and as a teenager Stokely Carmichael during the 1960-70s would be educated by the likes of Malcolm X and other “street-corner orators of Harlem.”

The resiliency of Black people to improvise and educate their children despite episodic disruptions by the West speaks volumes about the journey for excellence that is grounded in deep thought.²⁷ Deep thought refers to the corpus of African ideas which were derived from ancient African foundations, and still continues to resonate where people of African descent find themselves in time and space. In other words, deep thought is the well of African ideas and practices that people of African descent pull back from in order to move forward. African people have been striving for excellence before episodic disruptions by the West and are still striving for excellence today. Hence, with

²⁵ Alabama State University, “Alabama State University History and Tradition,” Alabama State University, <http://www.alasu.edu/about-asu/history--tradition/index.aspx> (accessed July 12, 2012).

²⁶ James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South 1860 – 1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 19 – 20.

²⁷For more details see Carruthers, *Mdw Ntr Divine Speech* and Hilliard, *SBA*.

the low performance of Black youth today the question becomes, how do the descendants of those who in the face of episodic disruptions laid their lives on the line to read and write, build public schools, Sabbath schools and Historically Black Colleges and Universities close this gap of educational disparity?

Statement of Problem

Unfortunately, African people in the United States, still have some prevailing misconceptions about their education and education in general. We were not brought to the United States or to the so-called New World to be educated. We were brought as part of a massive labor supply.

— John Henrick Clarke ²⁸

As Clarke states, America on many occasions has demonstrated its intentions legally, politically, economically and socially to place the education of people of African descent at a low priority.²⁹ America's unasked "Negro Question"³⁰ has been "How does it feel to be a problem?"³¹ At the *Lake Mohonk Conference on the Negro Question* in 1890, the problem was best articulated by Dr. Curry of Virginia:

²⁸ John Henrick Clarke, "Forward," in *The Education of the Negro: An Essential Preface to Understand the Mis-Education of the Negro*, by Carter Godwin Woodson (Brooklyn: A&B Publishers Group, 1999), ix.

²⁹ This does not overlook the philanthropic work done by "white architects of black education, in America" which holds very large implications to the system we see today. "White architects" refer to prominent white philanthropic individuals and organization in America who not only contributed substantial funds towards the education of blacks, but also structurally controlled through power and wealth the direction of educational policy concerning black people up until today. William H. Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954* (New York: Teacher College Press, 2001).

³⁰ On Wednesday morning, June 4, 1890 in a meeting of white men and women, without the presence of African people, the Mohonk Conference titled the Negro Question was organized, by the former 19th president of the United States Rutherford B. Hayes. See Isabel C. Barrows ed. *First Mohonk Conference on the Negro Question* (New York: Negro Universities Press, (1890) 1969), 9.

³¹ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 43.

As a man, a patriot, a Christian, I have labored for the elevation of the Negro. Nor have I been entirely unselfish; for I know that we are bond, hand and foot, to the lowest stratum of society. If the Negroes remain as co-occupants of the land and co-citizens of the States, and we do not lift them up, they will drag us down to industrial bankruptcy, social degradation, and political corruption.³²

To be sure, the problem of “industrial bankruptcy, social degradation, and political corruption” was addressed, in 1890 at the Lake Mohonk Conference where they drafted the framework for industrial schooling for people of African descent, and the pleasant image of an American public schooling system being a “great equalizer” was fashioned by Horace Mann.³³ However, ever since the American public schooling system was immortalized, American sociologist Randall Collins suggests that “the public school system in the U.S. was founded mainly under the impetus of WASP [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant] elites with the purpose of teaching respect for Protestant and middle-class standards.”³⁴ And since then these WASP ideals have not changed. Furthermore, upon closer examination, Horace Mann (1851), the father of American Public Education, in a letter to a Convention of Black people in Ohio stated that “in intellect, the Blacks are inferior” and “these are, in general, the views which I [Horace Man] did, and still do

³² Barrows ed. *First Mohonk Conference*, 9.

³³ Horace Mann described public education as “Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery.” Horace Mann and Felix Pecant, *Life and Works of Horace Mann, Vol 4*, (Boston: Lee And Shepard Publishers, (1867) 1891), 251.

³⁴ WASP ideals can be best contextualized from the text *The Education of a WASP* through the eyes of a typical American housewife, “We are WASPs, my husband and I, lifelong members of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority group, who created and continue ‘white racism’ in America.” See Lois Mark Stalvey, *The Education of a WASP* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1970), 2. Randall Collins, “Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification,” *American Sociological Review* 36, no. 6 (Dec.1973):1011.

entertain.”³⁵ Carl C. Brigham (1923), creator of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), in his text *A Study in American Intelligence* claimed Blacks are “intellectually inferior;”³⁶

The notion of Black inferiority explaining educational disparities has been long held and far reaching. Peter Blau and Otis Duncan, renowned educational researcher scholars stated, “Negroes begin life at a disadvantage... [an] initial handicap, the Negro experiences further handicaps at each stage of the life cycle.”³⁷ Dr. James Watson (2007) Nobel Prize winner for his work on DNA structure said, "all our social policies are based on the fact that their [people of African descent] intelligence is the same as ours, — whereas testing says not really.”³⁸ It is easy to conclude that if American academia feels this way about people of African descent, then being rejected, mis-educated, deeducated, labeled as “in trouble,” special-education, learning disabled, hyperactive (Attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder and Attention deficit disorder), pushed-out, and or tracked to lower levels will be the result. As a result, the problem for this study is not American education system.

³⁵ The first quote is from a letter commented on in the December 21, 1851 issue of the *Liberator* by E.R. Johnson based on a letter to an African convention at Cincinnati Ohio written by Horace Mann in January 1851, Later that year Mann replied by saying “Mr. E.R. Johnson: Dear Sir – In your letter of the 2nd instant, this day received, you quote a passage from a letter written by me last winter, to a colored Convention at Cincinnati, Ohio, and you then add, that you wish to ‘ascertain what views you (I) now entertain on the subject.’ In reply, I answer, that I suppose, in common with all writers on the subject, that the human race is divided into different families, as the Caucasian, the African, Mongolian; that these families have certain physical and psychological differences; that the Caucasian excels the others in intellect... these are, in general, the views which [I] did, and still do entertain.”

³⁶ Carl C. Brigham, *A Study of American Intelligence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1923), 190.

³⁷ Peter Michael Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan, “The Process of Stratification” from *The American Occupational Structure* (New York: Wiley, (1967) 1978), 240.

³⁸ Cahal Milmo, “Fury at DNA Pioneer’s Theory: Africans are Less Intelligent than Westerns,” *The Independent* (October 17, 2007). <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/fury-at-dna-pioneers-theory-africans-are-less-intelligent-than-westerners-394898.html?printService=print> (accessed June 6, 2012).

With America's many forms of episodic disruption, the problem I see is the gap we observe countless Black students fall through. The gap I am referring to is the excellence gap—the gap between the actual performance of Black students and their deeply rooted cultural expectations for excellence.³⁹ In the media we are regularly bombarded with reports such as “only 12 percent of Black fourth-grade boys are proficient in reading,”⁴⁰ “in 2008, only 65 African-American public school students in Massachusetts passed an AP science exam;”⁴¹ and “a meager 37% of Black and Hispanic boys are graduating for New York high schools in four years.”⁴² The sheer magnitude of these events illustrate that Black children are a perceived problem to America. Yet, we also know to be true, but not regularly reported that such realities as sixteen-year-old Ralph Jones who turned down the Ivy League's to attend Florida A&M University,⁴³ Autum Ashante who was college bound at the age of thirteen after being homeschooled

³⁹ Asa Hilliard III, “No Mystery: Closing the Achievement Gap Between Africans and Excellence,” in *Young Gifted And Black: Promoting High Achievement Among African-American Students*, Theresa Perry, Claude Steele, and Asa Hilliard III (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 138.

⁴⁰ Gabriel Trip, “Proficiency of Black Students Is Found to Be Far Lower Than Expected,” *The New York Times*, November 9, 2010 http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/09/education/09gap.html?_r=0 (accessed January 5, 2013).

⁴¹ MASS MATH + SCIENCE INITIATIVE, “MMSI,” October 16, 2012 <http://www.massinsight.org/mmsi/> (accessed January 5, 2013).

⁴² Melissa Russo and Tom Burke, “NY Graduation Rates for Black, Hispanic Boys Lowest in Nation,” September 24, 2012 <http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/NY-GRADUATION-RATES-TRAGIC-FOR-BLACK-HISPANIC-BOYS-171043271.html> (accessed January 5, 2013).

⁴³ “When a boy enters first grade at the age of 4 and high school at the age of 12, it's a foregone conclusion that the child will end up at a Harvard or a Stanford or a Cornell. Right? Not if the boy is Ralph Jones Jr., a 16-year-old freshman at Florida A&M University who has received national attention in recent days for passing up opportunities at the 45 other schools that accepted him -- including the prestigious institutions listed above -- to attend the Tallahassee, Fla., HBCU.” Lauren Williams, “Why This FAMU Freshman Choose an HBCU Over Harvard,” *theroot.com*, October 12, 2010 under “Controversy Over-Year-Old FAMU Student Ralph Jones Who Chose Over Harvard,” <http://www.theroot.com/views/16-year-old-famu-freshman-talks-about-choosing-hbcu-over-harvard> (accessed June 4, 2012).

by her father,⁴⁴ fifteen-year-old Ty Hobson-Powell who graduated from the University of Baltimore and is heading to Law School,⁴⁵ and eighteen-year-old once homeless David Boone who will be attending Harvard in the fall.⁴⁶ How do we close the gap?

The challenge I see before us today is not the commonly publicized gap between Black and white youth, but the excellence gap between Black and Black youth. Instead of asking what whites are doing better than us, we should be asking why are we not doing what has already worked for over thousands of years even in the face of disruption? Knowing how the American public schooling system was historically constructed, the major problem is not whether we choose to send Black students to public schools or not. Frederick Douglass, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, Fannie Lou Hamer, and most Black students, even today did and do not have that choice. In considering the level of achievement United States public schools represent on an international level is

⁴⁴ Her father, Ben Ashante, recognized his daughter had a special gift and he decided to home-school her. He eventually retired and solicited the help of local, retired teachers to educate his daughter. Will Bradford, "13-Year-Old Bronx Prodigy Heads to College," *Huffpost Black Voices*, June 24, 2011, <http://www.bvblackspin.com/2011/06/24/13-year-old-bronx-prodigy-heads-to-college/> (accessed June 4, 2012).

⁴⁵ "He began classes at N.C. Central University Law School in August after he became the youngest person to graduate from the University of Baltimore at age 15, finishing a four-year degree in two. The average age of a day-time student at NCCU is 24 years old, according to Linda Sims, associate dean for student services at NCCU School of Law." Lana Douglas, "Motivated 16-year-old enters NCCU Law School," *Newsobserver.com*, April 26, 2010 under "Motivated 16-year-old enters NCCU law school – Education – NewsObserver.com," <http://www.newsobserver.com/2011/09/28/1523683/motivated-16-year-old-enters-nccu.html#storylink=cpy> (accessed June 4, 2012).

⁴⁶ "At age 14, his home was destroyed by gang members who were upset the teen wouldn't join them. Boone and his siblings had to split up and take shelter wherever they could, because their mother couldn't afford a new house. On some nights, the teen had no choice but to sleep on park benches... Boone was accepted to more than 20 colleges throughout the nation, including a handful of Ivy League universities such as Yale, Princeton and Cornell."—"David Boone, Cleveland Student, Goes From Homeless To Harvard" *HuffintonPost.com*, June 3, 2012 under "Huff Post Teen The Internet Newspaper: News Blog Video Community," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/03/david-boone-homeless-student-harvard_n_1566191.html?view=print (accessed June 5, 2012).

“mediocre” compared to other countries.⁴⁷ As the closing of public schools occur across the country, the major concern should not be whether low performing schools should be kept open, but whether or not parents and community take back the control as the primary educators of our children. Black students should not be left to *just* be sent public schools therefore running the risk of them falling through the gap. In the twenty-first century, the defining moment for Black people in America has come. Either we choose to believe that “the beautiful ones are not yet born”⁴⁸ by still asking America to give us the education our children need, or we believe that “we are the ones we have been waiting for.”⁴⁹ If we believe the latter, then we know since we have been on earth and in America, we are the ones who can close the gap. I believe, similarly with Ella Baker, “Now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. Therefore, we must cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light...The ‘works of darkness’ are ignorance, doubt and fear; but

⁴⁷ The three-yearly OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, which compares the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds in 70 countries around the world, ranked the United States 14th out of 34 OECD countries for reading skills, 17th for science and a below-average 25th for mathematics. See Karin Zeitvogel “US Falls to Average in Education Ranking” in *AFP*, 7 Dec 2010 <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALEqM5juGFSx9LiPaur6eO1KJAypB2ImVQ?docId=CNG.5337504e8f65acf16c57d5cac3cf339.1c1> (accessed June 4, 2012) for full report see PISA 2009 Results.

⁴⁸ The title to Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah 1968 novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* tells the story of a nameless man who struggles during a post-independence Ghana, after the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s first president. Towards the end of the novel and the man’s struggles to reconcile himself, on the back of a bus in green paint society informally tells him through his search “The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born.”

⁴⁹ In commemoration of the 40,000 women and children who on August 9, 1956, presented themselves in bodily protest against the “compass” in the capital of apartheid. The last closing lines state “And who will join this standing up, and the ones who stood without sweet company, will sing and sing, back into the mountains and if necessary, even under the sea, we are the ones we have been waiting for.” June Jordan “Poem for South African Women,” <http://www.junejordan.net/poem-for-south-african-women.html> (accessed June 4, 2012).

armed with truth and knowledge, faith and courage, we can and must follow the light of freedom to complete and certain victory.”⁵⁰

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

Having produced a few books touching on the history of black men and women in America, it seemed only natural that I turn my attention to boys and girls of African descent who have worked, played, been schooled, suffered, endured, and dreamed in America.

— Tonya Bolden⁵¹

Tonya Bolden in 2001 published a book titled *Tell All the Children Our Story: Memories and Mementos of Being Young and Black in America*. Bolden in telling the “history of boys and girls of African descent who have worked, played, been schooled, suffered, endured and dreamed in America,” frames the scope of my research study.⁵² To answer the question of closing the excellence gap for Black students, this study looked back at the history of boys and girls of African descent who have strived for educational excellence. How did Ancient Kemet, Akan, and Gikuyu boys and girls work, play, suffer, endure and dream for educational excellence? After African people are brought across the waters, how did a young Frederick Douglas, Anna Julia Cooper, William Edward B Du Bois, Callie House, Ralph Bunche, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Kwame Ture as boys and girls work, play, suffer, endure and dream for educational excellence? As a

⁵⁰ Upon her decision to depart from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Ella Baker wrote a letter on July 31, 1960 to her many contacts. The bible scripture comes from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 13:11-14. Joanne Grant, *Ella Baker Freedom Bound* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998), 133.

⁵¹ Tonya Bolden, *Tell All the Children Our Story: Memories and Mementos of Being Young and Black in America* (New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2001), 9.

⁵² Ibid.

result, like a map, what can we learn from what they experienced to speak to our experience today?

The research approach constructed for this study methodologically uses the *Africana Studies*' framing questions to examine the *long-view* experiences of African people, and a three tier critical ethnographic research methods approach.⁵³ The framing questions create a process of "tracing and re-tracing the African experience from its [long-view] origins in Africa to the present" giving shape to the research methodologies. The disciplinary term *Africana Studies* in this context refers to the study of Africans and African-descended communities. From the main research question, three sub questions were constructed to identify and categorize the elements of each broad area.

Main Question:

- How do we close the excellence gap between Black students' present levels of performance and levels of excellence?

Sub Questions:

- In looking at African people prior to European episodic disruptions, how did African people view and define educational excellence for their children?
- How did Black people in America organize and govern themselves to close the excellence gap?
- Do these systems of organization and governance still exist today?

⁵³ For more details on the *framing questions* see Greg Carr, "Teaching and Studying the African (a) Experience: Definitions and Categories." In *School District of Philadelphia African-American History High School Course Curriculum* (Philadelphia: Songhai Press, 2006), 13. "Long-view" refers to pre-European encounters, see Greg Carr, "What Black Studies is Not: Moving from Crisis to Liberation in *Africana Intellectual Work*," *Socialism and Democracy* 25, no. 1 (June 2011):179-180. The *six conceptual categories* guide the research method and conceptual design distinguishing *Africana Studies* from simple studies of materials involving African people. For a full breakdown of the *six conceptual categories* see Carr, "Teaching and Studying the African (a) Experience," 14-17.

This study utilized a three branch critical ethnographic research method approach of content analysis of archival data, participant observations and long interviews to explore several avenues to examine the experience of Black youth. The sampling and data collection process was divided into three stages to address all four research questions. In sample 1 proverbs, symbols, writings and other archival texts from the people of Ancient Kemet, Akan and Gikuyu about the educational development of boys and girls were used as a mode of inquiry to construct an understanding of educational excellence prior to European disruptions. In sample 2 a sample of nineteen (19) Black families centered around ten (10) Black men and nine (9) Black women whose childhood experiences span from the 1700s – 1980s. In sample 3, over a seven month period in the Fall and Winter of 2012, and Spring of 2013 I traveled to conducted in-depth interviews and video observations with families (adults and minors) about their educational experiences outside of public schooling. A thread of cultural continuity was revealed dating back from Ancient Kemet to Philadelphia and Atlanta, seated in the well of African deep thought.

This is not a study on closing the Black-white achievement, intelligence, IQ, success or testing gap. This is not a study that “re-inscribes existing knowledge orders,” by suggesting shadow programs or institutions that mimic the subjugation of public schooling.⁵⁴ This is not a study that suggests we blame Black parents, especially mothers, without regard to the power and work they contribute to their children. This is not a study that “attempts to suppress, ignore or otherwise manage the narration of long-view

⁵⁴ Greg Carr, “What Black Studies is Not,” *Socialism and Democracy*, 25, no. 1 (2011): 179-180.

genealogies of African deep thought” as if the education of African people is a linear chronological history that began in 1886 at the Mohawk Conference. Rather, it is a genealogy.⁵⁵ It is an attempt to follow the *Ground Rules for Intellectual Work* to gain SIA [Insight and Understanding] on African ways of learning, educational thought, practice, training, and instruction to be able to speak to *Mekhet* [After].⁵⁶ While embracing the essential questions and solutions of closing the excellence gap that has been raised by previous generations of scholars, the core of this project reveals that Black people’s improvisational efforts to educate their children and close the excellence gap have and can be mediated through what I categorize as **(1) Collective Training, (2) Spiritual and Moral Balance, and (3) Content Mastery.**

⁵⁵ “Whenever we see the word *history*, we are automatically speaking of Western Civilization. History and Western Civilization are synonymous. It is as if nothing else ever happened to mankind until the arrival of Western man.” Anderson states “Genealogy is the key to break the chains of Western intellectual supremacy. See Anderson Thompson, “Developing an African Historiography,” in *The African World History Project: The Preliminary Challenge* (Los Angeles: Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization, 1997), 17.

⁵⁶ The *ground rules for intellectual work* were principles developed during Greg E. Carr’s, chair of Afro-American Studies at Howard University, work with the “listening writers” of the Philadelphia Freedom Schools and who still utilize them in their program. See Greg E. Carr, “Africana Cultural Logics and Movement Building: A Brief Essay and Study Bibliography,” Research Essay for Children’s Defense Fund Advanced Service and Advocacy Workshop for HBCU Student Leaders, Clinton, TN (2003); Carr, “Inscribing African World History.” SIA is a Kemet (Egyptian) concept which translated in European American English to “insight” or “understanding.” See Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature Volume II: The New Kingdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 227; Hilliard, III, *SBA*, 6 - 7. Dr. Greg Carr in his course syllabus *Mekhet* is a Kemet (Egyptian) concept which translates in European American English (EAE) to “After.”

Significance of the Study

[This piece] is not addressed primarily to white people, though it does not put you down in anyway- it simply ignores you (clapping). For my people need all the inspiration and love they can get (clapping). So, since this house is full and there are over 22 million blacks in the country, I only want 1 million to buy this record- you understand.

— Nina Simone⁵⁷

Writing on Africana educational excellence is made possible, because of the labor of many scholars and particularly historians who have worked on quilting together aspects of the research questions. The significance of this study, as Nina says is “for my people.” This dissertation looks to continue the research on Black education to be an instrument of Black Nationalism and be a vehicle for social change in the Black community.⁵⁸ One of the major objectives is to apply methodologies, methods, vocabulary and comparative techniques explicitly associated with Africana Studies to be able to analyze texts, practices and narratives. A second objective is to interrogate and deconstruct dominant methodologies presently used to frame the narrative and research on Black children and learning. A third objective of this study is to help facilitate the development of stronger pathways of collective, community and institutional engagement to address the practical day-to-day problems that place lives on the line. Following the call to scholarship by the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC), a fourth objective of this dissertation is to “reclaim our history through

⁵⁷ *To Be Young Gifted and Black*, by Nina Simone, concert in New York City, 1970.

⁵⁸ James Stewart's (1987) *The Field and Function of Black Studies* paraphrases Allen (1974) call to Black Studies scholars to research black history and illuminate the contributions, be an instrument of Black Nationalism and be a vehicle for social change in the black community. See Nathaniel Norment Jr. ed. *The African American Studies Reader Second Edition* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2007), 44-52; Robert L. Allen, “Politics of the Attack on Black Studies” *Black Scholar* 6 (1974), 2-7.

Research, enlighten our people through Education, inspire our people through Science and Spiritual Development and raise our consciousness through Creative Productions.”⁵⁹

This project is a process of reclaiming and reconstructing historical and cultural narratives of how Black people across time and space learn, to (re)inscribe meaning so that Black children can understand who they are and what they can accomplish.

Chapter Summaries

...It would be only fair to the reader to say frankly in advance that the attitude of any person toward this story will be distinctly influenced by his theories of the Negro race. If he believes that the Negro in America and in general is an average and ordinary human being, who under given environment develops like other human beings, then he will read this story and judge it by the facts adduced. If, however, he regards the Negro as a distinctly inferior creation, who can never successfully take part in modern civilization and whose emancipation and enfranchisement were gestures against nature, then he will need something more than the sort of facts that I have set down. But this latter person, I am not trying to convince.

— William Edward Burdhardt Du Bois⁶⁰

Like the work of Du Bois, my study is an attempt to synthesize and contribute to the body of knowledge that identifies pathways to getting past episodic disruptions of the West, and back to the humanity of African standards of educational excellence. For clarity and better comprehension, the framework for this study follows as such: Chapter

⁵⁹ The mission of ASCAC is, “We as scholars, scientists, artist, students and determined workers. Our mission is to reclaim our history through Research, enlighten our people through Education, inspire our people through Science and Spiritual Development and raise our consciousness through Creative Productions.” Association For the Study of Classical African Civilizations Study, Nzinga Ratibisha ASCAC National President, 1990 *Association For the Study of Classical African Civilizations Study Guide: Building for Eternity Book 1* (Atlanta: ASCAC Foundation, (1991) 2011), 12.

⁶⁰William Edward Burdhardt Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York: The Free Press, (1935) 1998), Atlanta, December, 1934 Letter to Reader.

one discusses the study's background, its conceptual framework, and major core concepts. Chapter two examines the field of literature on the educational gap Black students face in America. The review of the literature sets forth the conceptual and theoretical frameworks to understanding the different disciplinary approaches that have been taken to examine the topic. Chapter three details the research approach, methodologies, methods, framing questions and limitations. Chapters four through six encompasses the effective approaches, adaptations and improvisational elements of achieving education excellence of the Ancient Kemet, Akan and Gikuyu people and the childhood experiences of individuals who have collectively strived for educational excellence from the 1700s to today. Focusing on the last two questions, in the face of episodic disruption what have Black people collectively unified around, organized to make decisions on, resolved, and established as common methods to manage the goal of educational excellence for their children. Chapter four provides a breakdown of how female and male individuals and the Black community have collectively played a role in closing the excellence. Chapter five places focus on the spiritually and morally balance necessary in achieving educational excellence. Chapter six focuses on the importance of content mastery in listening, reading, speaking and writing. Chapters seven is the conclusion, where I briefly summarize my findings and discuss recommendations for future directions.

Definition of Key Terms

Before proceeding, certain terms and concepts require clarification.

Community / The Collective	<i>Community / the Collective</i> refer to a collection of individuals and families who share a common and identifiable network of sociocultural communications. ⁶¹
Cultural Meaning-Making*	<i>Cultural Meaning-Making</i> refers to the types of music, art, dance and/or narratives created during a period.
Deep Thought	<i>Deep thought</i> refers to the corpus of African ideas which have originated from ancient African foundations that continues to resonate with people of African descent wherever they find themselves even today.
Episodic Disruptions	<i>Episodic horizontal disruptions</i> refer to the events or challenges Africans are subject to in the face of exigencies of White Supremacy.
Excellence	<i>Excellence</i> is the quality of what you do, rooted in your level of training, moral character and content mastery. Excellence is also one's long journey to be Divine over a life time.
Excellence Gap	The <i>excellence gap</i> refers to the educational gap between students' present level of performance for African students and levels of excellence.
Female Representatives of the Collective**	<i>Female representatives of the collective</i> refer to mothers, daughters, grandmothers, aunts, and sisters.

* Indicates one of the six conceptual categories from Carr's "Teaching Africana Studies."

** The label used in Valethia Watkins-Beatty's "Complementary in African American Historical Narratives Chart" from the "Lessons in Africana Studies: Dimensions of Africana Studies Gender."

⁶¹ Gomez, *Exchanging Our County Marks*, 68.

Governance*	<i>Governance</i> refers to people’s attempts to forge collective unity, organize to make decisions, resolve disputes, reestablish relationships, and establish common methods to manage around common goals.
Improvisation	<i>Improvisation</i> refers to the ways Africans address episodic horizontal disruptions, that maybe structurally different but fundamentally similar to what has been done in the past.
Male Representatives of the Collective**	<i>Male representatives of the collective</i> refer to fathers, sons, grandfathers, uncles, and brothers.
Movement and Memory*	<i>Movement and Memory</i> refers to the ways of communicating ideas about the past to future generations.
Performance	<i>Performance</i> is a person’s presentation of character intellectually, spiritually, politically and socially.
Science and Technology*	<i>Science and Technology</i> refers to the types of ideas about how nature works and devices created to address it.
Social Structure*	<i>Social Structure</i> refers to the types of social economic, political and cultural relations developed to explain relationships.
Ways of Knowing/ Systems of Thought*	<i>Ways of Knowing/ Systems of Thought</i> refers to the kinds of systems developed to explain existence and the meaning of life.

* Indicates one of the six conceptual categories from Carr’s “Teaching Africana Studies.”

** The label used in Valethia Watkins-Beatty’s “Complementary in African American Historical Narratives Chart” from the “Lessons in Africana Studies: Dimensions of Africana Studies Gender.”

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the formal and informal conversations around closing the education gap for Black students. Certainly, there is no one body of literature, research, or canon that summarizes the dynamic nature of the subject matter. In fact, a major impetus for this study is the great void and level of misinformation on the role Black individuals, communities and institutions attempt to engage in deep thought to forge collective unity, organize, reestablish and establish common methods to close the gap. To achieve this objective, this literature review is divided into three areas: (1) the education gap, (2) contributors to the education gap, and (3) the excellence gap.

To familiarize the reader with the subject matter under consideration, section one, examines what researchers mean by the popularized phrase education gap. Most recently, the state of this research area has professed three types of gaps – an intelligence, achievement and academic related behavior gap. Section two, broadly reviews the literature that examines the role individuals, specifically Black students, mothers, fathers and the community have within the gap. Central to this discussion are theories of acting white, stereotype threat, economic deprivation, social and structural strain. Particular attention will be placed on negative stereotypes about Black families mounting out of the Moynihan Report. Lastly, section three moves way from literature about the educational

gap to investigate research specific to the excellence gap between Black students. Fundamental to this section is Asa G. Hilliard's theory of an *excellence gap*. This section will discuss key concepts that are important for the examination of the excellence gap, limitations to the theory, and attempted models to support the argument. In sum, the aim of this literature review is to: (1) provide an understanding of the education gap, (2) explore the multi-dimensional theories advanced to explain the education gap, and (3) provide a foundational understanding of the excellence gap.

What is the Educational Gap?

Negro teachers will become rarer and in many cases will disappear. Negro children will be instructed in the public schools and taught under unpleasant if not discouraging circumstances. Even more largely than today they will fall out of school, ease to enter high school, and fewer will go to college. Theoretically Negro universities will disappear. Negro history will be taught less or not at all and as in so many cases in the past Negroes will remember their white or Indian ancestors and quite forget their Negro forbearers.

— William Edward Burghardt Du Bois¹

In studies of infants' mental and motor skills, (Geber 1957; Bayley 1965; Frankenburg and Dodds 1967; Leiderman 1973; A. Wilson 1992; Rippeyoung 2006) findings reconfirm that there is an educational gap at birth, but it's not the one society generally speaks about. French scholar Marcelle Geber in traveling to Africa to research the effects of malnutrition among youth in Africa discovered that Ugandan infants were

¹ William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, "Whither Now and Why" in *The Education of Black People: Ten Critiques, 1906 – 1960* W.E.B. Du Bois, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 195.

months ahead of children of European descent on all intelligence scales utilized. William K. Frankenburg and Josiah B. Dodds in 1967 would discover that black youth in America at six months old cognitively developed significantly faster than white youth in America. Later on, in 1978 Jane Flannery Jackson and Joseph Jackson, would argue “Overall, the greatest precocity has been found in Black infants, both in Africa and in the United States, followed by Indian infants in Latin America and infants in Asia. Caucasian infants rate lowest on the precocity scale.”² More recently, Phyllis Rippeyoung in examining the scores of infants of black and white mothers on the Bayley Scale of Infant Development also concluded that “when one controls for social, human, and financial capital, and for differences in health and type of childcare, the infants of African American mothers would actually do better than the infants of White mothers.”³ Consequently, overtime this natural head start black children have is often stagnated or reversed forming a gap (James et. al.1966; Jencks 1972; Kozol 1991; Orfield and Eaton 1996).

Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips (1998) in their edited text *The Black-White Test Score Gap* state,

African Americans currently score lower than European Americans on vocabulary, reading, and mathematics tests, as well as on tests that claim to measure scholastic aptitude and intelligence. This gap appears before children enter kindergarten, and it persists into adulthood. It narrowed since 1970, but the typical American black still scores below 75 percent of American whites on most standardized tests.⁴

²Jane Flannery Jackson and Joseph Jackson, *Infant Culture* (New York: Crowell, 1978), 210.

³ Phyllis Love Farley Rippeyoung, “Is it too Late Baby? Pinpointing the Emergence of a Black-white Test Score Gap in Infancy” (Doctoral dissertation, University of Iowa, 2006), 1.

⁴ Jencks and Phillips, “The Black Test Score Gap,”1.

For this reason, the central questions scholars grapple with are where is the gap, and who is to blame for it? In order to answer these questions, a brief examination of the publicized term “gap,” is necessary.

An Intelligence Gap

Since, the 1700’s research scientists have professed an *intelligence gap* between people of African and European descent (Morton and Combe 1839; Nott and Gliddon 1854; Nott 1868). The most recent measures have been psychological methods such as Intelligence Quotient testing (IQ). Originally, developed by French psychologist Alfred Binet in 1905 as a method of measuring the level of development in young children (Binet 1909; Binet, Simon and Town 1911), IQ testing later evolved and circulated around the world as an, “intelligence tests of retarded school children.”⁵ Later on it turned into a system of diagnosing mental disability to allow for the forceful sterilization of Black women during the Eugenics Movement (Winfield 2007), a form of ability grouping in the labor force and armed services (Kevles 1968), and a marker for standardized testing to allow for the tracking of students into lower levels (Williams 1986). The source of this data has been used to suggest substantial differences in human capacity, even up until today.

American educational psychologist, Arthur Jensen, in his 1969 article “How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement” published in the *Harvard*

⁵ Lewis Madison Terman, *The Measurement of Intelligence; an explanation of and a complete guide for the use of the Stanford revision and extension of the Binet-Simon Intelligence Scale* (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1916), 3.

Educational Review using statistical analysis of IQ scores, concluded that Blacks were genetically inferior to whites in general intelligence. His theories aligned with what other research publications had declared – people of African descent were intellectually inferiority (Binet, Simon and Town 1911; Van Evrie 1859, 1863; Galton 1978). In 1994 similar arguments would arise again in the publication of Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray’s *The Bell Curve*. This scholarship would represent an upsurge of literature that supported causality between genetic inequality and the intelligence. Conversely, as widely published intelligence gap arguments have been, other scholars have disputed such arguments based on issues of validity, bias, overzealous claims, and miss-measurement (Gould 1987; Jensen 1979; Hilliard 1976).

An Achievement Gap

By the 1960s and 1970s, a second gap became “the focal point of an enterprise of research studies.”⁶ Scholars refer to this as the *achievement gap*. The two most common measures of the achievement gap are reflected in student’s academic test scores and ability grouping. The major source of comparison in this literature, similar to the intelligent gap, has been Blacks and Whites. Books such as *The Black-White Test Score Gap*, *The Black-White Achievement Gap: Why Closing It Is the Greatest Civil Right Issue of Our Time*, and *Steady Gains and Stalled Progress: Inequality and the Black-White Test Score Gap* highlight the narrow range of the discussion. As research on the Black-White test score gap flood universities, journals, public policy and the media (Phillips, Crouse

⁶ Prudence Carter, *Keepin' it Real: School Success Beyond Black and White* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

and Ralph 1998; Vigdor and Ludwig 2007) recent figures from the NEAP report “Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress” state in 2009 that “White students had average scores at least 26 points higher than Black students in each subject, on a 0-500 scale.”⁷

On the contrary, many black and some white scholars have suggested varying levels of testing bias that contribute to the gap (Jencks 1998; Jencks 1980; Jencks and Phillips 1998). Strong efforts by organizational institutions such as the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPSi), which sees its “mission and destiny as the liberation of the African Mind, empowerment of the African Character, and enlivenment and illumination of the African Spirit,”⁸ and scholars such as Asa Hilliard (1991), Amos Wilson (1991), Wade Nobles, Cedric X, Phil McGee and Naim Akbar (1976) brought to light issues of content, methodology, and selection bias in testing.

A second aspect of the achievement gap is *ability grouping*. Ability grouping is the educational practice of grouping students by academic potential or past achievement. The educational gap, known as ability grouping generally represents a form of tracking of students into learning disabled, special education or lower performing classes (Slavin 1991). Researchers suggest Black students face the harsh cost of being tracked into disadvantaged and lower level tracks (Oakes 1987, Morris and Goldring 1999, Tyson

⁷ National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) “Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress Executive Summary” July 2009
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/studies/2009455.asp> (accessed July 15, 2012).

⁸ Association of Black Psychologists (ABPSi), “Our History,” last modified 2012,
http://www.abpsi.org/about_history.html (accessed July 19, 2012).

2011). Tracking has overwhelmingly proven to substantially be unbeneficial to low achieving students, and a form of segregation for students by race and socioeconomic status. Page and Page (1995) describe how, “Schools in the [Southern region] became increasingly resegregated through the use of tracking, with the majority of African American students assigned to lower tracks and the majority of Caucasian students assigned to higher tracks.”⁹ African Americans overwhelmingly comprise of the majority of students who face a “culture of exclusion”¹⁰ that contributes to a gap. Consequently, the ability tracking and grouping of African American students have created both short-term impacts on self-esteem and long-term impacts that lead to an academic gap, “or worse, dropping out of school altogether.”¹¹

A Gap in Academic Related Behavior

Unlike testing and ability grouping, researchers have also focused on *academic related behaviors* that constitute a gap. Generally, this gap describes students who are pushed-out or drop-out of school.

The term pushed-out has been coined to characterize the large number of students discharged from the schooling system prior to receiving a high school diploma primarily through suspension, expulsion, or placement in special education settings. Unfortunately,

⁹ Jane A. Page and Fred M. Page, “Tracking and its effects on African-Americans in the field of education” in *Beyond tracking: Finding Success in Inclusive Schools*, ed. Harbison Pool and Jane Page (Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1995), 73.

¹⁰ Chris Searle, “The Culture of Exclusion,” in ed. Jenny Bourne, Lee Bridges, and Chris Searle, *Outcast England: How Schools Exclude Black Children* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1994).

¹¹ Jerome Morris and Ellen Goldring, “Are Magnet Schools More Equitable? An Analysis of the Disciplinary Rates of African American and White Students in Cincinnati Magnet and Nonmagnet Schools,” *Equity & Excellence in Education* 32 (1999): 64.

in the United States a large number of these students are Black youth. The Children's Defense Fund "Portrait of Inequality 2011: Black Children in America" states,

Although Black students comprised only 17 percent of students in public schools in 2006, they represented:

- 35.6 percent of all students who experienced corporal punishment.
- 37.4 percent of all students suspended.
- 37.9 percent of all students expelled...

In 2008, Blacks constituted 17 percent of the youth population (10-17). They constituted:

- 31 percent of all juvenile arrests.
- 26 percent of all juvenile arrests for drug abuse violations.
- 52 percent of all juvenile arrests for violent offenses.¹²

The term drop-out refers to a disruption in the schooling process that results in a student leaving the traditional schooling system as a whole and not returning back (i.e. medical, employment, or pregnancy), moving to an alternative form of schooling without notifying their original school (i.e. out-of-state, homeschooling), or leaving and not being able to return since one has surpassed a certain age or time away. Research suggests, African America's face the highest rates of event dropout - the proportion of students who drop out in a single year without completing high school; status dropout - proportion of students who have not completed high school and are not enrolled at one point in time, regardless of when they dropped out, and cohort dropout - the proportion of students in a cohort of students over a period of time that drop out (Lee and Burkam 2003; Hauser, Simmons and Pager 2000).

¹² The Children's Defense Fund, "Portrait of Inequality 2011: Black Children in America" last modified 2011 <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/portrait-of-inequality-2011.pdf> (accessed January 5, 2013).

Who is to Blame for the Educational Gap?

It is strange, then, that the friends of truth and the promoters of freedom have not risen up against the present propaganda in the schools and crushed it. This crusade is much more important than the antilynching movement, because there would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom. Why not exploit, enslave, or exterminate a class that everybody is taught to regard as inferior.

— Carter G. Woodson¹³

Since the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was passed new standards have been presented, yet old systems of inequality still exists (Darling-Hammond 2000, 2007). As many researchers, social activists and scholars have particularly focused on this alarming gap across the country, concerns about family structure, the social cost of high unemployment, crime, poverty, and increasing dependency on welfare and other social services have also been on the rise. A myriad of explanations have been proposed to explain the gap. The most popular explanations have focused on student, family, environment, and school level factors.

The Role of Students in the Gap

Historically, the most common explanations for the gap have focused on student level characteristics. Following along the same theories of intellectual inferiority, research arguments have suggested students are culturally and historically to blame.

¹³ Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Chicago: African American Images, 2000), 3.

Acting White

In the 1997 September issue of “The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education,” its headlines read “‘Acting White’; Is It the Silent Killer of the Educational Aspirations of Inner-City Blacks? Young blacks are doing a tremendously good job of destroying themselves.”¹⁴ Nigerian anthropologist and sociologist, John Ogbu (1978), would become notable well-known for agreeing with this statement. In one of his most cited works, Ogbu referred to African Americans as “involuntary/caste-like” minorities, who have developed an “oppositional identity” to mainstream culture in response to white supremacy, which leads them to perform poorly in school (Ogbu 1974; Ogbu and Simons 1998). Later, in 1986, Signithia Fordham would co-authored with John Ogbu, “Black Students’ School Success: Coping with the ‘Burden of ‘Acting White,’” a study of African American students in one predominantly black high school in Washington, D.C., setting the stage for an *acting white* argument.¹⁵ Their results concluded that high-performing African American students lent from hegemonic white culture as part of a tactic for academic achievement – known as “acting white.” Fordham and Ogbu’s, findings suggest, while struggling to sustain a black identity, low achieving Black students performed poorly in school, because they decide to consciously or unconsciously

¹⁴ “‘Acting White’; Is It the Silent Killer of the Educational Aspirations of Inner-City Blacks?” in *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (1997) 93.

¹⁵ The 1986 study stated “Among the attitudes and behaviors that black students at Capital High identify as ‘acting white’ and therefore unacceptable are : (1) speaking standard English; (2) listening to white music and white radio stations; (3) going to the opera or ballet; (4) spending a lot of time in the library studying; (5) working hard to get good grades in school (those who get good grades are labeled ‘braniacs’); (7) going to the Smithsonian; (8) going to a Rolling Stones concert at the Capital Center; (9) doing volunteer work; (10) going camping, hiking, or mountain climbing; (11) having cocktails or cocktail party; (12) going to a symphony orchestra concert; (13) having a party with no music; (14) listening to classical music; (15) being on tie; (16) reading and writing poetry; and (17) putting on ‘airs,’ and so forth.”

avoid acting white. In other words, the fear of receiving an education is the fear of receiving a white education.

Even though, many scholars have supported evidence of an “acting white” phenomenon among Black youth (Fryer 2006; Ford, Grantham, Whiting 2008; Steinberg, Bradford and Stanford 1996; Buck 2010), others scholars have challenged the validity of the student’s comments, generalization of the sample, and the study’s method of analysis. In opposition to Ogbu’s theory of acting white, others have found equal and in some cases even higher values of education for Black students in comparison to white (Tyson, Darity and Castellino 2005; Cook and Ludwig 1997; Horvat and O’Connor 2006). European Sociologist Roslyn Arlin Mickelson (1990) with a more diverse and broader sample later demonstrated that Black students value education despite differences in family resources, more than their white counterparts. However, her findings suggest this value does not translate into improved or high academic achievement. Using survey data of high school seniors from eight racially mixed public schools in Los Angeles,¹⁶ her conclusions suggested, that *abstract* attitudes – formed from the dominant ideology that anyone can become successful by doing well in school – Black youth were unable to convert these attitudes into high test scores, unlike the *concrete* attitudes whites students have that produced high levels of academic achievement. As strong of an argument Mickelson was making for value, it was still somewhat suggested that if Black students in America could somehow become as devoted as whites to schooling, then the academic achievement gap would be totally reduced.

¹⁶ Sample 41 percent black and 59 percent white.

Black Sociologist Prudence L. Carters in her book *Keepin' It Real School Success Beyond Black and White* attempted to set the record straight. In her analysis of sixty-eight African American and Latino students, ranging from thirteen to twenty, for a ten-month period, she also heard students expressing “acting white” terminology, yet, she did not find any evidence that this equated with whiteness. Carter stated,

Instead, I [Carter] heard how minority youth often face social pressure to embrace cultural practices or ‘acts’ associated with their racial and ethnic identities... Students in this study, as the evidence will show, claim that their school attachment and engagement are often affected by how teachers and principals, the school’s cultural gatekeepers, parcel out rewards and sanctions according to who abides by dominant cultural rules.¹⁷

In other words, African American students do not have a reactive cultural of resistance to education. The students’ experienced personal cultural tensions with European institutions of schooling, which in some insists, hindered their academic achievement. However, this was not a normative practice among all Black students. Karolyn Tyson (2011) would follow-up with her own analysis and suggests the intervening factor of tracking, which links “achievement with whiteness,”¹⁸ is to blame for acting-white utterances among student. Other researchers suggest, these types of cultural tensions have been exposed on instructional, structural, and evaluative levels mostly not on the part of the student (Hale 1982; Hilliard 1995; Delpit 1995, 2006, 2012; Ferguson 2001; Valenzuela 1999; Noguera 2008).

¹⁷ Carter, *Keepin' It Real*, 5 -6.

¹⁸ Karolyn Tyson, *Integration Interrupted: Tracking, Black Students, & Acting White After Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8.

Stereotype Threat

The same way Black students have been blamed for not being motivated enough, they have also been described as being threatened by academic success. American social psychologist, Claude Steele and his colleagues Joshua Aronson and Steven Spencer, termed this *stereotype threat*. Stereotype threat is the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype. The fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype, explains the cognitive underperformance of African American students (Steele and Aronson 1995; Steele 1992; Steele 1998; Steele 2003). In a comparative examination of black and white college students SAT subject test scores, when just one group was notified of their test scores measuring intellectual ability, Steele describes,

Planned contrasts on the adjusted scores revealed that, as predicted, Blacks in the diagnostic condition performed significantly worse than Blacks in the nondiagnostic condition than Whites in the diagnostic condition and then Whites in the nondiagnostic condition...Blacks completed fewer items than Whites, and participants in the diagnostic condition tended to complete fewer items than those in the nondiagnostic conditions.¹⁹

Finding suggests, the mindfulness of being stereotyped by others induces fear or anxiety, which leads to decreased performance, thus confirming negative stereotype. In other words, the threat of being stereotyped causes students to perform poorly.

In another study examining Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores (Steele & Aronson 1995), Black students showed similar results. Blascovich et al. (2001) not only compared test scores, but also blood pressure between twenty African Americans and nineteen European Americans students, and the African Americans student in the

¹⁹ Claudia Steele and Joshua Aronson, "Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69 (1995): 802.

stereotype threat group underperformed on the written test, and also had significantly higher blood pressures than any of the other groups. Additionally, Davis and Silver (2003) examined 212 self-identified African-American responses on seven political knowledge questionnaires afforded in a threatening or nonthreatening way, and found that African-Americans answered significantly fewer responses correctly than white respondents. Consequently, as statistically significant and highly cited stereotype threat research is between Blacks and whites, critics point out that in experiments where stereotype threat was removed, there was still a substantial remaining achievement gap, which suggests stereotype threat is only partially explanatory (Sackett et al. 2004).

“At Risk”

New York University professor and all-around authority on urban schools, Pedro A. Noguera suggest, “The trouble with Black boys is that too often they are assumed to be at risk because they are too aggressive, too loud, too violent, too dumb, too hard to control, too streetwise, and too focused on sports.”²⁰ “At risk,” similar to the “fragile” sticker a sender places on a package before it is sent, is the common label used to describe many Black students before they are able to participate in the schooling process.²¹ Most recently, the common explanatory element of “risk” is now used on

²⁰ Pedro A. Noguera, *The Trouble with Black Boys and Other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), xxi.

²¹ The language of risk defined theoretically in terms of time and outcomes were originally drawn from the work of Kraemer et al. Kraemer et al presented a topology of risks and risk factors. Their major argument is, “labeling a factor with the generic term risk factor with no further effort to delineate its role as a fixed marker, variable marker, or causal risk factor is a limited finding. Any causal risk factor for a disorder, any correlate of such a causal of a correlate of such a causal risk factor may be a risk factor.” See Kraemer et al, “Coming to Terms With the Terms of Risk,” *Arch Gen Psychiatry*, 54 (1997) 342.

students to explain educational outcomes. In considering individual level variables to examine the gap, researchers have examined what can be categorized as social-biological and academic markers of risk.

Social-biological risks are labeled on students with demographic factors such as race/ethnicity, gender, and language. When a student is identified as black he or she is at risk. When a student is identified as a black male he is at risk. When a student is unable to express his or her thoughts using traditional Standard English he or she is at risk, the list goes on and on. Policy makers have made reference to school-to-prison and cradle-to-prison pipelines in response to states and prisons using reading and math test scores to determine how many prison rooms to build for certain “at-risk” student in their future.²² These students are mostly students of African descent. Entwisle, Alexander and Olson in 1997 suggest that indicators of risk can be distinguished as early as in the first grade.

Academic risk, described by Lee and Burkam (2003), refer to student’s school behaviors that reflect the manifestations of school-related problems in the future. This form of risk labeling is seen when students are labeled as at-risk because of truancy, absenteeism, or grade retention (Rumberger and Thomas 2000; Lee and Burkam 1992), or having low academic testing and IQ scores (Bryk and Thum 1989, Kunjufu 1985). Ann Ferguson in her field observation at a racially diversified elementary school, describes,

²² School-to-prison pipeline line phrase is used to describe a systematic pattern of pushing disadvantage students out of school into the criminal justice system. Cradle-to-prison pipeline refers to a systematic pattern of pushing disadvantage babies, out of neighborhoods into the criminal justice system.

Though African American boys made up only one-quarter of the student body at Rosa Parks, they accounted for nearly half the number of students sent to the Punishing Room for major and minor misdeeds in 1991-92....No one at the school seemed surprised that the vast majority of children defined as 'at-risk' of failing academically, of being future school dropouts, were mostly black and male...Those who were classified as lazy, belligerent, incorrigible at school could be respectful, diligent, and responsible in other contexts.²³

“And how does race matter” regarding the issue of punishment and education?²⁴

“Crime is thus one of the masquerades behind which “race,” with all its menacing ideological complexity, mobilizes old public fears and creates new ones...The ideological reproduction of a fear of black people...is gravitating toward and being grounded in a fear of crime.”²⁵ As America perversely creates the argument to blame and convict black students for their low performance based on nature, its foundation is based on the grounds of history starting from slavery. Yet, if nature is the dependent variable, and researchers admit to a historical genealogy that dates further back for people of African descent, such explanation would not hold valid (Diop 1974, 1981; Browder 1989; Carruthers 1995; Hilliard 1995, 2003). Studies of infants’ mental and motor skills, finding reconfirm that children of African descent are born intellectually advanced compared to European children (Geber 1957; Bayley 1965; Frankenburg and Dodds 1967; Leiderman 1973; A. Wilson 1992; Rippeyoung 2006). Even when anti-literacy laws were formed,

²³ Ann Ferguson, *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity* (Law, Meaning, and Violence) (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 2, 15.

²⁴ Angela Y. Davis, “Race and Crimilization: Black Americans and the Punishment Industry,” in *The House That Race Built*, ed. Wahneema Lubiano (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 269.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 266, 269.

Heather Andrea Williams' text *Self-Taught African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (2005) provides comprehensive documentation on the numerous ways African Americans educated themselves in the South during the 1861-1871. In secret places, caves, pits, deep in the woods, under a tree, in the basement of churches or in creating their own spaces, black people governed themselves to gain educational excellence.²⁶ When such arguments as these are raised, consequently researches just change the subject and move on to other intervening variables such as family, neighborhoods and schools to explain the education gap.

The Role of the Black Family in the Gap

Other research literature has shown that family background variables are related to children's achievement (Blau and Duncan 1967; Jencks 1972; Sewell, Haller, and Portes 1969). Resources related to family background employ their influence at different levels of educational attainment, performance, and transitions, through socio-economic status, social class, level of education, social involvement and family structure.

One of the most cited studies supporting black Families having a negative impact on the educational performance of students is the 1965 *Negro Family Case for National Action*, also known as the Moynihan Report. Upon being hired by the U.S. Department of Labor, American politician and sociologist, Daniel Moynihan, in writing to President Lyndon Johnson, argued that, the absence of nuclear families hinder the

²⁶ Williams, *Self-taught*, 7 – 30.

progress of Black children and the Black community. Specifically, “Negro children without fathers flounder – and fail.”²⁷ The Moynihan Report not only added to the long record of historical stereotypes about the black family, it reinforced the term nuclear family, a two parent household with blood-related children, as the universal and highest form of family organization. From a national standpoint, the Moynihan Report, reinscribed a framework that views Black families as pathological, and to blame for the failures of black youth (Blau and Duncan 1967).

In 1998, at the Morehouse College Institute for American Values Conference researchers discussed the same “alarming” issue facing the black family. Looking at the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population data, the rate of single parent households for children 18 years and younger over the past 50 years, indicated a large gap between Black and White families.²⁸ Economic and social researchers suggest, students living in a single parent household, mother only or father only, have been found to have lower academic achievement scores (Aston and McLanahan 1991; Coleman 1988; McLanahan 1985; McLanahan & Booth 1989; Rumberger 1983). Yet, when broken down by race conflicting results suggest family structure has a greater influence on the drop out status of black youth than whites (Boggess 1998; McLanahan 1985), others find a greater influence for whites than blacks (Hauser, Simmons and Pager 2000; McLanahan and

²⁷ Daniel P Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Govt., 1965), 36.

²⁸ Obie Clayton, Ronald B. Mincy and David Blankenhorn eds., *Black Fathers in Contemporary American Society: Strengths, Weaknesses, and Strategies for Change* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003).

Sandefur 1994), and some find no difference at all between races (Krein and Beller 1988).

McLanahan (1985) using economic deprivation theory argues the structure of black families do impact student achievement. Her findings suggest that single parent households, particularly mother only, have lower incomes, and if a parent works full time their children have less supervision, consequently resulting in negative impacts on their children's academic performance. With a sample of 3,289 participants age 17 – 27 in 1978, oversampling single-parent and black families, her findings suggest family income greatly accounts variations in dropout status for father-absent households and negative effects for children not living in two-parent households. McLanahan and Booth (1989) go on to claim single mothers also have limited work experiences, face sex discrimination in the work force and have high costs of childcare, influencing children's future outcomes (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). On the other hand more recent literature utilizing the NELS:88 data set suggests “after controlling for both 1988 income and for subsequent income loss, the children of single-parent households are at no greater risk of dropping out than are children who continue to live in two-parent households” (Pong and Ju, 2000; 165).

According to Clayton and Moore (2003), the high incarceration of African American men has also affected the family structure in the Black community. In a study investigating the proportion of African American adolescents who live with or without their biological fathers, Rodney and Mupier, (1999), found that with regard to some areas of conduct disorder, father-absent adolescents experience significantly more problems

like running away from home, skipping or cutting classes, being suspended from school and getting in trouble with the law. All of these factors are early indicators of “at-risk” dropout status.

While these two conceptualizations provide a strong argument for the influences of family structure on academic achievement, their measure of the black family structure is insufficient. Niara Sudarkasa in *The Strength of Our Mothers: African & African American Women & Families: Essays and Speeches* argues western comparative family studies have been centered around a monogamous conjugal union, without regards for other diverse understanding of family. The term nuclear family in Western society and research has been established as the highest form of family organization.²⁹ This framework, disregards the dynamic nature of Black families that extend beyond physical conjugal unions, and views Black families as negative, pathological and to blame for the failures of Black youth. McLanahan (1985) does not distinguish between mothers versus female guardian households. Researches rarely focus on the type of parents necessary to form a two parent household. Does a household with a mother and male guardian, uncle, brother, or set-father, two guardians or mother and female guardian, grandmother, aunt, or sister not constitute the same type of family as a nuclear family? The construction of family and household should be culturally defined. There is evidence to support that the entire Black family, extended family, (Ford 1996; Paik and Walberg 2007; Fries-Britt 1998; Mangnuson and Waldfogel 2008; Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif 1998), and

²⁹ George Peter Murdock, *Social Structures*, (New York: Free Press, 1965).

especially grandmothers (Hale 1982) have positive impacts on student academic achievement.

The arguments of the Black family being the culprit of low achieving youth has dominated society, and I do not deny that Black family face many challenges. Nevertheless, as research scholars have concluded that single-mothers or absent father are to blame for poor academic performance among Black youth, scholarship has also proven that this process has not occurred homogeneously across all types of families. The ability to overgeneralize about an entire cultural without using the proper framework is erroneous.

The Role of Black Communities in the Gap

The key decision in the Supreme Court's 1954 Brown v. Board of Education case was that racial segregation within state funded public schools would come to an end and an era of integration would follow. Desegregation would be the major Affirmative Action policy initiative working to assure the descendants of African people in the United States have access to integrated and quality public schooling our ancestors did not have. Through this initiative, Black children were structurally expected to achieve equally to the level of white students, just because the law stated things were now equal. However, over 50 years later Black students still experience separate and unequal schooling (Hilliard 1997, Clotfelter 2004, Kozol 1991, Orfield and Eaton 1996, Boger and Orfield 2005).

Neighborhoods are commonly believed to have an impact on youth behavior, experience, attitude and opportunity. Nevertheless, similar to the debate over school level impacts on academic achievement, the impacts of neighborhood on student performance are split. Several theoretical models have been suggested to explain the effects of neighborhoods on the educational achievement of students. Some suggest neighborhoods have a substantial impact (Datcher 1982; Vartanian and Gleason 1999), others suggest a weak impact (Corcoran et al. 1992).

Crane's (1991) epidemic theory suggests living in a neighborhood in which unemployment is moderate may not affect a student's educational attainment, but living in a neighborhood where nearly everyone is unemployed, poorly educated and living in poverty will have an impact on a student's educational attainment. In sampling 92,512 teenagers living only with their parents, controlling for family income, parents' educational status, family head's occupational status, household structure, family size, rural origin, gender, and race, Cranes results reported high rates of dropout probabilities of all blacks in the worst neighborhoods of the largest cities. Crane's (1991) epidemic theory, suggests when social problems reach a critical point, its prevalence of the problem will spread and increase. Similarly, low levels of achievement have consistently been found in central cities with low income neighborhoods (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov & Sealand 1993; Case & Katz 1991; Hauser, Simmons & Pager 2000). These epidemic incidences impact the relationships between parents and schools (Laurea 2003), teachers and students (Bowles and Gintis 2002), students and schools (Coleman 1966); impacting students chances of falling through the gap.

Urban scholars suggest that declines in neighborhood racial and economic segregation during the 1990s, are correlated with declines in the black-white test score gap (Gleaser and Vigdor 2003; Jargowsky 1997). For policy makers, the racial barriers in the labor market along with welfare policies aimed toward single-parent female-headed households have been detrimental to the Black family. W. Wilson (2003) reports the elevated unemployment rates in the Black community “decrease the ability of many inner-city men to provide adequately for their children, which in turns lowers their self-confidence as providers and creates antagonistic relations with their child’s mother.”³⁰ Segregation and isolation in neighborhoods, housing, employment, and schooling, remain a pronounced issue (W. Wilson 1987; Orfield 1993; Massey and Denton 1993).

Jonathan Kozol’s 1991 *Savage Inequalities* described the striking disadvantage public schools in urban areas, which predominantly serve students of African descent, face in regard to sub-standard facilities, under staffing, low resources, and overcrowding. His observations of public schools in New York City, East St. Louis, Chicago, Camden, Cincinnati, and Washington D.C. described the striking disadvantage public schools in urban areas, faced in regards to sub-standard facilities, under staffing, low resources, low academic performance and overcrowding. From one of his interviews he describes how,

³⁰ William J. Wilson, “The Woes of the Inner-City African American Father” in *Black fathers in contemporary American society: strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for change*, Clayton Obie, Ronald B. Mincy, and David Blankenhorn eds. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), 27.

A 16-year old student in the South Bronx tells [Kozal] that he went to English class for two months in the fall of 1989 before the school supplied him a textbook. He spent the entire year without a science text...In May of 1990 he is facing final exams, but, because the school requires students to pass in their textbooks one week prior to the end of the semester, he is forced to study without math and English texts.

He wants to go to college and he knows that math and English are important, but he's feeling overwhelmed, especially in math. He asked his teacher if he could come in for extra help, but she informed him that she didn't have the time.³¹

It is well documented that African American students are more likely to attend schools that have low per-pupil expenditure, high economic and racial segregation and school tracking, which impact students' level of achievement (Polinard et al. 1995). With school effects, African students in America more than usually, find themselves in segregated schools by race or social class in part because of their proximity to neighborhood inequality (W. Wilson 1996; Massey and Denton 1993).

All in all, if we could find out how to improve the "quality" of black neighborhoods and schools, we could close the education gap. Wells and Crain (1997) in *Stepping Over the Color Line*, suggest while attempts were made to desegregate the black side of the color line, whites segregated themselves in the suburbs and private institutions, and no attempt was made to desegregate the core values and assumptions of a white-dominated institution and society.

As Crane's and others' evidence appears to suggest that all Black youth are affected by living in Black neighborhoods and attending Black schools, Corcoran et al. (1992), Jencks & Mayer (1990) and Duncan (1994) suggest no evidence that a higher

³¹ Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequality Children in American Schools* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 110, 111.

concentration of low-income families is detrimental to a student's academic performance. Jencks and Mayer's *utility maximization theory* predicts that neighborhood quality has no effect on educational outcomes. Individuals choose their level of educational attainment to maximize their personal individual's utility, unrelated to their neighborhood circumstance (Jencks and Mayer 1990). Duncan (1994) suggest in his examine of PSID data consists of 3,439 teens-783 white males, 818 white females, 884 black males, and 954 black females:

An important focus in our empirical work was the distinction between the effects of the presence of low-income families (epidemic theories in the framework of Jencks and Mayer [1990]) and the absence of affluent families (collective socialization and institutional theories). We found virtually no evidence that greater concentrations of low- as opposed to middle-income families were detrimental (an exception was for the college-attendance decisions of black males), even among economically disadvantaged children.³²

Literature that presents everything Black, or a concentration of Blackness as bad, again adds to the long record of historical stereotypes about the Black family.

The Excellence Gap

We can't teach our children if we never call them together.

— Asa Hilliard³³

While many have written, investigated, and interrogated the black-white achievement, intelligence, and academic behavior gap, few have focused just on students

³² Greg J. Duncan, "Families and Neighbors as Sources of Disadvantage in the Schooling Decisions of White and Black Adolescents." *American Journal of Education* 103(1994), 47.

³³ Asa G. Hilliard, *The Maroon Within Us: Selected Essays on African American Community Socialization* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995), 63.

of African descent on African terms. This project turns away from the popular black-white comparison and Western conceptions of education, toward the gap between black student performance and excellence. Because of the labor of contemporary scholars such as Asa Hilliard, Jawanza Kunjufu, Janice E. Hale, and Joyce E. King a “transformative research and action agenda” has been on the move.

In 2004 Asa Hilliard would publish in the text *Young Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement among African-American Students*, a challenge to researchers to not examine the gap between black and white students, but the gap in excellence between black students alone and provides ways to judge us based on our standards of excellence. No different from his long list of scholarship within the area of African education, Hilliard would also call for research on the education of African descendant people to be on African terms.

In giving examples of best practices dating as far back to the Nile Valley Civilizations, Hilliard created a framework to understand African centered education. “There is something dreadfully wrong with an education/ socialization process that leaves us ignorant of our past, strangers to our people, apes of our oppressors, and creatures of habitual, shallow though, and trivial values.”³⁴ To close the address the issue Hilliard called for the cultural training of and transformation of African teachers. From *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind* Hilliard suggest,

I do not demand or expect public schools in the United States to accommodate, substantially, an extension of the excellent educational traditions of African or African diasporan people. This would be difficult, since the very nature of public

³⁴ Hilliard, *SBA*, 8.

schools in the United States contrasts greatly with traditional African education...The teacher education structure must include a valid internship for teachers in training. A valid internship would include the presence of a real “master” teacher, who, among other things, is successful with children who are predicted to fail.³⁵

Practicum sites at excellent schools and culturally relevant evaluation and performance criteria materials would provide teachers with proper experiential training.

As practical as these solutions were, they doesn't sustain the critique of the system that reveals why these best practices will never be embraced as solutions. As much as public schools, contrasts greatly with traditional African education, so do the universities and institutions that train teachers. Pragmatically, it would be great for western public schools to embraces and African curriculum, institutions of higher education to train teachers with the assumption that African children are not intellectually inferior, however that would require the entire system of western thought to be transformed as well. Theoretically, Hilliard’s work present grand solutions for a promising system, however working within the social structure and voiding the inevitable need to confront power, is problematic.

Researcher and Founding Director of the Institute for the Study of the African American Child, Janice E. Hale has been one of the contemporary scholar who has examined the impact of the black family on the performance of student achievement, as an extension of African traditions. In her 1948 text *Black Children Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles* she articulates a three stage approach of (1) political/ cultural (ideology), (2) pedagogical relevance (method), and (3) academic rigor (content). Hale’s

³⁵ Ibid., 116, 117.

model encourages parents to enforce a political sense of responsibility, cultural relevance, and academic excellence on their children. She states,

Black children must achieve competency in mastering the tools of this culture if they are to survive. It is enough to wear dashikis, speak Swahili, and eat “soul food” in educational settings, as desirable as those activities are. We must create an educational system that not only celebrates African and African-American culture but also imbues Black children with the skills they need to survive in this society and to contribute to its creative development.³⁶

Drawing upon a multidisciplinary method, in observing children and their families, Hale calls for a psychological approach to closing the gap. Her arguments present solutions for African people, on African terms. In her later text *Learning While Black Creating Educational Excellence for African American Children*, Hale would suggest a more dynamic approach for excellence calling upon parents and the entire village (the Black church, teachers, civil rights groups, public school boards, research scholars and advocacy organizations). Methodologically, Hale breaks from western notions of excellence, which she agrees are mediocre, however it becomes evident that she is still connected to a conversation with the West. From chapter one, “Mastery and Excellence versus the Bell Curve,” in her own words,

I offer a solution that places the school at the center of the effort to achieve upward mobility for African American children. The school is the appropriate focal point because everyone is required to attend school. Not everyone has a functional family, not everyone attends church, not everyone participates in the YMCA or YWCA, but everyone is required to attend school.³⁷

³⁶ Janice E. Hale, *Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles*, (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1948), 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

In her concluding remarks to parents, she states, “As we work toward the Beloved Community, it is important that African American parents impose on themselves the same standard I am setting out for white school officials in dealing with African American children.”³⁸ Hale re-inscribes western frameworks, and suggest solutions within the western social structure that primarily positions Black families at a disadvantage.

In the edited text, *Black Education A Transformative Research and Action Agenda for the New Century*, Joyce E. King would lead a academic research agenda not just on a national conversation about Black education, but on an international one. King’s transformative vision of Black education for human freedom focuses again on researching and presenting African solutions on African terms. The AERA Commission on Research in Black Education (CORIBE) vital principles for black education and socialization focuses on:

Article 1: Expanding Human Understanding

Article 2: Nurturing Cultural Consciousness

Article 3: Resisting Hegemony/ Domination/ Dispossession Culturally

*Article 4: Using a Liberatory Cultural Orientation as an Analytical/ Pedagogical Tool*³⁹

The framework for the *Declaration of Intellectual Independence for Human Freedom* set forth suggested guidelines to alleviate the crisis of Black education. Culturally and politically the agenda presents an inclusive approach to allow

³⁸ Ibid., 188.

³⁹ Joyce E. King, “A Declaration of Intellectual Independence for Human Freedom,” in *Black Education: A Transformative Research and Action Agenda for the New Century*, ed. Joyce E. King, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 21.

Black students to attain excellence without disruption. However, theoretically, it still requires the western system to turn away from its foundational assumptions of African intellectual inferiority. The declaration calls for agreement between “we” and the “other,” when the other has agreed to disagree.

In sum, the short falls of those who write on black educational excellence involves not writing on African terms, but also not providing solutions on African terms, detached from the west. The focus should not be on narrating difference or sameness with the West, but about speaking with and to Africana experiences on Africana terms. This is not a study that recommends creating add-on to programs to the academy — which has a core foundation of white supremacy in science and function. In no way do I suggest we blame black students, parents, or the community, re-inscribing myth of African intellectual inferiority. Following the call to action of Africana Studies, one of the major objectives of this research is to apply methodologies, methods, vocabulary and comparative techniques explicitly associated with Africana Studies to be able to analyze texts, practices and narratives.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH APPROACH

Introduction

The methodology, methods, and system of analysis utilized for this study have been constructed in order to address the main question:

- How do we close the excellence gap, between Black students' present levels of performance and levels of excellence?

and sub questions:

- In looking at African people prior to European episodic disruptions, how did African people view and define educational excellence for their children?
- How did Black people in America organize and govern themselves to close the excellence gap?
- Do these systems of organization and governance still exist today?

One of the major objectives of this study is to apply methodologies, methods, vocabulary and comparative techniques explicitly associated with Africana Studies to be able to analyze texts, practices and narratives of people of African descent. A second objective is to interrogate and deconstruct dominant methodologies presently used to frame the narrative and research on Black children and learning. In order to achieve this objective, this chapter is divided as follows: (1) the rationale; (2) methodology; (3) methods; and (4) limitations.

The Rationale

Each dissertation in the Temple University Department of African-American Studies must for all practical purposes be two dissertations in one. In addition to the specific subject area covered, each dissertation must deal as a matter of responsibility with the broad issue of the development of paradigms of Africology.

— Greg Carr¹

Following the call of intellectual scholarship by Greg Carr, this dissertation is two dissertations in one.² First it deals with positioning the study in a framework that starts, operationalizes, and applies an Africana paradigm. Secondly, it examines the subject of closing the excellence gap at hand. Since, this area of examination is such “an enterprise of research studies,” what becomes essential is distinguishing the methodology, which leads to “asking the right questions.”³ This study chooses to discard the appendages of Western thought, assumption and episodic disruptions. Its focus is not in narrating difference or sameness with the West, but about speaking about, with and to Africana experiences on Africana terms.

¹ Greg Carr, “African Philosophy of History in the Contemporary Era: Its Antecedents and Methodological Implications for the African Contribution to World History” (PhD dissertation, Temple University, 1998), 114.

² “Jegna” refers particularly to those individuals that possess content mastery in what they teach and are selflessly devoted with imparting knowledge and primarily concerned with the spiritual and intellectual development of African people. See Asa G. Hilliard, III, *African Power: Affirming African Indigenous Socialization in the Face of the Culture Wars* (Gainesville, FL: Makare Publishing Company, 2002), 18-20.

³ Greg Carr, Mbongi lecture at Philadelphia Freedom School’s Wednesday Academy, Benjamin Franklin High School, Philadelphia, 11 July, 2012.

Methodology: The Theoretical Frame

The assumption one holds will shape the kinds of answers one seeks and can influence the types of questions a researcher is likely to ask.

— Valethia Watkins⁴

Knowing, “...the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism,” and that the word, itself “is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary,” I am careful to follow core theories and paradigms within Africana Studies based on culture, social, and personal experiences about people of African descent.⁵ The methodological approach for this study was structured around (1) Normative Theory; (2) Examining the Africana Experience; and (3) Assumptions

Normative Theory

While many social scientists instinctually move toward grounded theory, as an inductive approach to the study of social life, it is derived out of sociological western framework. It should be understood that, “Objectivity in sociology cannot be taken for granted.”⁶ The methodological assumptions of sociology similar to many of the traditional disciplines are grounded in the social reality of biological difference. The narrative frame taken for this study comes from the normative practices out of Africa. These methodological groundings, as Carr suggests, “must be linked to the articulation of

⁴ Valethia Watkins, “Black Feminist Gender Discourse (1970-Present): A Critique” (Philadelphia, PA, 1998), 22.

⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: research and indigenous peoples* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 1.

⁶ Lucius Outlaw, “Africology: Normative Theory (1996)” in *The African American Studies Reader*, ed. Nathaniel Norment, Jr., (Durham, Carolina Academic Press, 2007), 549.

a genealogy of Africana intellectual work which aligns disciplinary Africana Studies within a range of normative practices emerging out of that long-view genealogy.”⁷ In other words, instead of using western assumptions to invade an African conversation, what are the normative practices, languages and ways of knowing that are culturally centered out Africa?

Examining the Africana Experience

Within the body of research about the educational experiences of people of African descent in America the primary and serious flaw scholars tend to bypass or neglect are the methodological and theoretical issues. From the lesson “Teaching and Studying the African(a) Experience” in the historical⁸ School District of Philadelphia Africana Studies Curriculum, Greg Carr states, “Any study of African people which does not begin with the recognition of and systematic re-cognition to both the concept of African cultural identities and the specific, lived demonstration of them will only continue to erase Africans as full human beings and actions in world history.”⁹ Regardless, of the types of tools or methods used, if the framework isn’t properly calibrated the entire research study is flawed. The methodology of this study uses the Africana Studies’ framing questions and six conceptual categories constructed to examine

⁷ Greg E. Carr, “Towards an Intellectual History of Africana Studies: Genealogy and Normative Theory (2006), in *The African American Studies Reader*, ed. Nathaniel Norment, Jr., (Durham, Carolina Academic Press, 2007), 439.

⁸ This curriculum was one of the first times a “systematic framework and process for ordering the study of the African experience across time and space” was created.

⁹ Carr, “Teaching and Studying the African (a) Experience: Definitions and Categories.” In *School District of Philadelphia African-American History High School Course Curriculum* (Philadelphia: Songhai Press, 2006), 12.

the *long-view* experiences of African people.¹⁰ The disciplinary term African Studies in this context refers to the study of Africans and African-descended communities. The framing questions create a process of “tracing and re-tracing the African experience from its [long-view] origins in Africa to the present” giving shape to the research methodologies. “Long-view” refers to a historical narrative that pre-dates African encounters with Europe and chattel slavery.

Such as this, the framework constructed for this study, recognizes that this narrative begins in Ancient Africa. In asking about the excellence gap between black students, the primary question becomes: Who are Black students to each other? How do black student see themselves, their families and communities? From the foundational six conceptual categories, in Table 1, subsets of questions were constructed.

¹⁰ On *framing questions* see Greg Carr, “Teaching and Studying the African (a) Experience: Definitions and Categories.” In *School District of Philadelphia African-American History High School Course Curriculum* (Philadelphia: Songhai Press, 2006), 13. “Long-view” see Greg Carr, “What Black Studies is Not: Moving from Crisis to Liberation in Africana Intellectual Work,” *Socialism and Democracy* 25, no. 1 (June 2011):179-180. The *six conceptual categories* guide the research method and conceptual design distinguishing Africana Studies from simple studies of materials involving African people.

Table 1: Africana Conceptual Categories		
Terms	Description	Guiding Questions
Social Structure	The structure of the type of social, economic, political and cultural relations developed (e.g. citizenship, chattel slaver, and maroonage)	What were the social, economic, political and/or cultural relationships people forged to strive for excellence?
Governance	The set of common rules created to regulate the community (e.g. Mali “empire,” Black church, and homeschooling)	What ways did people attempt to forge collective unity, organize to make decisions, resolve disputes, reestablish relationships, and develop common methods for excellence?
Ways of Knowing/ Systems of Thought	The kinds of systems developed to explain existence and the meaning of life (e.g. creation stories, ideas about life and death).	What kinds of systems did people develop to explain the function of wisdom and education?
Science and Technology	The types of ideas about how nature works and devices created to address it (e.g. innovations in technology, transportations, and architecture)	What forms of ideas did people develop, and/or what devices did people create to shape their environment to educate their children?
Movement and Memory	The ways of communicating ideas about the past to future generations (e.g. writings, symbols, and oral narratives)	How did people preserve memories of what they have learned and how did they pass it on to the future generation?
Cultural Meaning-Making	Types of music, art, dance and/ or narratives created during a period (e.g. songs, lullabies and ring shout)	What specific types of music, art, dance and/or narratives did people create to educate their children?

This lens orients the reader to the historical and cultural grounding that extends out of Africa and influence the behavior of Black people in America. From this perceptive, in this study I am able to re-inscribe African meaning making on African terms, grounded in classical African understandings of deep thought. Through an examination of the six conceptual categories, the improvisational elements people of African descent developed and adapted to close the excellence gap are revealed. This lens requires a reconceptualization of gender, family and education from western traditional assumptions.

The Assumptions

In distinguishing the difference between research methodology – “a theory and analysis of how research does or should be proceed,” and research methods – listing, interrogating, observing, or looking at data for evidence,¹¹ this project challenges three common assumptions in much of social science and educational research:

1. The premise of Western educational standards as a universal norm of excellence.
2. The premise that Western notions of gender are universal.
3. The premise that Western notions of the nuclear family are both universal and the highest form of family.

¹¹ Sandra Harding, *Feminism and Methodology*, (Bloomington, Indiana: University Press, 1987), 2-3.

Gender: Female and Male Representatives of the Collective

All I claim is that there is a feminine as well as a masculine side to truth; that these are related not as inferior and superior, not as better or worse, not as weaker and stronger, but as complements – complements in one necessary and symmetric whole.

— Anna Julia Cooper ¹²

A large amount of criticism has been placed on Black mothers and fathers in the examination of Black student's educational achievement. Not to negate the challenges parents face in providing an enriching educational experience, however in many research studies the actions, reactions and experiences of mothers and fathers are evaluated on Western notions of gender. Research that examine the role mothers and fathers play in the educational development of their children, I argue many times fall short first in the theoretical framing of gender roles. In using Western biological standards of conflict, disharmony and strenuous power relations, the behavior of Black mothers and fathers are systemically misinterpreted and devalued.

Nigerian scholar Oyeronke Oyewumi in her groundbreaking piece “Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects,” in *The Invention of Women: Making An African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, debates the notion of “worldview.” She argues, within discourses of gender, the West frames existence around the physical body.

The term “worldview,” which is used in the West to sum up the cultural logic of a society, captures the West's privileging of the visual. It is Eurocentric to use it to describe culture that may privilege other senses. The term “world-sense” is

¹² Cooper, *A Voice of From the South* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1852, 1969), 60.

more inclusive way of describing the conception of the world by different cultural groups.”¹³

In agreement with Oyewumi about gender, one must not think of all female and male relationships as Western. Black mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters have shared experiences and realities that differ from Western experiences and should be analyzed differently. When a Black woman disciplines her children, it should not be misinterpreted as an “angry Black woman abusing her children.” When a Black man doesn’t attend report card night, it should not be misinterpreted as “absent father.” What is “unseen,” should always be considered in the conversation. In examining the types of relationships, actions and methods Black men and women take in educating their children will be analyzed on African terms.

Family: The Collective

Our survival as a people is connected to our unwavering identification as Africans.

— Asa Hilliard¹⁴

In examining the issue of gender, the same can also be said about the way family (structure, networks and roles) is conceptualized. From quantitative, qualitative and theoretical research on the educational development of Black youth, the term family is

¹³ Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making An African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). See also Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, “Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects,” in *African Gender Studies: A Reader* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

¹⁴ Hilliard, *SBA*, 26.

constructed to represent a Western view. Western discourses of family have permeated and erased the humanity of Black families.

Niara Sudarkasa in *The Strength of Our Mothers: African & African American Women & Families: Essays and Speeches* argues western comparative family studies are centered on a monogamous conjugal union, without regards for other diverse understanding of family. The term nuclear family, a two parent household with blood-related children, has been established as the highest form of family organization in the West.¹⁵ This framework, disregards the dynamic nature of black families that extends beyond physical conjugal unions, and views Black families as negative, pathological and to blame for the failures of Black youth.¹⁶ With this study the term collective, community and family are used interchangeable to embody the dynamic shared meaning black people have about family. The collective goes beyond the conjugal and the physical.

Education: Sba & MAAT

Africans regarded the education process as a transformative process... A person becomes different; a person becomes more godlike, more human.

— Asa Hilliard¹⁷

Western discourses of knowledge and wisdom are generally framed around the physical body. Physical visualization of evidence is located in the head, the numerical

¹⁵ Murdock, *Social Structures*.

¹⁶ Moynihan, *The Negro Family*.

¹⁷ Asa G. Hillard, "Teacher Education from an African American Perspective" (lecture, AERA, Annual Meeting, New York, April 11, 1996).

value of a test score, or an individual's level of credentials.¹⁸ Just knowing in ancient KMT wisdom and speech were divine, for the Akan a wise person spoke in proverbs, and for Africans in America ones wisdom was weighted in your ability to gain freedom, speaks to a different understanding of education. However, knowing the West measured our ancestors' level of intelligence by filling our skulls with white mustard seeds, which in itself held many fallacies, and called us illiterate because we didn't speak their language, shows the limitations of such a world-view.¹⁹

Asa G. Hilliard in *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind* describes SBA as the Kemetic term embedded in deep thought which refers to teaching, wisdom, and study. The goal of African educational learning systems was not the accumulation of physical knowledge, but the holistic journey for MAAT. "Our educational and socialization processes to understand and live up to the principle of MAAT...To arrive at MAAT, however, requires SBA...It is through SBA that the great African civilizations of antiquity were produced."²⁰ According to Obenga, MAAT expresses the religious, cosmic, political, social and anthropological manifestation of truth, balance, reciprocity and justice. "Since the time of Classical Egypt, the word/ concept MAAT, 'truth,' can be found everywhere in Black Africa."²¹ Linguistically, what we have termed as educational excellence has changed over time, but fundamental it has not. For the Akan educational excellence embodied the development of anthropological human soul. For the Gikuyu

¹⁸ Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, (New York: Norton, 1981), 53 details the methods of Philadelphian physician Samuel George Morton 1839 *Crania Americana* publication.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hilliard, *Seba*, 2, 3.

²¹ Obenga, *African Philosophies*, 71-72.

educational excellence called for a social and political responsibility to your people. For the Black experience in America educational excellence would be no different, just a translated interpretation. In contextualizing what educational excellence is for Black people in America, similar to SBA it is translated and understood beyond the physical.

Methods: The Tools

The hardest part of the music is improvising, and it gets harder the older you are. Improvisation is a gathering together of all the evidence you have of how to resolve going from here to here.

□ John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie²²

With regard to this study, a mixed and interdisciplinary approach was developed. In order to get beyond what some modern social scientists and education theorists would call an issue with the Black child, Black family, Black communities or Black schools (Ogbu 1974; Ogbu and Simons 1998; Fordham & Ogbu 1986, Steele and Aronson 1995, Steele 1998; Buck 2010; Rumberger and Thomas 2000; Lee and Burkam 1992), having the proper tools consequently impacts the forms of answers received. In following the steps, of who Carr characterizes as “a master of normative Africana cultural theoretical improvisation,”²³ this study tethers together methods to resolve the issue of closing the excellence gap.

Wolcott argues, “researchers seeking a broader perspective do not venture out on branches that commit them to a single strategy...They seek a cosign of vantage that

²² Interview with John Birk: “Dizzy” Gillespie, in Charles Graham, *The Great Jazz Day* (Da Capo Press, 2000), 114.

²³ Carr, “Towards an Intellectual History of Africana Studies,” 441.

allows them a position from which they are able to draw on whatever combination of strategies seems appropriate.”²⁴ With “emancipatory goals” from western epistemological forms of research, venturing up from the methodological grounding within the long-view African experience, a critical ethnographic research method approach offered its advantages and unique perspectives. Thomas defines critical ethnography as,

...the reflective process of choosing between conceptual alternatives and making value-laden judgments of meaning and method to challenge research, policy, and other forms of human activity...Critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose. Conventional ethnographers generally speak *for* their subjects, usually to an audience of other researchers. Critical ethnographers, by contrast, accept an added research task of raising their voice to speak *to* an audience *on behalf* of their subjects as a means of empowering them by giving more authority to the subjects’ voice.²⁵

Such is the case with this study; it sought to answer questions that speak *to* an audience *on behalf* of the Black experience.

Broken down in Table 2, this study utilized a three branch critical ethnographic research method approach of content analysis of archival data, participant observations and long interviews to explore several avenues to answer to the Black experience. The sampling and data collection process was divided into three stages to address all four research questions. Since, this area has become “the focal point of an enterprise of research studies”²⁶ the particular methods of critical ethnographic research methods were chosen based on suitability and the nature of data that each research question required.

²⁴ Harry F. Wolcott, *Writing Up Qualitative Research*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001), 88-89.

²⁵ Jim Thomas, *Doing Critical Ethnography*, (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993), 4.

²⁶ Carter, *Keepin' it Real*, 4.

Table 2: Research Approach		
Study Research Question	Data Sample	Method
In looking at African people prior to European episodic disruptions, how did African people view and define educational excellence for their children?	Archival Data for from the Ancient Kemet, Akan and Gikuyu people	Content Analysis
<p>What roles did Black people, now facing episodic disruptions in America, play in closing the excellence gap for their children?</p> <p>How did Black people in America organize and govern themselves to close the excellence gap?</p>	Archival Data for nineteen (19) Black families centered around ten (10) Black men and nine (9) women whose childhood experiences span from the 1700s - 1980s	Content Analysis
Do these systems of organization and governance still exist today?	Data from seven (7) families, which included in total thirteen (13) mothers, fathers, sons and daughters from Philadelphia and Atlanta	Participant observation and long interviews

Content Analysis of Archival Data

Senegalese scholar, historian, anthropologist, and scientist Cheikh Anta Diop argued “The history of Black Africa will remain suspended in the air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt.”²⁷ In following the call to scholarship by the Association of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC),²⁸ a forth objective of this dissertation is to “reclaim our history through Research.” and Dr. Clarke, a founding member of the organization, precaution was taking in framing the opening research question within a long-view perspective. Again, this is not a study that “attempts to suppress, ignore or otherwise manage the narration of long-view genealogies of African deep thought” as if the education of African people is a linear chronological history that began in 1886 when whites convened to talk about us. To obtain such data to address the first research question, a content analysis of archival data was selected to.

1. In looking at African people prior to European episodic disruptions, how did African people view and define educational excellence for their children?

²⁷ Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, (New York: L. Hill, 1974), xiv.

²⁸ “We as scholars, scientists, artist, students and determined workers. Our mission is to reclaim our history through Research, enlighten our people through Education, inspire our people through Science and Spiritual Development and raise our consciousness through Creative Productions.” Association For the Study of Classical African Civilizations Study, Nzinga Ratibisha ASCAC National President, 1990 *Association For the Study of Classical African Civilizations Study Guide: Building for Eternity Book 1* (Atlanta: ASCAC Foundation, (1991) 2011), 12.

Content analysis is the study of recorded human communication. Among the forms of suitable data used in this study were writings, narratives, symbols, oral histories, letters, and speeches. Babbie, notes, “Content analysis is particularly well suited to the study of communications and answering the classic question of communication research: ‘Who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?’”²⁹ This mode of observation required a thoughtful handling of language, for “language is inextricably linked to thought; it expresses a people’s philosophy.”³⁰

Sample I:

Archival documents from the people of Ancient Kemet, Akan and Gikuyu were used as a mode of inquiry to construct an understanding of educational excellence prior to European disruptions. The data provided an opportunity to develop authentic accounts by drawing from personal and cultural narratives in its original language. The analysis of proverbs, symbols, writings and other archival texts strengthened the critical ethnographic design to derive correlating themes.

In selecting Ancient Kemet, I was able to ground and link many of the major themes within the Black experience through deep thought. In using *Mdw Ntr* □ the most ancient and dynamic African language that is both a language and script that conveys the meaning received by both sight and sound □ historical, social and cultural similarities

²⁹ Earl Babbie, *The Basics of Social Research*, (Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2011), 356.

³⁰ Obenga “Who Am I,” in *The African World History Project: The Preliminary Challenge* (Los Angeles: Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization, 1997) 36.

were found.³¹ In selecting the Akan, not only am I Akan and can speak the language, a representative body of written and spoken knowledge about the Akan prior to European episodic disruptions was available for analysis in Twi.³² The third ethnic group, the Gikuyu, represent an eastern comparative group to the Akan located in the western part of Africa.³³

Sample II:

Carefully selecting participants who had historically achieved educational excellence was critical in developing a well-rounded account to address the second and third research questions:

1. What roles did Black people, now facing episodic disruptions in America, play in closing the excellence gap for their children?
2. How did Black people in America organize and govern themselves to close the excellence gap?

³¹ Ibid., 36-37.

³² Twi is one of the indigenous languages spoken by the Akan.

³³ Wangari Maathai spells Kikuyu with a K, however Jomo Kenyatta states “The usual European way of spelling this word is Kikuyu, which is incorrect; it should be Gikuyu, or in strict phonetic spelling Gekoyo. This form refers only to the county itself. A Gikuyu person is Mu-Gikuyu, plural, A-Gikuyu.” 1.

Table 3: Historical Study Sample

Name	Date of Birth	Form of text(s)
Isabella Sojourner Truth	1797*	Autobiography
Araminta Harriett Tubman	1821*	Self-dictated Autobiographies
Henry Highland Garnet	1815	Biography
Martin Delany	1812	Biography
Frederick Douglas	1818	Autobiographies
Henry McNeal Turner	1834	Transcribed Sermon and Biography
Anna Julia Cooper	1858	Biography and Self-written text
Ida Bell Wells	1862	Autobiography
W.E.B. Du Bois	1868	Autobiography
T. Thomas Fortune	1856	Biography
Callie D. House	1861	Biography
Charlotte Hawkins Brown	1883	Biography
Mary McLeod Bethune	1875	Biographies
Ella Josephine Baker	1903	Biographies
Ralph Bunch	1903	Biography
Martin Luther King Jr.	1929	Autobiography
Fannie Lou Hamer	1917	Biography
Stokley Carmichael (Kwame Ture)	1941	Autobiography
Benjamin Carson	1951	Autobiographies

* estimated date of birth

A sample of nineteen (19) Black families centered around ten (10) black men and nine (9) black women whose childhood experiences span from the 1700s - 1980s were selected from Valetia Watkins' *Complementary in African American Historical Narratives Chart* from the "Lessons in Africana Studies: Dimensions of Africana Studies Gender" lesson.³⁴ In order to speak to how we close the excellence gap for our youth, I collected textual autobiographies, biographies, secondary interviews and other archival texts to trace their childhood life experiences, from birth to about 18 years old.

Participant Observations & Long Interviews

Participant observations and long interviews were selected to address the last research question:

3. Do these systems of organization and governance still exist today?

These research methods were selected to acquire information-rich data to illustrate the continuity of African experiences within the questions under study. I chose participant observation primary because, "all research is based on observational data, an observation that is itself overlooked by those insist on emphasizing difference."³⁵ In examining the childhood experiences of Black youth, utilizing participant observations provided the opportunity of an up close engagement with the respondents and their families

³⁴ For details on the *Complementary in African American Historical Narratives Chart* see Valetia Watkins, "Lessons in Africana Studies: Dimensions of Africana Studies: Gender" In *School District of Philadelphia African-American History High School Course Curriculum* (Philadelphia: Songhai Press, 2006), 22 – 41. Benjamin Carson was not in the original chart, but was later added for this project.

³⁵ Wolcott, *Writing Up*, 85.

understudy, with the added maintenance of a professional distance.³⁶ Participant observation was also chosen based on my ability to be immersed in the realities of the participants for a long period of time.

My most important data gathering technique were long interviews. McCracken, note,

The long interview departs from participant observations insofar as it is intended to accomplish certain ethnographic objectives without committing the investigator to intimate, repeated, and prolonged involvement in the life and community of the respondent. It departs from group methods of qualitative research (such as the focus group) insofar as it is conducted between the investigator and a single respondent. It departs from the “depth” interview practiced by the psychological inquirer in so far as it is concerned with cultural categories and shared meanings rather than individual affective states.³⁷

The four step method of inquiry using long interviews involves a (1) review of analytic categories & interview design, (2) review of cultural categories, (3) interview procedure and (4) interview analysis. After steps one and two, with Institutional Review Board approval, a third sample of participants was organized.

Sample III:

Over a seven-month period in the Fall and Winter of 2012, and Spring of 2013 I traveled to conducted in-depth interviews and video observations with families (adults and minors) about their educational experiences outside of public schooling. The study utilized participant observation and long interviews of 7 families, which included in total 13 mothers, fathers, sons and daughters from Philadelphia and Atlanta. Participants were

³⁶ David Fetterman, *Ethnography Step by Step*, (Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1998).

³⁷ Grant McCracken, *The Long Interview*, (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1988), 7.

obtained through personal references and snowballing. Participants were informed in advance of the voluntary nature of the study. Upon agreement to be interviewed consent was established for adults and minors. Lastly, primary document and pictures from participants were also collected as part of the data sources.

Interviews with participants were conducted at a location and time mutually agreeable to both parties. Sessions lasted about 30 - 45 minutes each and were recorded using a digital camera and audio recorder. Additional follow-up interviews were taken with each participant within a week or two of the original interview and photographs requested as a form of triangulation of data and supplementary credibility to the collection process. The interviewee wore a lapel microphone to record the audio and a canon T-2i was used to record the video. If a respondent preferred a telephone interview, I conducted the interview from a campus telephone line.

Upon meeting with the participant(s), I read the Statement of Informed Consent aloud with the respondent. The general consent form as well as the audio consent form—located in the Appendix was read aloud. After reading the consent form I asked the participant if they have any questions. After the participant has had the opportunity to ask questions, they signed the Statement of Informed Consent. Prior approval and consent was received before minors were interviewed. No compensation was provided to participants.

Limitations of Study

In translating African concepts into modern European languages, we must strive to go beyond literal approaches to understand the cultural substance and mental processes that spoke these concepts into existence.

— Mario H. Beatty³⁸

Language

The initial limitation of this study is in the use of European language to translate African experiences. To translate our narratives from the true native languages of our people (Mdw Ntr, Twi, Gikuyu etc...) in its rich meaning into arbitrary Western letters, allows for things beyond sight to get lost in translation.

(Re)mapping Africana Excellence

In (re)mapping narratives of Africana Educational Excellence, the most effective way is in collecting a large and diverse sample of primary documents, interviews and observations. The scope of the study does not afford for a full-scale investigation across Africa and the diaspora. The sample is a small expression of the plurality of African identities and experiences, but not the totality of African identities and experiences. The limitations of data collection and sampling considered is recognized and understood as not representative of the holistic Kemetic, Akan, Gikuyu, and Black experience. Rather it illuminates some of the ways of learning, educational thought, practice, training, and instruction with the community.

³⁸ Mario Beatty, "Maat: The Cultural and Intellectual Allegiance of a Concept," in *The African World History Project: The Preliminary Challenge* (Los Angeles: Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization, 1997), 212.

CHAPTER 4

COLLECTIVE TRAINING

Introduction

As discussed, closing the excellence gap in the face of disruption has involved many approaches, adaptations and improvisational elements on the part of people of African descent. The particular manifestations of these elements change over time and space, however, through deep thought the continuity we as an African people have in striving for excellence is revealed. When one looks prior to European episodic disruptions and beyond Western assumptions of knowledge and education, Black people individually and collectively have always valued education. Hence, how do the descendants of Africans with such high levels of performance and excellence address the issue of closing the excellence gap?


First, we turn to the individual and collective forms of training African people have utilized yesterday and still continue to use today. Before one is able to speak, write, read, or use an iPad the question is: Who is training you? Who is transmitting knowledge to you? Female and male representatives and the Black Family as a collective have historically been the primary authority in training, instructing and educating Black children.

**Female Representatives:
Mothers, Daughters, Grandmothers, Aunts, & Sisters**

O, ye daughters of Africa, awake! awake! awake! arise!
No longer sleep nor slumber, but distinguish yourselves,
Show forth to the world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted
faculties.

— Maria W. Stewart³⁹

Here and there, one of the roles Black women have held is being one of the primary educators of children has been evident. From the writings of Ancient Kemet, *Šdi* symbolizes the role women, especially mothers, have in educating children. In Table 4, the determinative on the far right of the glyphs shows a woman’s breast, indicating that education started with the mother.

Table 4: Ancient Kemet translation of <i>Šdi</i>		
Transliteration	Translation	Glyphs
<i>Šdi</i>	to educate	

Source: Data from Theophile Obenga, African Philosophy The Pharaonic Period: 2780-330 BC (Popenguine, Senegal: Per Ankh, 2004), 248.

As a form of organization and governance, women were seen as having the primary authority in educating children. Women in Ancient Kemet would nurture and instruct their children. When it came to advanced scribal training, it was generally known that mostly boys were trained, inferring to many that girls who later became women were not educated; however that is not true. Women farmed and created products, which they could sell, indicating they had some education in agriculture, business, science and

³⁹ Maria W. Stewart, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart presented to the First Africa Baptist Church & Society, of the City of Boston* (Boston: Friends of Freedom and Virtue, 1835), 6.

technology. Mothers would teach children the fundamentals of housekeeping, cooking, brewing and making clothes. Kemetite women were mainly responsible for the early educational development of their children, especially for girls. When boys reached a certain age, they would go and be educated by their father.

It is in this same philosophical grounding, but different context that the Akan also view women as having a significant role in educating children. In examining Akan creation narratives we are given a spiritual, cultural and social understanding of the importance of women.

The ancestresses of the Akan came from either the sky or the earth to the forests of Adanse and Amansie, between the Pra and Ofin Rivers. There they founded the first towns from which all Akan believe they are derived: Adansemanso, Abuakwa Atwummanso, Asantemanso, Asenmanso, and Abankeseso.”⁴⁰

Another narrative explains,

Ancestress of the Bretuo, descended from the sky...Asona ancestress, appeared from the hole in the ground... Amena emerged from a rock...in the forest heartlands that lay more or less equidistant from the Atlantic seaboard to the south and the wooded savannah to the north.⁴¹

Spiritually, the Akan believe they are a people from women. This way of knowing shaped their social structures and ways of governance. Historically, seen as one of the most traditional matrilineal cultures of Africa, families trace their lineage through female lines. Kofi Asre Opoku writes in *Hearing and Keeping Akan Proverbs*, “In Akan society when going to the farm or traveling through the forest, women and children lead and the men

⁴⁰ Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 345.

⁴¹ Wilks, *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante*, 5.

follow behind to protect them.”⁴² Given the authority males in traditional society have, women in the Akan culture are also understood to have an esteemed role with no sense of competition or disrespect to men, unlike Western notions of gender.

From a traditional Akan proverb it says, *If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation)*. Before any child steps into society, he or she will have already been taught by their mother in the language, values and etiquette of the community. As modern organizational institutions such as The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) work under the assumption that African people are not as interested in educating its women as much as its men, the Akan differ.⁴³ Under a different social structure and governance framework education has different meanings. In other words, being able to train up a child in the language, ways of knowing, and cultural meaning-making of your people, and not Western principles of Education may seem as if you are uneducated. What the West calls “improving development goals,” normalizes Western standards of education as the norm, and devalues African systems of education. The Akan stress the importance of education and value the role women have in that process.

Moving East, we encounter the same philosophical grounding in Africa for the Gikuyu. Jomo Kenyatta in *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu*, a vibrant collection of essays on the life and customs of the Kikuyu people before colonial conquest, states,

⁴² Kofi Asare Opoku, *Hearing and Keeping Akan Proverbs*, (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1997), 33.

⁴³ UNICEF “UNICEF Launches Girls’ Education Initiative in Western and Central Africa” *Press Release*, 2 July 2003 http://www.unicef.org/media/media_10944.html (accessed January 23, 2013).

The education of very small children is entirely in the hands of the mother and nurse. It is carried on through the medium of lullabies. In these the whole history and tradition of the family and clan are embodied and, by hearing these lullabies daily, it is easy for the children to assimilate this early teaching without any strain. This is one of the methods by which the history of the people is passed on from generation to generation. At the time when the child begins to learn how to speak, care is taken by the mother to teach the child correct manner of speech and to acquaint him with all important names in the family, past and present.⁴⁴

Through systems of cultural meaning-making, such as lullabies, Gikuyu women are able to educate their children. Understanding, that the history and tradition of the family is essential in building institutional memory by hearing is powerful. Knowing about your people first provides you with the framework to know and see yourself. Not only do women teach children about their history, but they also provide them with the letters and words to develop speech. Gikuyu women hold the central control in carrying out the task of passing on the power of the word to their children. To this framework female representatives of the collective have been the primary educators of own children.

As we came across the waters, Black women would continue to do the same for their children in the face of episodic disruption.

In the midst of the social structure of enslavement, known as less than a human being, Pati Delany held strong to her authoritative role as the primary educator of her children. From the biography of Martin Delany which was written by Frances Rollins, she details the depth of resistance Pati Delany took to establish her role as the primary educator of her children.

⁴⁴ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 96 – 97.

An attempt was made to enslave herself and children, five in all, in Virginia, where they resided. Being informed of it, she at once determined to test or avert it. Taking the two youngest, she [Pati Delany] set out on foot, with one lashed across her back, and the other in her arms; she walked the distance from Charlestown to Winchester in time to meet the court, consulted her lawyer, entered suit, and when all difficulties were satisfactorily adjusted, she returned to her children triumphant.⁴⁵

In another situation,

Thus the progress of Pati Delany's children was soon made the gossip of the day, and attracted thicker continually curious inquirers, eager to see and hear negro children spell and read... A man called at the house, and delivered a summons to her [Pati Delany], to the effect that it was understood that she was having her children taught to read, in direct violation of law, for which she should answer before a court of justice... Finally, in September, 1822, under the pretext of moving to Martinsburg, she left Charleston for Chamberburg, Pa., where residing for fifteen years, her children were enabled to continue their studies...⁴⁶

At a time when social and governance structures of the New World considered it unlawful for African people to be educated Pati Delany, like the Gikuyu women, functioned within her known ways of governance, and organized her family accordingly to make sure her children were educated. With the Mandigo blood of her father, Pati held strong knowing she was the primary educator of her children. From this she would have an immense impact on her son's life.

The young Delany, not forgetting his mother's persecutions, his father's humiliations in Virginia, and the wrongs of his race generally, caught the spirit of truth, and was fired with a high and holy purpose. With the scene of Nat Turner's defeat and execution before him, he consecrated himself to freedom; and, like another Hannibal, registered his vow against the enemies of his race... He began,

⁴⁵ Frances Rollins "Life and Public Services of Martin R. Delany," in *Two Biographies by African-American Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 26.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 35, 36.

in the right direction, to prepare himself for whatever position he should be called upon to fill, by a renewed earnestness in his studies.⁴⁷

As Martin Delany grew older, the sacrifices his mother made for him would be one of the driving forces in his development politically and intellectually. Pati Delany's determination in the face of episodic disruption opened the door for Martin Delany to become the abolitionist, writer, physician and the early-Black Nationalist that we speak of today.

While, Pati Delany was somewhat fortunate to be able to keep her family united, many Black women during this period were not offered this opportunity. In 1818 Harriet Bailey was one of them. After being sold out to work, away from her son Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, Harriet resisted the common governance laws that enforced the separation of Black families. Whenever she had a chance, she would walk twelve miles on foot just to see and hold her son. Frederick Douglas, after changing his name, would write,

I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times in my life; and each of these times was very short in duration, and at night...She made her journey to see me in the night, traveling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work. She was a field hand, and a whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise....I do not recollect of ever seeing my mother by the light of day. She would lie down with me, and get me to sleep, but long before I waked she was gone⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid., 40 -41.

⁴⁸ Frederick Douglas "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, An American Slave," in *Douglas Autobiographies* (New York: Library of America, 1994), 16.

Harriet Bailey knew the role a mother played in a child's life. In the Western social structure, similar to the arguments found in the Moynihan's Report, Bailey can be described as a single-mother, abandoning her son and to blame for any of his faults. With the strong likelihood of her rapist being the father of Frederick and having been forcefully separated from her son, Western theories of family underestimate the power of African relationships. Frederick Douglas himself would say,

Figure 1

Frederick Douglas in 1845



Source: Fredrick Douglas National Historic Site

I learned, after my mother's death, that she could read, and that she was the only one of all the slaves and colored people in Tuckahoe who enjoyed that advantage. How she acquired this knowledge, I know not, for Tuckahoe is the last place in the world where she would be apt to find facilities for learning. I can, therefore, fondly and proudly ascribe to her an earnest love of knowledge. That a "field hand" should learn to read, in any slave state, is remarkable; but the achievement

of my mother, considering the place, was very extraordinary; and in view of that fact, I am quite willing, and even happy, to attribute any love of letters I possess, and for which I have got – despite of prejudices – only too much credit, *not* to my admitted Anglo-Saxon paternity, but to the native genius of my sable, unprotected, and uncultivated *mother*...⁴⁹

Harriet Bailey, an educated Black woman with all she had in her, held her primary authoritative role in educating her son. In their brief physical interactions, a spiritual and mental relationship would last forever. Douglas “learned the fact, that I was not only a child, but somebody’s child.” Like an Akan woman, Harriet would educate her son, who would go on to educate many more.

In the face of episodic disruptions, as much as mothers demonstrated significant contributions in the educational development of their children, grandmothers were doing the same as well. Hannah Greer, with great pride in African people and the knowledge of her husband being the son of an African king, would tell her grandson Henry McNeal Turner about the importance of reading and writing. During the 1830’s when African people in America were denied education, Henry recalls in a *A Speech on the Present Duties and Future Destiny of the Negro Race, Delivered Sept. 2, 1872*,

I have often thought of a story my grand mama used to tell when I was a boy...Thus you see the pen is mightier than the sword. We all know that from time immemorial, the white race has been shoving the pen, and have emblazoned immorality on their brow by so doing.

If we ever intend to make the world feel and respect us, we must do the same...One of our necessities, — therefore, are historians, who will note and

⁴⁹ Frederick Douglas “My Bondage and My Freedom,” in *Douglas Autobiographies* (New York: Library of America, 1994), 155 – 156.

date every transpiring event worthy of attention. This is the only legacy for a generation or two that we will be able to transmit to our children.⁵⁰

Later in his teens, Sarah Greer Turner, his mother, would encourage him to pursue a ministerial career. By age nineteen he was licensed to preach, and from there Bishop Henry McNeal Turner would become the first southern bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church.⁵¹

Again, in 1917, Lucy Agnes Taylor “Nana” Johnson would move with her two grandchildren after the death of their mother, Olive Ages, and the departure of their father, Fred. Lucy took a 13-year-old Ralph Johnson Bunche and picked up where his mother left off. Bunche recalls,

Figure 2:

Lucy Agnes Taylor Johnson, Nana Ralph Bunche's Maternal Grandmother



Source: UCLA, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library (Anonymous, Photographer, 1890s)

⁵⁰ Henry McNeal Turner, *A Speech on the Present Duties and Future Destiny of the Negro Race* (Savannah, GA, 1872), 14 – 16. See also Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 8.

⁵¹ Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner*, 12.

Most of this guidance came to me from my maternal grandmother who reared my sister and me after we lost our parents in childhood... I learned from her that hard work can be enjoyed and can be highly rewarding. Although having little education herself, she appreciated the value of education and insisted that I should get as much of it as possible, and the best possible...Bunche always claimed that he would never have gone to college but for Nana's foresight and insistence.⁵²

Lucy Taylor Johnson, a Black woman born into slavery, instilled in Ralph the value of education. Lucy trained, instructed, and poured into Ralph. At a point in his academic matriculation when his high school placed him on a non-academic track, Lucy insisted that the school transfer him to an academic track with courses that would prepare him for college. When Bunche was excluded from the city-wide honor society because of race and began considering dropping out of school, Nana won't let him. Aside from Ralph being a brilliant student, and the valedictorian of his graduating class at Jefferson High School, according to Ralph, Nana influenced him to perform and excel well.

Figure 3

Ralph J. Bunche portrait at around age 6



Source: UCLA, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library (1910).

⁵² Brian Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche: An American Life*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), 31, 36; also see direct quote from an interview with Mr. Kennedy with Ralph Bunche, May 7, 1968.

As mothers and grandmothers, Black women took authoritative roles in educating children, regardless of society's social structure. In following the role of her mother, as a sister Ida Bell Wells would do the same for her siblings. From her autobiography, we hear of the role her parents, especially her mother played in educating her.

Our job was to go to school and learn all we could...My father was one of the trustees and my mother went along to school with us until she learned to read the Bible. After that she visited the school regularly to see how we were getting along. A deeply religious woman, she won the prize for regular attendance at Sunday school, taking the whole brood of six to nine o'clock Sunday school the year before she died. She taught us how to do the work of the home – each had a regular task besides school work, and I often compare her work in training her children to that of other women who had not her handicaps.⁵³

Figure 4

Ida Bell Wells as a Young Woman



Source: Mary Garrity, Photographer, (Chicago, 1893) National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

⁵³ Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 9.

With humility Elizabeth “Lizzie” Warrenton Wells not only played a central role in educating her children, but she also modeled that in action and character. This would forever stay with Ida, especially subsequently after the death of both of her parents at the age of sixteen. As a sister, Ida would take over where her parents left off.

When all this had been arranged to their satisfaction, I , who said nothing before and had not even been consulted, calmly announced that they were not going to put any of the children [her siblings] anywhere; I said that it would make my father and mother turn over in their graves to know their children have been scattered like that and that we owned the house and if the Masons would help me find work, I would take care of them...I took the examination for a country school-teacher and had my dresses lengthened, and I got a school six miles out in the country. ⁵⁴

Wells worked hard to keep her family together and raise her six remaining siblings. Through enslavement, emancipation, Jim Crow, segregation and even up until today Black women would continue in the struggle against disruption and held on to their authoritative role as primary educators of children.

It is in these same philosophical groundings that female representatives of the collective have historically remained the primary educators of Black children. Mary Jane McLeod Bethune would grow up hearing her maternal grandmother, Sophia “talk to God as if He were a person actually present... ‘You [Mary] were sent to Patsy and Sam to be a leader.’”⁵⁵ Kwame Ture grew up reading voraciously because his mother purchased all kinds of books that seemed to her “educational.”⁵⁶ From the deep well of this model,

⁵⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁵ Rackham Bolt, *Mary McLeod Bethune A Biography* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1964), 7.

⁵⁶ Stokely Carmichael with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life of Stokely Carmichael {Kwame Ture}*, (New York: Scribner, 2003), 68.

Benjamin Carson in his own words stated, “It would be impossible to tell about my accomplishments without starting with my mother’s influence. For me to tell my story means beginning with hers....”⁵⁷ Anna Julia Cooper, many years later, in 1930 in response to a questionnaire sent to “Negro College Graduates” by Dr. Charles S. Johnson of Fisk University, wrote: “I owe nothing to my white father beyond the initial act of procreation. My mother’s [Hannah Stanley Haywood] self-sacrificing toil to give me advantages she had never enjoyed is worthy of the highest praise and undying gratitude.”⁵⁸

Figure 5

Hannah Stanley Haywood Anna Julia Cooper’s Mother



Source: *Anna J. Cooper: a voice from the South* by Louise Hutchinson

⁵⁷ Benjamin Carson, *Gifted Hands 20th Anniversary Addition: The Ben Carson Story* (Michigan: Zondarvan, 1990), 14.

⁵⁸ Jacqueline M. Moore, “Anna Julia Cooper Educator, Clubwoman, and Feminist” in Nina Mjagkij ed., *Portraits of African American Life Since 1865* (Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2003), 70. See also “Questionnaire Survey of Negro College Graduates” Anna Julia Cooper Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC.

Even today in Philadelphia these deep thought narratives still exists. Growing up in the inner city of Philadelphia during the 1970's Etta Love would make sure her son Anyabwile "never felt poor," regardless of the social structure of poverty in America. When asked how his mother directly and indirectly influenced his educational development, Anyabwile would recall,

I grew up in a family where education was important. Where I had a mother, who, I don't know how she did it, but ordered encyclopedias for us and had them come once a month for us or a couple letters of the alphabet [at a time]. I had a mother, who took us to the library, and that was like our outings. We would meet her there after school and she would take us there on the weekends. One of my biggest memories is getting a library card... Her taking the three of us, me, my brother, and my sisters to get a library card and spending hours there. I think sometimes she would leave and go run errands on the avenue and then come back and get us. So that was always there.

Figure 6

Anyabwile Love at a young age.



Source: Anyabwile Love

Etta, like Pati Delany held on to her role as the primary educator of her children in the face of disruptions. She found ways to govern and organize her children to endow them with educational opportunities. Through taking vacations down South she taught family history, through music she taught culture, and through family dinners together at the table with tableware she taught a sense of pride. Now, a doctoral student and a father of a teenage daughter looking back on his life, Anyabwile in his day-to-day activities tries to do the same.

While Anyabwile had his mother, Aura Townsend, in turn would have her grandmother, Lillian Townsend. In reflecting on her educational journey, Aura recalled how Lillian Townsend played a large role,

Figure 7

Aura Townsend and grandmother



Source: Aura Townsend

I became a mother at fourteen (14), nine (9) days before my 15th birthday, and at that time I wanted to change my life. I was in the streets, making poor decisions. So, when I had this baby, on November 30th, 1996. Eight (8) pounds six (6) ounces (smiling), I knew I had to change, and I wasn't sure what that looked like... I stayed with my dad for like three days, and his wife at some point was

like, “Baby, we need this day bed, for somebody else.” So, I was like uhmp, that was that. I stayed with another friend for one night and I was torn between, do I go to a shelter or do I call my grandmother... I called my grandmother, and said I need a place to stay. I had a disagreement with my mom. Her whole thing was, “You can stay with me as long as you don’t have any more children and as long as you pursue your education.” She was from Barbados, lived half her life here in the states. She died in 2007, at ninety (90) years old.

Lillian like Hannah Greer, would instill the value of education in her granddaughter. Upon moving in with her grandmother, Aura continued to pursue her education, graduated high school, attended college and is now obtaining her Master’s degree. Nothing better illustrated the impact Lillian had on her granddaughter than the value of education Aura would instill in her daughter, even as a teenage mother.

Figure 8

Aura Townsend and daughter



Source: Aura Townsend

Aura governed and organized herself to be able to educate her daughter; to provide a wider experience for her daughter she exposed her to books. On the weekend, Aura would ride the bus with her daughter and provide cultural and educational tours of

Philadelphia and research free programs in the city. To allow her daughter to play an instrument, Aura worked and applied for scholarships for additional assistance. When Maijah was asked about her educational achievements she stated,

We would sit - she would moisturize my hair and just tell me how beautiful I was. And that is still something that is significant today. (crying) A lot of thing that I do and experience is because of my mom. (Wiping tears) Without her, I wouldn't have been introduced to a lot of things. There are so many things that I'm not open too, and she's like Joy you have to try it, you have to do it. And it's like okay mom, and I love it. Some programs I would never choose to do it, but I love it. God is a big influence in both of our lives, so he plays a big role as well. But, as far as educational, primary growth ALL MY MOM.

Despite, the challenge of being a teenage mom with the help of her grandmother being her primary teacher, Aura was able to excel and do the same for her daughter. Our methodology and methods for education begin with Black women. Even in the face of greatness as the West ridicules and blames Black women for the failure of Black children, with the strengths of our mothers we can begin to close the excellence gap. We must not be distracted by the false arguments that Black women cannot govern, organize and be the primary educators of their children. Pati Delany, Harriet Bailey, Hannah Greer, Lucy Taylor Johnson, and Elizabeth Warrenton Wells did it, and Aura Townsend is doing it today. As Black women occupy this position, let us not forget that they do not occupy this space alone. In balance, Black men also play a significant role in educating their children.

**Male Representatives:
Fathers, Sons, Grandfathers, Uncles, & Brothers**

One thing they cannot prohibit —
The strong men... coming on
The strong men gittin' stronger.
Stronger men...
STRONGER...

— Sterling Brown⁵⁹

Here and there the significant role Black men have in the educational process of Black children has also been evident. From the writings of Ancient Kemet, Ptahotep writes,

*If the son-of-man accepts his father's words,
no plan of his will go wrong.
Teach your son to be a hearer,
one who will be valued by the heart of the nobles,
one who guides his mouth by what he was told,
one regarded as a listener.
This son excels, his deeds stand out,
while failure enters him who listens not.*

As early as the Middle Kingdom, from the writing of Ptahotep the role a father takes in teaching and training his son is made clear. The responsibility of character development, which is related to the heart, is entrusted to the father. On the other hand, we also see another type of paternal relationship enshrined between teacher and student. From the *Great Eternal Teaching System* a student, referred to as a son in this text, studies to inherit the skills of his expert father, his teachers.

⁵⁹ Sterling Brown, "Strong Men," in *Black Voices An Anthology of African-American Literature* ed. Abraham Chapman (New York: Signet Classic, 1968), 420.

*May you be able to communicate to your children
the teaching handed down since the time of the god.
I am a noble worth listening to,
one whose lord has recognized his intelligence.
Follow my way; stick to my method; avoid vain argument.
The obedient son grows into a blameless man;
So can he fail in any enterprise?⁶⁰*

The Ancient Kemites understood the role of a father in the educational training process extended beyond an offspring relationship. This African model would echo throughout the continent.

Likewise, the Akan considered fathers also responsible for character development in children. With a philosophical understanding of an African personhood, each individual is composed of *mogya* (blood) and *honam* (body) representing the physical components, and the *kra* (life force/soul), *honhom* (breath of Divine Life), and *sunsum* (spirit) representing the spiritual components. At conception, it is believed that the *mogya* of the mother comes together with the *sunsum* of the father, and a child is born. When viewed from the perspective of education, the *sunsum* of the father, which is now in the child, is the most important part. It is understood, that an educated Akan man is one who has both *sunsum* (spirit) and *nyansa* (skills and practical knowledge).⁶¹ The character a father develops in a child is critical in their educational development.

It is in the same philosophical grounding, Kenyetta writes about the Gikuyu. For the Gikuyu,

⁶⁰ Obenga, *African Philosophy*, 246 – 247. Also see Georges Posener, *L'Enseignement loyalste. Sagesse égyptienne du Moyen Empire*, (Droz: Geneva, 1976), 33-34; text 101-108.

⁶¹ Okrah, *Nyansapo (The Wisdom Knot)*, 39; See Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 62.

The father has to teach his boy various things...the boy is taught about family, clan and tribal lands, and their boundaries are carefully pointed out to him. Care is taken to teach the boy how to be a good observer and to reckon things by observation without counting them, as counting, especially sheep, goats, cattle or people, is considered as one of the Gikuyu taboos, *mogiro*, and one which would bring ill-luck to the people or animals counted.”⁶²

For boys, their second level of education would generally come from their father. A father was to show his son the history which was spoken to him through his mother. The mother would speak about the history of the family, clan and tribal land, and it would be the father’s job to train and equip the child in the way of the family, clan and tribal land to continue that history.

As we come across the waters, Black men would continue to do the same for their children in the face of episodic disruption.

It was during the period of enslavement that James Wells would govern his family and train his daughter to be a hearer. Education was very important in the Wells family. In the 1860s, James Wells, an educated carpenter in Holy, Mississippi, would introduce his daughter, Ida at a very young age to her profession. According to Ida,

I do not remember when or where I started school. My earliest recollections are of reading the newspaper to my father and admiring groups of his friends. He was interested in politics and I heard the words Ku Klux Klan long before I knew what they meant. I knew dimly that it meant something fearful, by the anxious way my mother walked the floor at night when my father was out to a political meeting. ⁶³

⁶² Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 99.

⁶³ Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 9.

James was a man of character, working for the advancement of Black people. As the social structure of Jim Crow reinforced and legalized segregation, Ida Bell Wells, grew up to be a writer. Even though, James Wells passed away when Ida was young, he would plant a seed in his daughter which forever stayed with her. James's interest in politics would be passed down to his daughter, encouraging her to devote her entire life to fighting against the lynching of innocent men, women, and children.

In spite of the constraints of enslavement Samuel McLeod deemed it necessary to govern and organize his family to be able to provide the best educational opportunities from his children. According to her family, in 1875 "Mary was born 'free,' and free she remained. Free to think and dream and plan and become the women leader of her race."⁶⁴ Yet, this dream and plan required space. On the edge of emancipation Mary's father, Samuel McLeod, reckoned it critical to provide and show his family freedom.

Figure 9

Samuel and Patsy McLeod the parents of Mary McLeod Bethune in Mayesville, South Carolina



Source: State Archives of Florida, *Florida Memory*

⁶⁴ Rackham Holt, *Mary McLeod Bethune A Biography* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1964), 3.

Many of the Negroes thereabout had continued to live in the same sort of cabins as before Emancipation. But the McLeod's had determined to better themselves as befitted self-determining human beings. Samuel McLeod and some of the other boys went into the woods and cut logs to erect a cabin of their own on their own land.... The McLeods had not rested content with their first five acres. As the boys grew up and went to work on neighboring farms they had pooled their resources and brought another thirty acres reaching west and north toward the swamps.⁶⁵

By rejecting Western stereotypes of Blacks, Samuel McLeod would train his children to be self-determined noble builders. The McLeod family purchased their own land and built their own homes. From the example her father and family set forth, in October 1904, Mary Jane McLeod Bethune would rent a small house and use \$1.50 to build the Literary and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in Daytona that would eventually stand today as Bethune-Cookman University. Samuel McLeod with the help of his wife, Patsy McIntosh McLeod, trained their children to build and create. That desire pushed his daughter to strive for excellence, not just for herself, but for the advancement of others.

As Samuel McLeod would train his daughter to build, Martin Luther King Sr. would train his son to be a servant-leader.⁶⁶ Before Martin Luther King Jr. became the civil rights icon and religious giant we speak of today, his father was modeling this for him. In his autobiography Martin Luther King Jr. writes,

I think that my strong determination for justice comes from the very strong, dynamic personality of my father, and I would hope that the gentle aspect comes from a mother who is very gentle and sweet.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Holt, *Mary McLeod Bethune A Biography*, 3, 5.

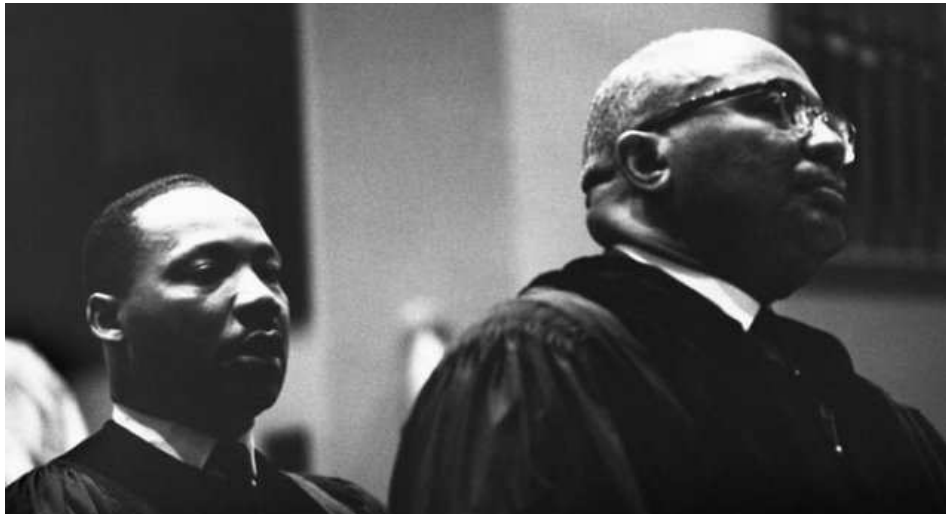
⁶⁶ A servant-leader is one who leads through serving others.

⁶⁷ Martin Luther King Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 3.

My father has always had quite an interest in civil rights. He has been president of the NAACP in Atlanta, and he always stood out in social reform. From before I was born, he had refused to ride the city bus after witnessing a brutal attack on a load of Negro passengers. He led the fight in Atlanta to equalize teachers' salaries and was instrumental in the elimination of Jim Crow elevators in the courthouse. As pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, my father wielded great influence in the Negro community...⁶⁸

Figure 10

Martin Luther King, Jr. looks on as his father, Martin Luther King Sr., delivers a sermon



Source: Discovery.com

Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. exemplified what leadership, service and sacrifice looked like to Martin Jr., and like his father he demonstrated what greatness truly is. Martin Luther King, Jr. would later attend Morehouse, become the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, lead the Montgomery Bus Boycott and be a major leader in the Civil Rights Movement. As many credit Mahatma Gandhi for influencing Martin Jr. for his non-violent activism, he would say himself,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 5.

My home situation was very congenial. I have a marvelous mother and father. I can hardly remember a time that they ever argued (my father happens to be the kind who just won't argue) or had any great falling out. These factors were highly significant in determining my religious attitude. It is quite easy for me to think of a God of love mainly because I grew up in a family where love was central and where lovely relationships were ever present. It is quite easy for me to think of the universe as basically friendly mainly because of my uplifting hereditary and environmental circumstances. It is quite easy for me to lean more toward optimism than pessimism about human nature mainly because of my childhood experiences.⁶⁹

Figure 11

Martin Luther King Jr. as a child



Source: Time Magazine

Martin Luther King, Jr. was trained primarily in his home by his father and mother before he was educated at Morehouse, by Gandhi and the streets of Alabama.

As Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr. would train his son, Rev. Mitchell Ross, a prominent Baptist minister in Warren County, would also train his granddaughter Ella Baker. Even though he died when Ella was no more than seven years old, Rev. Ross had a great source of influence on Bakers' life. Ella would "sit in a deacon's chair behind the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.

pulpit while her grandfather preached.”⁷⁰ Even at a young age this would forever be engrained in her.

Ella’s approach to speechifying stemmed to great extent from her grandfather’s example. “Grandpa, who was a pastor of four churches, had an unusual manner about him in that he did not countenance shouting. He’d stop people and tell them to be quiet and listen. Or when a young minister came to preach at his church and felt he had to act as some ministers acted, which was to put the ‘rousement’ over you, Grandpa would catch him by the coattails and pull them and say, ‘Now you sit down and rest yourself while I sing this hymn and then get up and talk like you got some sense.’”⁷¹

Mitchell Ross would pass on to his granddaughter, the power of speech. In just a short amount of time, Ross would ingrain in Ella Baker, the civil and human rights spokeswoman, a distinct level and style of activism. Civil Rights activist and the Algebra Project founder, Robert P. Moses would state, “She was our *‘fundi’*... Ella Baker, as well as others, was our *fundi* in the tradition of community organizing...Their work, which also educated me and other young people, changed the political terrain of a state, and of the nation.”⁷²

It is in the same context and framework Frank Hughes trained and educated his children. Raising children in the 1980s as Africans in the traditional suburbs of Lynchburg Virginia was not easy. In an interview with his son, Omari Hughes states,

⁷⁰ Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Movement*, (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 35.

⁷¹ Joanne Grant, *Ella Baker Freedom Bound* (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1998), 19 - 20. Also see Sue Thrasher and Casey Hayden, Interview with Ella Baker, New York, April 19, 1997).

⁷² "Fundi" is a Swahili word meaning a person who passes skills from one generation to the next. Robert P. Moses and Charles E. Cobb, Jr., *Radical Equations: Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 4.

When you go to a public school in America, the education that you get has been structured largely by white Americans and largely doesn't include a lot of information about who you are as a person of color, as an African American...My dad really made sure that the gap that was there, because of that traditional education system, wasn't a gap that I would feel in my life. By teaching me as much as he possibly could about who I was.

Omari's "supplemental education" involves his father exposing him to conscience writers such as Frantz Fanon, Zora Neale Hurston, Maya Angelou, Carter G. Woodson, David Walker, and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Frank Hughes taught his son that "we are African people living in America, wanting to reclaim that history...aware that that we lived within a nation, even though we build, we were not really given a place in, so we have to create a place of our own." As a former Black Panther Party member and teacher, Frank considered it necessary for his children to be knowledgeable of an African social orders, governance systems and ways of knowing even though they were schooled in an institution grounded in teaching lies. Even in the typical Thanksgiving elementary school play, when Omari was cast as a pilgrim, Frank Hughes refused to have his son wear a Black hat and gold buckle. That evening instead of receiving a congratulatory gesture for his theatrical opportunity, Omari was given a copy of *Before the Mayflower* to read in the second grade. Like a Gikuyu father, Frank both taught and showed his son the history of his people. Now a minister and a soon-to-be-father, Omari hopes to do the same for his children.

I want them to see me in prayer... I want them to see me mediating on the word. I want them to see me in study. I want them to actually see it, because there are things that I have imagines of my parents doing and it has been ingrained in me. And I think it just does something to you, when you see images of your dad in

the morning like in prayer. Those are the images I want my children to have of me.

While America and mainstream media dictate a negative image of Black men not having a significant role in educating their children, when we follow our narratives, we find that for the Kemetic, Akan, and Gikuyu people, for James Wells, Samuel McLeod, Martin Luther King Sr., Mitchell Ross, Frank and Omari Hughes, that's just not true. We cannot allow the West to control our narratives, or the training of our children.

The Collective, Black Family & Community

Excellence comes from people, not programs.

— Asa G. Hilliard ⁷³

Community here refers to a collection of individuals and families who share a common and identifiable network of socio-cultural communications (Gomez 1998).

Figure 12

(TT 55) Theban Tomb Ancient Kemet Vizier, Ramose



⁷³ Asa G. Hilliard, *African Power: Affirming African Indigenous Socialization in the Face of the Culture Wars* (Gainesville: Makare Publishing Company, 2002), 6.

Along with female and male representatives, the Black community as a whole creates an intergenerational and collective learning atmosphere that is critical for Black youth. From the narratives of Ancient Kemet, children are accustomed to imitating their elders. In a well-known scene in the Theban tomb of the Ancient Kemet Vizier, Ramose (TT 55), Figure 12, a young girl is depicted with her arms, hands, legs and head in the same gesture as the elder women beside her. As the women mourn and grieve with their hands raised to the heavens, the young girl does the same. Kemetite children were socialized and educated not to be children, but to be future adults. Collective training involved, learning what it meant to be a member of the general society as a whole. The Ancient Kemetites understood that the responsibility of education was not an individual task, but one of the entire community.

For the Akan, collective training was also imperative. A very well-known Akan proverb states “*It takes a whole village to raise a child.*” Within the Akan community historically and culturally every individual shared in the nurturing and educational experience of a child. From the naming customs it is revealed that depending on the age of an individual, any basic encounter would justify a sibling, parental or elder type of relationship. In other words, for a young child any adult male or female is your father or mother, and any elder is your nana or grandparent. This social structure imposed the responsibility of education on the entire collective.

Ayi Kwei Armah, one of Africa’s most well noted scholars, born and raised in Ghana but academically schooled at Achimota, Groton, Harvard and Columbia, in his memoir *The Eloquence of the Scribes*, writes:

Some of the information my grandmother was so silent about I was able to piece together from evening story-telling sessions. Mostly, these began with riddles, conundrums, word and memory games, animal fables, especially the cycle of stories about the anti-hero Ansanse, prototype of the human being as pure, selfish ego. These were enjoyable, but talk sessions during hunters' and fishers' festivals, funerals, marriages or naming ceremonies, sometimes yielded accounts that carried a more exiting charge ... I grew up knowing I possessed a physical and spiritual connection to human beings who lived centuries and millennia ago...It is difficult to persuade African children growing up with such a background of family history that they come from a people without history.⁷⁴

From the collective educational experience his community provided, Armah became grounded in who he was and who he was to become. As his school teachers gave him a European invitation to a white education, void of his African roots with a sense of “psychic and mental alienation,”⁷⁵ Armah was able to excel because of the primary and collective training he received at home.

For the Gikuyu it was understood that parents took the responsibility of educating their children up until they reached the stage of their tribal education.⁷⁶ Tribal education involved, training from community members, especially other elders. Kenyatta writes,

Anyone observing the children at their play will no doubt be impressed by the freedom which characterizes the period of childhood among the Gikuyu. The children do most things in imitation of their elders and illustrate in striking way the theory that play is anticipatory of adult life.⁷⁷

[Children are taught] In the Gikuyu community there is no really individual affair, for everything has a moral and social reference. The habit of corporate effort is but the other side of corporate ownership; and corporate responsibility is illustrated in corporate work no less than in corporate sacrifice and prayer.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Armah, *Eloquence of the Scribes*, 25 – 37.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁶ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 96.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

Elders, like in most African social and governance structures, are considered central to the social order. Socially, elders train and educate younger people by passing on history and lessons of moral character. Collectively, an intergenerational education becomes essential to passing on the history but also training the children in the collective nature of the society.

Figure 13

W.E.B. Du Bois at age four (4)



Source: University of Massachusetts at Amherst

In view of these African realities, as people come across the waters, this community form of education would remain. At a young age, when his father left his mother, William Edward Burghardts Du Bois would be raised and educated around the “African” Burghardts. In his autobiography, Du Bois would describe the Burghardts as,

The Black Burghardts were a group of African Negroes descended from Tom, who was born in West Africa about 1730.⁷⁹

The result was in the end that mother never went and my father never came back to Great Barrington...And yet I look back I cannot see how mother accomplished what she did. Her brother and sisters, her cousins and relatives always stood by.⁸⁰

According to Du Bois, the Burghardts were at least twenty-one persons large based on the 1830 Census, and lived in South Egremont Plain for nearly 200 years. Othello, Du Bois's grandfather, would tell Du Bois of his African genealogy, making sure Du Bois knew the Burghardts were descendents of an African, not slaves. This framing genealogy connected Du Bois to something deeper than the American North. Overtime, the Burghardts would educate, share and enlighten Du Bois about their racial narratives. Du Bois would later write,

...much of my philosophy of the color line must have come from my family group and their friends' experience... Most of these had been small farmers, artisans, laborers and servants. With few exceptions all could read and write, but few had training beyond this. These talked of their work and experiences, of hindrances which colored people especially encountered, of better chances in other towns and cities. In this way I must have gotten indirectly a pretty clear outline of color bars which I myself did not experience.⁸¹

From these story-telling sessions, similar to what Armah received, Du Bois at a young age would develop his race consciousness. The decision to be raised and have his educational experiences governed around the Burghardts prepared and trained Du Bois

⁷⁹ William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* (Canada: International Publishers, 1968), 62.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 72 – 73.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

for Fisk, Atlanta University, Harvard, and University of Pennsylvania intellectual race scholar we speak of today.

At the age of seventeen, W.E.B. Du Bois would later hear a “Negro folk song” that led him down south to teach in a rural Tennessee schoolhouse. Around this time Black people in Rutherford County, Tennessee were organizing and advocating for their children. Despite the county government’s social structure of ignorance, Black people in Rutherford Country provided their own schooling programs for their children. Freed Blacks and religious institutions such as the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church built schools. Black leaders were holding conventions across states demanding and planning for racial advancements. Alongside this, a young Callie Guy House would benefit from this collective governance. By the time Callie House was a teenager she has been educated by an entire community of Black people working on behalf of the collective. It would then not seem out of character for Callie to grow up and do the same. Mary Frances Berry would describe the impact of Black Rutherford on House in *My Face is Black is True*.

When House became an advocate for pensions, she told exslaves that their right to ask for a compensation law was guaranteed by the government. She pointed out that “the Constitution of the United States grants to citizens the privilege of peaceably assembling themselves together and petition their grievance[s].” She had learned this lesson despite her very rudimentary schooling available in the Ruther County schools. During Callie House’s youth, African Americans in Tennessee wanted land, schooling, and religious freedom...Before the Civil War

was over, blacks held conventions that pushed for abolition and the right to vote.
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Men and women in Rutherford were vocal in abolishing slavery, opening schools for their children, and demanding rights. Similar to the Kemetite and Gikuyu people, in imitating elders in the community, Callie House grew up imitating her elders and the various leadership groups around her. Her efforts to gain reparations for Black people and charter the *National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association* in 1898 was not only the result of years of American public schooling, but collective education from Black people.

Moving forward in the 1950s and 60s, between his family in the Bronx, and the gates of Howard University, Kwame Ture would receive an extensive form of secondary education. In addition to the primary education Ture's parents would provide him, he would speak of a collective training the Black community granted him.

On a good day, a wide range of political opinion and commentary, and community, national, and international news was to be heard and dissected. There came into the shop old Garveyites, race men, street players, black Republicans and Black Muslims, nationalists of the descriptions, and the rappers, poets, and wordmen who seemed to talk simply for the joy of hearing their own voices... The barbershop became a necessary corrective, an early window into an African-American worldview and sensibility, a crucially important counterpoint of references for those...

But I can remember no organized discussion in school, in Sunday school, or any casual mention in the streets of the Bronx community of either the Supreme Court's Brown decision or, the next year, the lynching of young Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi. But at the barber's, they were the central subject of discussion and analysis, the topic of debate, the source of anger and eloquence, the catalyst for poignant reminiscences, in short, for the handing down of collective history.⁸³

⁸² Mary Frances Berry, *My Face is Black is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-slave Reparations*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 19.

⁸³ Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 74.

It was in the socio-cultural eclectic climate of New York that Ture would develop the fervor for political activism. Michaux's famous African Bookstore on 125th Street exposed Kwame to the Pan-Africanist writing of Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah, and C.L.R. James. The Schomburg Collection was "Harlem's great treasures" to Ture⁸⁴ and the "street-corner orators of Harlem" his public speaking instructors. From the streets of New York to the streets of Washington D.C. Kwame continued to receive a community education. In his senior year, Ture attended a demonstration in Washington D.C. along with an organization known as the "Young Communists at Science." He would meet a group of Africans known as the Nonviolent Action Group from Howard University (NAG) who were affiliated with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). By September Ture was enrolled as a student at Howard University.⁸⁵

At Howard I was educated as much by my fellow students as by the faculty; as much from the location of the school, the friends I made, and the spirit of the times as from anything to be found in the curriculum; as much from the character of the administration as from the quality of instruction; as much from the movement as from the university. But educated I was.⁸⁶

From New York to the yards of Howard University, Ture's collective community education fostered the intellectual scholarship and political activism we still speak about today.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 105.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 112.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 113.

While we cannot ignore the fact that everyone is not afforded the opportunity to be raised in a supportive family household today, the collective narratives within our deep well still exist. For Kevin White, a young Black male growing up in the 1990s of urban Philadelphia, the collective would not only be his primary educator, but they would also save and change his life. When asked about his childhood memories and educational development, Kevin would recall the immense role the collective community had in his life.

My childhood was very different from the childhood my son has currently (laughing). I remember...I was in my English class. It was a Friday and we had a free-write journal entry and I had wrote about suicide (pause). My teacher was walking by, at that time and she said "what's wrong? Do you mean it?" And I'm looking at her like "yeah."

Coming from a turbulent family background, and not having a smooth primary school transition, Kevin encountered a decision many Black youth contemplate, when provoked with disruptive realities of: Should I stay or should I leave? Should I dropout or do I wait until they push me out? What am I doing here? No one would notice if I just took my life. Sean Joe reports, "Between 1980 and 1995, the suicide rate among African-American youth more than doubled, exhibiting a 126% increase among those aged 15–19 and a 233% increase among those aged 10–14."⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Joe, Sean, "Implications of National Suicide Trends for Social Work Practice with Black Youth" *Child Adolescent Social Work Journal* 23 (August 2006): 458-471.

Table 5: Black 9th - 12th Graders Who Have Attempted Suicide One Or More Times

Year	Males	Females
2005	5.2%	9.8%
2007	5.5%	9.9%
2009	7.8%	10.7%
2011	9.0%	17.4%

Source: National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention, Division for Adolescent and School Health

From the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention, Division for Adolescent and School Health, in Table 5, the percentage of Black 9th and 12th graders has also increased for both males and female adolescents. Since, most modern social scientists and education theorists would call this issue a problem with the Black child and the Black family Kevin would later be committed to a mental health institution. Yet, when asked the right questions, consequently the answer is in the forms of disruption western societies and social structures come into conflict with African social structures, ways of knowing, systems of governance, cultural meaning-making, movements and memory. Like the Igbo people in Charleston, Savannah and New Orleans it was understood that,

Suicide was a violation of *omenala* and was an abomination; the offender was denied a place in the ancestral burial grounds... [yet] they reassess[ed] the meaning of life in light of their novel circumstances. And they concluded that, as they were now living the converse of life, suicide was the means back to life, back to Africa...At that meeting, each Igbo would renegotiate the next life, and return to the soil of the ancestors, far from the shores of America.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 133-134.

Escape by any means necessary, including death, was paramount over enslavement of the mind, body and spirit. Many young Black youth are confronted with this same decision after being rejected, mis-educated, deeducated, labeled as “in trouble,” special-education, learning disabled, and hyperactive (Attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder and Attention deficit disorder pushed-out, and or tracked to lower levels. Without support from individual female and male representatives in the home to provide primary education, one is just left with America’s label of “being a problem.”

Over the course of time, the Black community would step in and remedy Kevin educationally, mentally and spiritually. Rubin Mills, Dana King, and the Freedom School program would help him develop and reconnect to African ways of cultural meaning making through poetry, ways of knowing through ancestral communication, and governance through education and reading.

Figure 14

Kevin White, on the far right, with students and mentor, Dr. Greg Carr, below on the far left, at a Freedom School Program.



Source: Kevin White

A good brother by the name of Rubin Mills and I believe Dana King who was a teacher in Ben Franklin high school at that time had contacted Rubin Mills to see and check on me as one of the students. Rubin Mills introduced me to a program called Freedom Schools and that was when I was seventeen...Next thing you know, I'm on a plane for the first time in my life at the age of seventeen. It was 1999. I was going down to Alex Haley Farm in Tennessee. When I got there and I saw 200 high school students, and I realized that is was more to life than I was living back in the city of North Philadelphia. In that moment I picked up literature, started writing poetry and everything else is history.

This relationship would procure a new sense of identity. Through poetry he was able to speak, see, and hear himself differently. Freedom School required Kevin to shift his framework and reclaim his African self. From that collective training, Kevin returned to Philadelphia reorganizing himself around things that now spoke to who he was to become. Nothing better illustrates the impact of this collective training on Kevin as a teenager then him becoming a political and social leader in his high school, and later moving on to attend and graduate from Cheyney University of Pennsylvania. Now, as a father, Kevin and his wife, Kilolo Moyo-White, take pride in being the primary educators of their son, but also work to create an atmosphere that involves the same collective education Kevin received.

So I'm not telling him what to do, I'm just putting the people around him so he can feel as if it's second nature to him. I find that way are teaching is more productive, in the sense that the young person don't feel like he or she isn't always being told what to do, but being shown by others how to do and exposed to different professions. So it is in their mind that this is something I possibly can do.

In looking at Table 6, the living arrangements of Black Children in 2012 have been different.

Table 6: Living Arrangement of Black Children in 2012	
Structure	Percent
Living with two married parents	33.40%
Mother only	50.90%
Father only	4.20%
Living with no Parent	6.70%
Other	4.80%
<i>Source: Child Trends Calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2012. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2012." Table C-2. Available at: http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2012.html</i>	

However, according to this categorization of family Frederick Douglas, Ida Bell Wells, and Ralph Bunch were “Living with no Parents,” Anna Julia Cooper, W.E.B Du Bois, and Ben Carson were from a “Mother Only” family, yet they still strived for excellence.

In sum, the major thrust of sustaining educational excellence and closing the excellence gap is in the individual, roles female and male representatives and the collective Black Family demonstrate in training our children. The only way we can restore balance is by deciding to be the primary educators of our children, and if we choose to allow the west to be the secondary educators to simply providing credentials. Armah says, “before entering the world of schools, I grew up in a home environment that gave me a point of view from which I could see that the vision of reality the established world offered me in its magnificent schools was an atrocious lie.”⁸⁹ We must teach and stress the importance of training our children. We must stop looking to America asking them to give us the education our children need. I close with a statement from Anyabwile Love made regarding the education of his daughter,

⁸⁹ Armah, *Eloquence of the Scribes*, 15.

I don't think schools on any level should be the primary educators of our children it's always secondary. The home is primary, culturally, academically, socially, spiritually and religiously... they go to school just to get the license, that is not really education... The education that our children need – African [children], should come from home. If you teach your children truth, lies don't make sense anymore.

CHAPTER 5

SPIRITUAL AND MORAL BALANCE

Introduction

The question of how people of African descent through the MAAFA to the inner cities of Philadelphia, in the midst of the most intense danger and disruption, could have a sense of educational excellence has been a central scandal for European scholars. How can a people stripped, alienated and drowned of its culture dare to want, image and strive for more. Marimba Ani, formally known as Dona Richards, summarizes the foundations of these cultural strivings in *The Implications of African-American Spirituality*. She writes:

I shall maintain that Africa survived the middle passage, the slave experience, and other trials in America because of the depth and strength of African spirituality and humanism. This spirituality allowed the survival of African-Americans as a distinctive cultural entity in New Europe. The fact that a people's experiences and historical circumstances are shared over long periods of time in the setting of the culture makes them one, and their oneness creates a common spirit. The idea of *spirit* is especially important for an appreciation of the African-American experience... Spirit is ethereal. It is neither touched nor moved, seen nor felt in the way that physical entities are touched, moved, seen and felt. These characteristics make it ill-suited to the analytical mode most favored by European academics. We experience our spirituality often, but the translation of that experience into an intellectual language can never be accurate. The attempt results in reductionism.¹

¹ Dona Richards "The Implications of African Spirituality" in Molefi Asante and Kariamun Welsh-Asante, *African Culture: the Rhythms of Unity* (Trenton: African World Press, 1990), 207, 208.

For Ani, the question of African American strivings is a question of what, not a question of how. Historically, people of African descent over generations have held a spiritual consciousness that informs their search for principle themes, practices, traditions and experiences. As collective training has been the prerequisite to educational excellence, the nurturing of identity through a spiritual understanding of social order and moral responsibility has also been a requirement. In examining the importance of cultivating an awareness of *African beingness* and genealogical connectivity, having a strong knowledge of African ways of knowing and an unwavering sense of reciprocity is critical to closing the excellence gap.²

Spiritual Social Order

When the Klan, police, sheriffs, governors, and court said,
“You will not march,” our sermons and songs said:
I’m gonna do what the Spirit says do, I’m gonna do what the Spirit says do,
What the Spirit says do, I’m gonna do, O Lord, I gonna do what the Sprits says do
I’m gonna march when the Spirit says march...
I’m gonna vote when the Spirit says vote...
I’m gonna live like the Spirit ways live...

— Rev. Otis Moss, Jr.³

For people of African descent to understand life is to understand that there is a spiritual social order. In the opening chapter of his ground breaking work *African*

² African beingness, also sometime referred to as African personhood, explains the nature of a human being through cultural ideas of African philosophy. See Colita Nichols Fairfax dissertation “The Philosophical and Psychological Analysis of African Personhood and Self-understanding” (Philadelphia, PA, 2008); Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought*, 85 – 98.



³ Rev. Otis Moss, Jr., “African American Music and the Freedom Movement,” in *African American Heritage Hymnal* (Chicago: GIA Publication Inc., 2001).

Religions and Philosophy, Kenyan-born philosopher and writer, John Samuel Mbiti laid out an outline of an African worldview. He describes the African ontology as having five interconnected categories: (1) God, (2) spirits, (3) man, (4) animals and plants, and (5) phenomena and objects. He wrote that, “God is the Originator and Sustainer of man; the Spirits explain the destiny of man; Man is the centre of this ontology; the Animals, Plants and natural phenomena and objects constitute the environment in which man lives.”⁴ Ways of knowing for people of African descent have been unified under the reality that there is a spiritual social order that stretches beyond man. After closely analyzing African traditional practices and concepts, before and after the colonial period, Mbiti argues that changes have impacted the surface material side of life, yet at a deeper level, people of African descent still hold strong to traditional spiritual concepts of existence. In a close examination of how the Kemetic, Akan and Gikuyu people understood educational excellence, the highest form of performance dealt with an individual’s ability to have, to be, and to do with guidance from God, the spirits, and nature. Overtime, Black people would continue in the same tradition.

Historically, for African people, the educational process of attaining wisdom and knowledge was not just physical. For the Ancient Kemites, the relationship between what was listened, learned, spoken and done were prearranged and sent from the highest social order of the Divine down to the human heart. Jacob Carruthers, a scholar of Cheikh Anta Diop, in his text *Mdw Ntr Divine Speech*, provides us with a detailed grounding in the Ancient Kemetic understanding of wisdom and speech. For the Kemites the brain was not

⁴ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), 15 – 16.

the seat of wisdom and knowledge, it was the heart. In Table 6, from the writings of Ancient Kemet, *ib* symbolizes the heart and mind, synonymous with comprehension. The tongue, written as *ns*, has the power to utter commands from the heart, and implement idea.

Table 6: Ancient Kemet translation of <i>ib</i> and <i>ns</i>		
Transliteration	Translation	Glyphs
<i>ib</i>	heart, mind, understanding, intelligence, will, desire, wish, attention	
<i>ns</i>	tongue	

Source: Data from Theophile Obenga, African Philosophy The Pharaonic Period: 2780-330 BC (Popenguine, Senegal: Per Ankh, 2004), 87.

According to Carruthers, Speech is divine and a gift from the Creator. From the Memphite narrative Ptah, god, proclaims words spoken, and his words give all Life, Power and Health. By uttering the name of all things he brought them into being.⁵ According to Kemetic belief, in the name laid inherent the essence of a being or a thing. From the heart, through the tongue creation comes about. It was through the heart that god spoke, giving man knowledge of god and god's will. People strived for a heart of wisdom. For this reason, during mummification the heart was generally one of the only organs not extracted from the body.

⁵ Molefi Kete Asante, Abu Shardow Abarry, *African Intellectual Heritage: A Book of Sources* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 306 – 307.

In this same philosophical grounding, Kemetic education begins with the assertion that “no one is born wise.”⁶ Therefore, the proper Kemetic education consisted of developing Divine Speech through listening to the “divine, universal and intergenerational conversations among God the creator, the cosmos, nature and the creatures of the earth, especially human beings.”⁷ Good speech is therefore an intergenerational and spiritual conversation of passing on the “speeches of those who listened” and picking up speech from the Divine. Hilliard, in harmony with Obenga and Carruthers, stresses that within a Kemetic education,

A person becomes different, a person becomes more godlike, more human... It was a process rooted in a world view where there was a belief in human perfectibility, the belief that humans could indeed become more like god. Basic skills were merely the lowest level of education. The development of character, humaneness and spirituality were higher levels of attainment.⁸

Performance was a person’s presentation of character from the heart intellectually, spiritually, politically and socially. Having a high level of performance was not about how much you know, have, or believe, but about your attitude about what you know, have, believe and how you act. Excellence was a level of perfection, an attempt to be God like on a human level over the totality of your life. It was understood that God gave wisdom and speech was divine. As a result, excellence on a human level was a verb; a journey and a process of saying what the Divine says, thinking the way the Divine thinks,

⁶ Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature Vol I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 63.

⁷ Carruthers, *Mdw Ntr Divine Speech*, 44-45.

⁸ Asa G. Hillard, “Teacher Education from an African American Perspective” (lecture, AERA, Annual Meeting, New York, April 11, 1996).

moving how the Divine moves, and being in relationship with all things like the Divine was.

In the same vein, as described in chapter four, for the Akan it is understood that an educated Akan man was one who had both *sunsum* (spirit, personality and character) and *nyansa* (skills and practical knowledge).⁹ To the Akan, a person is not just material flesh, but a human being is constituted of three elements: *okra*, *sunsum*, and *honhom*.¹⁰ *Okra* the primary element of a human being is known in a European contemporary sense as the Soul. The *okra* is the innermost self, the essence, of the individual person, life (spark of the Supreme Being). This spiritual connection is linked through the *honhom* “breath.” *Sunsum*, the second element of a human being can be translated into the term Spirit. The *sunsum* is comprised of the human personality, character and presence. This unites the body and the soul and can manifest in dreams as physical entities. With a strong traditional sense of spirituality, the Akan connect this way of knowing to their systems of education for their children. For example, “The first significant thing that happens to an Akan child after his or her birth is a spiritual naming ceremony that is conducted on the eighth day of a child’s life. This begins to teach the child of his spiritual obligations and that honesty, respect and humility which are the overriding requirements of Akan help to ensure a successful and blessed life.”¹¹ To take the connection between education and spirituality a step further, in the Akan conceptual scheme, the *sunsum* is

⁹ Kwadwo A. Okrah, *Nyansapo (The Wisdom Knot): Toward an African Philosophy of Education* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 39; Gyekye, *An Essay on African philosophical thought*, 62.

¹⁰ Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought*, 85.

¹¹ Anthony Ephirim-Donkor, *African spirituality: on Becoming Ancestors*. (Trenton, New Jersey: African World Press.1997), 6.

incarnate in the infant as the *su*. From the *su* the child develops the *suban*, character. In the Akan traditional setting, an educated man was one who could combine character with particular skill.

Similar to the Ancient Kemites the Akan also believe that wisdom comes from God. In contrasting knowledge that comes from a book and wisdom from God, an Akan proverb *Nsem nyinaa ne Nyame*, translated means “All wisdom is from God.”¹² Nyame is one of the many common names from God, meaning Supreme Being, Great Spirit, the Creator and Sustainer of all things. The Akan experience God as good and believe that God is the source of all wisdom. Opoku states, “[The Akan] prize wisdom above money, beauty and strength and regard it as a great possession.”¹³ Another proverb also states, *Wope asem aka akwere Onyankopon a, ka kyere mframa*, translated means “If you want to speak to God, speak to the winds.”¹⁴ It is understood that God’s nature is a spirit hidden everywhere in the wind. The assertion of the unity of God’s wisdom and man’s need to receive wisdom from God, creates a shared spiritual relationship that can only be accessed through communication. The education process then becomes a process of teaching children how to communicate with God and nature to gain wisdom.

It is in this same philosophical grounding that the Gikuyu, also stress a strong sense of a spiritual order connected to education. From the memoirs of Gikuyu born, Wangari Maathai, she describes how the Gikuyu people are strongly connected to a spiritual social order. She wrote,

¹² Opoku, *Hearing and Keeping*, 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

According to the [G]ikuyu myth of origin, God created the primordial parents, [G]ikuyu and Mumbi, and from Mount Kenya showed them the land on which they were to settle...For the [G]ikuyus, Mount Kenya, known as Kirinyage, or Place of Brightness, and the second-highest peak in Africa, was a sacred place...Whether [the Gikuyu people] were praying, burying their dead, or performing scarifies, Gikuyus faced Mount Kenya, and when they built their houses, they made sure the doors looked toward it. As long as the mountain stood, people believed that God was with them and that they would want for nothing.

Through her use of both written Gikuyu and European language, Wangari contextualizes and gives imagery to the reader of a spiritual and cultural sense of existence the Gikuyu people embody. The Gikuyu hold a strong way of knowing grounded not only in God, but also in nature. When it comes to the education of children, Maathai recalls,

At the time of my birth, the land around Ihihe was still lush, green, and fertile... When a baby joined the community, a beautiful and practical ritual followed that introduced the infant to the land of the ancestors and conserved a world of plenty and good that came from that soil... The bananas and the potatoes would also be roasted and long with the meat and the raw sugarcane given to the new mother. She would chew small pieces of each in turn and then put some of the juice into the baby's tiny mouth. This would have been my first meal. Even before breast milk, I would have swallowed the juice of green bananas, blue-purple sugarcane, sweet potatoes, and a fattened lamb, all fruits of the local land.¹⁵

In following the Gikuyu tradition, Wangari recalled during her childhood experiences that, "I am as much a child of my native soil as I am of my father, Muta Njugi, and my mother, Wanjiru Kibicho."¹⁶ Part of her educational training as a child was developing a spiritual understanding in an ontological balance between man, God and nature. As

¹⁵ Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed A Memoir* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 3,4-5. Again, Wangari Maathai spells Kikuyu with a K, however Jomo Kenyatta states "The usual European way of spelling this word is Kikuyu, which is incorrect; it should be Gikuyu, or in strict phonetic spelling Gekoyo. This form refers only to the county itself. A Gikuyu person is Mu-Gikuyu, plural, A-Gikuyu."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

Mbiti argued, with European distributions and forceful impositions shifting the land, people, and social relations, a deep sense of spiritual order and connectedness remained.

Figure 15

Wangari Maathai as a young girl



Source: Independent Lens

Even though educating African children was not a priority of European settlers in Kenya, Wangari's family felt different. With such a strong philosophical connection with nature, Wangari did not choose her educational passion to work with nature alone, it somewhat chose her. As a political activist, Wangari did not choose to fight against injustice; she was born into a people of leaders who believed "present comforts and their future prospects depend[ed] on knowing their place, giving respect and obedience where it is due."¹⁷ Wangari would grow up to become an environmentalist and the first Eastern African woman to receive a Doctorate of Anatomy from the University of Nairobi, become a political activist, founder of the Green Belt Movement and a Nobel Peace Prize winner.

¹⁷ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 103.

Through the process of encountering disruption in America, for black people an African belief system grounded in a spiritual social order would remain. After being born into slavery in about 1797 in Ulster County, New York, one day living a cruel life of captivity as an enslaved African for Isabella Baumfree would come to an end. Yet, through her ways of knowing and understanding in an African spiritual social order she developed a path toward excellence.

When she was a young girl her mother, Betsey (Mau-mau Bett) told her about the protection and guidance of God. As a child Isabella remembered her mother once saying,

“My children, there is a God, who hears and sees you.” “A God, mau-mau! Where does he live?” Asked the children. “He lives in the sky,” she replied; “and when you are beaten, or cruelly treated, or fall into any trouble, you must ask help of him, and he will always hear and help you.” She taught them to kneel and say the Lord’s prayer.¹⁸

This way of knowing and gaining wisdom from God would stay with Isabella and aid her in gaining excellence. After being sold four times since the age of nine, Isabella testified of her speaking to God, Him speaking back, and even revealing Himself to her.¹⁹ Remembering how and who to pray to from her mother after having her son sold at five years old and her enslaver, John Dumont rescinds his promise to free her, Isabella prayed and God told her to leave.²⁰ From the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, she describes,

The question in her mind, and one not easily solved, now was, “How can I get away?” So, as was her usual custom, she “told God she was afraid to go in the night, and in the day everybody would see her.”... “Thank you, God, for that

¹⁸ *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005), 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

thought!” So, receiving it as coming direct from God, she acted upon it, and one fine morning, a little before day-break, she might have been stepping stealthily away from the rear Master Dumont’s house, her infant on one arm and her wardrobe on the other... turning her thoughts to God, her only help, she prayed him to direct her to some safe asylum.²¹

Being trained by her mother, to have the confidence that “that there was no place where God was not,” Isabella held strong to her spiritual ways of knowing. Like the Akan, Isabella spoke to the wind and it spoke back. Isabella would later go on to emancipate herself, become a preacher, regain custody of her son Peter, upon the call of God change her name to Sojourner Truth, begin giving public anti-slavery speeches, narrate her own life story with the help of Olive Gilbert, locate jobs and shelter for newly freed enslaved Africans, and work for the Freedman’s Bureau. As wise as Sojourner Truth was as Ani stated, “these characteristics make it ill-suited to the analytical mode most favored by European academics.” Under a European context Sojourner Truth is defined as “illiterate.”²² Again, for the West one’s level of performance is isolated to biological representations of knowledge. It has yet to be documented that Sojourner Truth physically wrote anything in English, received a high score on an IQ test, or obtained an academic degree; so she must be illiterate. Yet, just because she never took the time to education herself in the written form of Standard English, should not deem her illiterate.

Sojourner’s performance was her presentation of character spiritually, politically and socially. Without a doubt, she spoke, communicated and had enough wisdom and

²¹ Ibid., 30.

²² The term illiterate was used in “The World of Sojourner Truth and Her Narrative” section in *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005), xii and Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth A Life, A Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 3.

character to speak, preach, teach and lead millions of people. Such a high level of performance was not about how much she knew, had, or believed, but about your attitude to present that wisdom. With this attitude she changed her name to Sojourner Truth with the plans to travel the land telling the truth, speaking on human, women's rights, abolition and prison reform, Furthermore, if anybody stopped her she would "make this nation rock like a cradle." Just because she attributed all of her wisdom to and from God, does not make her illiterate.

Other than the narrative of Sojourner Truth, nothing better illustrates the power of having an understanding of a spiritual social order than in the early educational development of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner. Henry was born in 1834 in Newberry Courthouse, South Carolina, to Sarah Greer and Hardy Turner at a time when teaching Blacks to read and write was forbidden. Yet, at a young age Henry knew he was destined for great things that required educational excellence. From Stephen Ward Angell's biography on Turner titled *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South*, it states, "At age twelve, he [Henry McNeal Turner] dreamed that millions of people would come to him for instruction and that he would teach them while standing on a mountain. As a result, he decided that God had marked him for great things."²³ Even though the social and governance structures deemed it unlawful for people of African descent to be educated, Henry looked toward his ways of knowing. As a teenager Turner had conversations, dreams and interactions with God that guided his

²³ Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner*, 9.

educational development. Being able to hear in the spiritual is important, but so is seeing in the spiritual. In a dream,

Despite the solidarity of South Carolina whites against his attempts to learn to read, he believed that God would ensure that he would succeed. The youth experienced night visitations which he claimed helped him to read Webster's blue-black speller and the Bible. He claimed that his dream teacher "would never come to my assistance at night unless I would study the lessons with great effort and kneel down and pray for God's assistance before going to sleep."²⁴

Turner possessed an insatiable craving for knowledge and found guidance through his ways of knowing, despite the social structure of enslavement. Henry McNeal Turner would go on to lead the Black church and develop a sense of racial pride and consciousness among millions of Blacks in the face of centuries of enslavement and oppression. In tapping into his understanding of a spiritual order, seeking God allowed him to strive for educational excellence. Teaching Black children to strive for the manifestation of themselves in the unseen, to become who they see in the seen is powerful. The catch phrase "go for your dreams," is very much an underestimated phrase used, however Turner did just that.

It is in the same spiritual context and framework Sonya Carson educated her children. After realizing her husband had another family, attempting to commit suicide, moving to Boston with her sisters' family and then moving back to Detroit with her two sons, Sonya Carson made a decision.

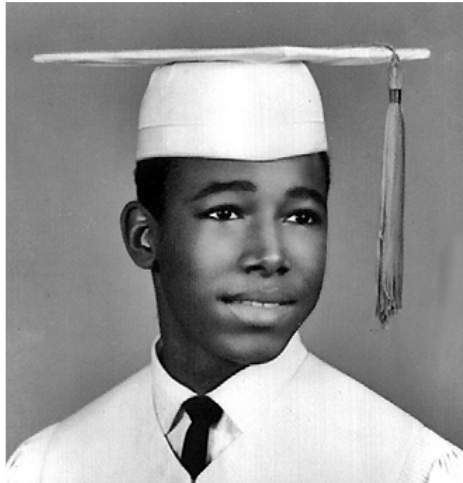
One day I said to the boys, "We're going to have a family altar" That's how we said it in the Adventist church. It meant that the three of us would pray and read

²⁴ Ibid., 11. Turner is quoted in William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive, and Rising* (New York: Arno Press, 1952), 809.

the Bible together. We would do it every morning...A lot of times I had to leave early, before they got out of bed. I'd set the alarm. "Boys, you have to get up after I'm gone. You pray for yourselves and just ask God to guide you and to give you strength. Ask Him to send His holy angels to watch over you and to help you study the best you can."²⁵

Figure 16

Benjamin Carson's graduation from Southwestern High School, Detroit, Michigan, 1969.



Source: Johns Hopkins Children's Center

With this training Ben Carson, would forever hold prayer and scripture in his heart. At a time when his attitude was impacting and destroying his learning he remembered,

I had always had a terrible temper, striking out at anyone who opposed me. One afternoon when I was fourteen, I argued with a friend named Bob. Pulling out a camping knife, I lunged at my friend...Realizing that I could have killed my friend, I raced home, locked myself in the bathroom, and sat on the edge of the tub – my heart filled with shame and remorse over what I had done. I prayed for God to take away my temper. At one point I slipped out of the bathroom long enough to grab a Bible..."Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32). During the two or three hours that I remained in the bathroom, God performed a miracle in my

²⁵ Ben Carson and Cecil Murphey, *Think Big: Unleashing Your Potential for Excellence* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), 46.

life – He took away my temper, and I can honestly say I never been troubled with anger since.²⁶

Amidst growing up in a single parent home, in poverty, with poor grades, low self-esteem and a horrible temper Sonya Carson challenged her son to strive for excellence. Similar, to Bishop Turner, Benjamin S. Carson would also one day have a childhood dream of becoming a physician. To yield the realization of that dream, Carson took to his spiritual grounding and found guidance. Reminded of how his mother taught him to look for wisdom from God, Carson took part in daily prayer that helped guide his intellectual pursuit. In the present day, Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., M.D., is an award winning and pioneering surgeon, full professor of neurosurgery, oncology, plastic surgery, and pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

Even today having grounding in an African ontological understanding and spiritual social order is essential. In raising a young Black boy, Kiloyo Moyo-White understands grounding him in the ways of knowing of African people is critical. In her interview she stated,

The society that we live in is very much against him... you have to make it. There is no option other than being successful, being a man of integrity, and being an honorable person, and instilling spirit so you are honoring your ancestors because without that you are walking into the future blindly, without protection... This may be the reason my so many brothers, and sisters are so lost and don't have that sound guidance for themselves, because maybe they have lost their spirit.

²⁶ Carson and Murphey, *Think Big*, 27-28.

Figure 17

Kilolo Moyo-White and Son



Source: Ryan Powell

In covering her son with the andinkra symbol *gye nyame*, meaning “except for God,” similar to the Akan, Kilolo along with her husband Kevin, are not only the primary educators of their son, but they also foster a sense of spiritual social order in their home.²⁷ The two most significant areas in the Moyo-White household are the library and the prayer altar. Like Sonya Carson, they have a space set aside to communicate with and honor God and their ancestors. From their interviews and observations around the house, there are many cultural elements of movement and memory that represent an African worldview. Pictures of family members remind Ida of his past and present. African symbols from around the country remind him of places his family has been and his cultural heritage. Plants, pots and drums utilized during libation ceremonies, remind him

²⁷ The Andikra Symbol *Gye Nyame* is a reflection of the omnipotence of God.

of his ability to speak to the wind. Proverbs and sayings on the walls re-inscribe a sense of African pride; which all in turn convey their sense of spiritual groundings. In this environment, Ida is surrounded physically and spiritually with guidance. Even at the young age of 3 years old, Ida participates in prayer at the altar and other traditional family rituals.

Religiosity somewhat similar to spirituality is a complex concept many statistical research use to measure the various aspects of belief, behavior and intelligence. Consequently, William H. Jeynes used 1992 NELS data in examining the effects of student religious commitment on the academic achievement of urban students, in a 2003 article in the “Education and Urban Society,” discovered that on academic measures religiously committed urban children outperform their less religious counterparts.²⁸ In providing an explanation, his second and third argument stand out the most, “A religious child may obtain more direct encouragement and help from his or her place of worship...Third, to the extent that urban areas are filled with more distractions and temptations [disruptions], religion may be an important contributing force to avoiding those temptations, and the control group that one is being compared to may consist of people who are more likely to have given into those alluring dangers.”²⁹ To get through

²⁸ From Jeynes study, Of the students sampled, 69% were White, 13% were Hispanic, 11% were African American, 6% were Asian, and 1% were Native American. Whether a student was classified as very religious,” depended on whether each student described herself or himself as (a) very religious, (b) actively involved in a religious youth group, and (c) attending church or other place of worship at least three or four times a month.. When race and gender were added to the model they did little to affect the effects for being very religious, indicating not much of a race and gender difference.

²⁹ Ibid., 57.

disruption and distraction, having a spiritual grounding statically presents a positive impact of academic achievement.

The resiliency of Black people to strive for excellence guided by a sense of a spiritual order speaks to the journey for excellence that is grounded in deep thought. Through speaking to the wind, having a dream, praying before a test or simply feeling covered by African symbol, overtime the process looks different, but fundamentally the deep spiritual groundings remain the same. If our generation would produce another Sojourner Truth, Henry McNeal Turner, or Benjamin Carson he or she would have to be spiritually grounded in traditional ways of knowing and systems of thought. A high level of performance cannot be guided by a non-standard European curriculum, but an understanding that wisdom and knowledge is sacred. The power in being wise is not in just receiving an A, but gaining an excellence attitude and character about this wisdom. Excellence is a level of perfection, an attempt to be God like on a human level, because wisdom comes from God, not Google or a Cloud. Truly speaking, after the power is attained, how one chooses to use that power is what creates and restores balances.

Moral Responsibility

If we are to develop our personalities to their fullest, we must add a fourth dimension to this ordinary self, — that we may expand up and out from our narrow, immediate world. This fourth dimension - call it "bigness," soulfulness, spirituality, imagination, altruism, vision, or what you will – it is that quality which gives full meaning and true reality to others.

— Ralph Bunche

While having a sense of a spiritual social order is critical, moral responsibility is what balances the relationship.

For the Ancient Kemites, educational excellence “stress[ed] people’s responsibility to one another, to the community, to nature, to the Creator, and to the cosmos.”³⁰ “From the Kemetic perspective, governance [was] based upon the wisdom that well-educated and self-disciplined individuals will produce and maintain the natural order in conformity with Maat, i.e., Divine Order!”³¹ From ancient writings of Ptahhotep, he states,

*May this servant be ordered to make a staff of old age,
So as to tell him the words of those who heard,
The ways of the ancestors,
Who have listened to the gods.
May such be done for you,
So that strife may be banned from the people,
And the Two Shores may serve you!*³²

From the instruction of Ptahhotep, the writer directs the people to teach and pass on wisdom primarily in “the ways of the ancestors,” which indicates a spiritual way of

³⁰ Beatty, “Maat,” 235.

³¹ Carruthers, *Mdw Ntr*, 113 – 114.

³² Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature Volume II*, 63.

knowing. Secondly, it instructs that from this wisdom, “strife may be banned from the people.” In other words, the instructed must use what is heard to solve the problems of the people. African people fundamentally understood that wisdom was given from God, to give back and to use. For the Ancient Kemites the formulation of excellent discourse spoken by God and taught by man to the hearer is of profit for the people. Thus, the process of wisdom and knowing was a reciprocal method.

As indicated earlier, in the same vein the Akan believe all wisdom comes from God, they also believe the purpose of wisdom is to be shared. An Akan proverb, *Nyansa nye sika na woakyekyere asie*, translated means “Wisdom is not like gold that it should be tied up and kept (in a safe place.)”³³ One of the most important expectations of those who have wisdom from God is to use their wisdom and apply it to solving of problems. Wisdom is practical, it is not about how much you know, but about your ability to show your wisdom in what you say and do for your people. If you claim to be wise or clever, you must be able to show it. It is understood that someone who has wisdom, but doesn’t use it to benefit themselves or their community is a “fool.” *Ebetō da no na nyansa da okwasea tiri mu*, translated means “It may be that wisdom may be found in the head of the fool.”³⁴ For the Akan, with wisdom from God comes a sense of moral responsibility to use it.

The same can be said for the Gikuyu. The entire education process and achievement of knowledge was for the preparation of action. Kenyatta states,

³³ Opoku, *Hearing and Keeping*, 69.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

In all tribal education the emphasis lies on a particular act of behavior in a concrete situation...But here again the knowledge is so practical, so much preconditioned by behavior, that it can be taught and is taught mainly by doing what they are told to do on particular occasions and by not being allowed to do or to touch certain things that are always within their experience.

It is with personal relations, rather than with natural phenomena, that the Gikuyu education is concerned right from the very beginning. Growing boys and girls learn that they have one thing to learn which sums up all the others, and that is the manners and deportment proper to their station in the community. They see that their happiness in the homestead, their popularity with their playmates, their present comforts and their future prospects depend on knowing their place, giving respect and obedience where it is due.³⁵

The Gikuyu instruct their children in the moral and social conduct of the culture and ways of knowing. What is particularly significant is that when a man learns, he is afforded the ability to act, but especially act of behalf of his community. Man is not given wisdom to go solve the problems of others, but of his own people. Early on boys and girls are taught the laws and customs, especially those governing the moral code and general rules of etiquette in the community.

As African people came across the waters having a sense of spiritual social order, a moral responsibility to community continued to dwell deep within. Similar to Sojourner Truth, Araminta Tubman, known as the Moses of her people, would escape led by spiritually ways of knowing, but because of her utmost moral responsible to her people also returned back. From her autobiography, written in conjunction with Sarah Hopkins, it states,

Harriet was now left alone, but after watching the retreating forms of her brothers, she turned her face toward the north, and fixed her eyes on the guiding

³⁵ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 102 – 103.

star, and committing her way unto the Lord, she started again upon her long, lonely journey... Without knowing who to trust, or how near the pursuers might be, she carefully felt her way, and by her native cunning, or by God given wisdom, she managed to apply to the right people for food, and sometimes for shelter; though often her bed was only the cold ground, and her watchers the stars of night.

After many long and weary days of travel, she found that she had passed the magic line, which then divided the land of bondage from the land of freedom.³⁶

Among the essential ways of knowing, Araminta followed what the spirit said. Like the Ancient Kemites she had Divine conversations with God the creator, the cosmos, nature and the creatures of the earth. Like the Akan, she spoke to the winds and God spoke back. Like the Gikuyu, her relationship with nature helped guide her to freedom. What profoundly stands out from the text is the declaration that this way of knowing was “native” to her. For many scholars, this “native” way of knowing doesn’t stand out as an excellence form of learning. But what tips the scale, is why and how Araminta is able to master this skill and come back and free more enslaved Africans. Upon “passing the magic line,” with the wisdom she had received from her “native” ways of knowing, her level of performance is elevated when she is able to use this wisdom to solve not only her problems, but also the problems of her people. After, changing her name to Harriet, the name of her mother, Tubman recalls,

“So it was wid me,” said Harriet, “I had crossed de line of which I had so long been dreaming. I was free; but dere was no one to welcome me to de land of freedom, I was a stranger in a strange land, and my home after all was down in de old cabin quarter, wid de ole folks, and my brudders and sisters. But to dis solemn resolution I came; I was free, and dey should be free also...Oh, dear Lord... Come to my help, Lord, for I’m in trouble!”

³⁶ Harriet Tubman and Sarah Bradford, *Harriet Tubman The Moses of Her People* (Gloucester, Mass: Corinth Books Ins, 1961), 29, 30.

...suddenly and mysteriously she appeared some dark night at the door of one of the cabins on a plantation...traveling by night, hiding by day, scaling the mountains, fording the rivers, threading the forests, lying concealed as the pursuers passed them. She, carrying the babies, drugged with paregoric, in a basket on her arm. So she went *nineteen* times, and so she brought away over three hundred pieces of living and breathing “property,” with God given souls.³⁷

Again, as European scholars define her as illiterate, Harriet’s wisdom offered her liberation and freedom not “to be tied up and kept.”³⁸ The problem of enslavement was not just her problem, but all enslaved Africans problems. If she had the wisdom to solve that problem, her excellence would come about in doing that for others. With the utmost sense of moral responsibility to her family and her people she would not let anyone jeopardize her plans. When *people* who followed her would give up with a revolver pointed to their head she would say, “Dead niggers tell no tales; you go on or die!”³⁹ From Dorchester County, Maryland to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania over 130 miles Harriet went back and forth, freeing over 300 people and developing her skills. With her ways of knowing from God, systems of cultural meaning making through Negro Spiritual such as “*When dat ar ole chariot comes, I’m gwine to lebe you,*” the governance power of a

³⁷ Ibid., 32 – 33.

³⁸ Catherine Clinton in *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004), 35; Milton C. Sernett *Harriet Tubman Myth, Memory, and History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 105 define Harriet as “illiterate.”

³⁹ Ibid., 33.

revolver, and symbolic patterns of movement and memory, Harriet would not let anyone get in her way of her education for liberation.⁴⁰

Figure 18

Harriet Tubman in her Civil War scout's uniform.



Source: Woodcut likeness by J.C. Darby, Auburn, New York. Front scene in *the Life of Harriet Tubman* by Sarah H Bradford

Similar to Tubman, Du Bois would also hear the spiritual call of moral responsibility. Even though being up-north, among the Burghardts and the non-racial

⁴⁰ From her first autobiography with Sarah Bradford titled “*Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*” p. 17 states, as Araminta departed for freedom “Those communications were generally made by singing. They sang as they walked along the country roads, and the chorus was taken up by others, and the uninitiated knew not the hidden meaning of the words—‘When dat ar ole chariot comes, I’m gwine to lebe you; I’m boun’ for de promised land, I’m gwine to lebe you.’” Google map (2013) suggests from Dorchester County, Maryland to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania it is at least a 136 mile walk over 45 hours, with a caution note that, “This route may be missing sidewalks or pedestrian paths.”

tensions of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Du Bois would hear a Negro Spiritual that called him to the Jim Crow South. From his autobiography he would state,

I heard too in these days for the first time the Negro folk songs. A Hampton Quartet had sung them in the Congregational church. I was thrilled and moved to tears and seemed to recognize something inherently and deeply my own. I was glad to go to Fisk. "On the other hand, there was the call of the Black South; teachers were needed. The crusade of the New England schoolmarm had done a fine work...They needed trained leadership. I was sent to help furnish it...I went into Tennessee at the age of 17 to enter Fisk University."⁴¹

In the *Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois would detail the first summer he spent teaching in a small black town in Tennessee as an undergraduate student at Fisk University.

There they sat, nearly thirty of them, on the rough benches, their faces shading from a pale cream to a deep brown, the little feet bare and swinging, the eyes full of expectation, with here and there a twinkle of mischief, and the hands grasping Webster's blue-black spelling-book. I loved my school, and the fine faith the children had in the wisdom of their teacher was truly marvelous. We read and spelled together, wrote a little, picked flowers, sang, and listened to stories of the world beyond the hill.⁴²

As much as the north treated him well, the souls of Black folk in Tennessee and the sense of moral responsibility firmly united Du Bois to his educational calling. The *soul* of Alexandria, Tennessee spoke to Du Bois, "I have called my tiny community a world... and yet there was among us but a half- awakened common consciousness, sprung from common joy and grief, at burial, birth, or wedding; from a common hardship in poverty, poor land, and low wages; and, above all, from the sight of the Veil that hung between us

⁴¹ Burghardt, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois*, 106- 107.

⁴² Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 100.

and Opportunity.”⁴³ After two summers of teaching in Alexandria, Du Bois went on to finish his Bachelor's degree at Fisk, earn a second Bachelor's, a Master's degree and become the first African American to be awarded a Ph.D. from Harvard University. Consequently, what started Du Bois on the road to becoming the most well-known intellectual scholars on race in the twentieth-century is the reality that he first heard the spiritual or moral call from the south and took that responsibility to not only educate himself at Fisk, but also educate others.

Ralph J. Bunche, on the other hand, did not hear a spiritual call, but the physical voice of his grandmother Lucy Agnes Johnson. Lucy “Nana” Johnson instilled in Ralph a sense of moral responsibility to Black people from a very young age. According to Ralph, Lucy Johnson was a proud Black woman, even though she could pass for being white like her twin brother. Bunche said that she taught him to be proud as a Black man. What vividly stands out to Bunche is a small graduation situation. From his biography, by Brian Urquhart, the writer recalls,

At Ralph’s graduation ceremony in 1922, Mr. Fulton, the Jefferson High School principal, a well-meaning but insensitive man, made the mistake of saying to Nana: “Mrs. Johnson, we are very sorry to see Ralph leave Jefferson. We like him here. He has been a good student and a good athlete. In fact, Mrs. Johnson, we have never thought of Ralph as a Negro.” Nana retorted, “You are very wrong to say that. It is an insult to Ralph, to me, to his parents and his whole race. Why haven’t you thought of him as a Negro? He is a Negro and he is proud of it. So am I. What makes you think that only white is good?” And with a few more well chosen words, she said a tart “Good day” and left with Ralph.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid., 102.

⁴⁴ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 31-32.

Figure 19
Ralph J. Bunche high school graduation picture



*Source: UCLA, Library Special Collections,
Charles E. Young Research Library (1910).*

What always stuck with Ralph Bunche was the fact that, “Nana was fiercely proud of her origin and her race, and everyone in our ‘clan’ got the race-pride message very early in life.”⁴⁵ Many tend to credit Bunche's enduring excellence from his service to the United States government and to the United Nations, yet if one considers how Bunche was an active and vocal supporter of the civil right movement, completed his dissertation and post-doctoral work in Africa, taught and chaired the Department of Political Science at Howard University from 1928 until 1950, was a member of Roosevelt’s Presidential Black Cabinet, and “readied the international stage for an unprecedented period of transformation, dismantling the old colonial systems in Africa,” it would be clear that he

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

excelled because of his moral responsibility to his people.⁴⁶ In Bunches' own words, his intellectual brilliance appeared early on, generally because, "She instilled in me a desire to do my best in anything I tried to do so that I could have a sense of achievement and experience pride. ...She told me to be proud of my origin, of my family and of the society in which I live."⁴⁷ Even until his death, Bunche lived in Queens, New York, from 1953 and is buried today in the Bronx, New York among his people.

Consistent with the educational understanding of having a sense of moral responsibility, today Anyabwile Love fosters in his daughter the idea that wisdom is not only used to solve problems, but the problems of your people.

At a young age it was important to teach my daughter the things she wouldn't get at school...Teaching her the relationship to the ancestors and her responsibility, these are not things you'll get at school and that's okay, we don't need schools to teach our children these things. But it is our responsibility it teach our children these things. I try to teach her to see things from the gaze of African people and Black people...I always say if you teach children the truth, lies don't make sense anymore. Unfortunately, they learn the lie first so they believe it as truth. So, when you try to teach them the truth you have to fight with them to believe it. It's almost like conspiracy theory. At an early age teach I taught her the difference... having adult like conversations as a child, so she can being to internalize these idea for herself ... I hope she can see that it is importance and significant. Even in being in a space where there are a whole group of black people thinking about their futures, [she should know] that she has a relationship to African history and we are African people and have a relationship to America.

⁴⁶ Bunche completed his dissertation in 1934, a comparative study of the impact of French colonial administration of Togoland, a territory under a League of Nations mandate, and of Dahomey. From 1936 to 1938, on a Social Science Research Council fellowship, he did postdoctoral research in anthropology at Northwestern University, the London School of Economics, and Capetown University in South Africa. The quoted statement is from Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the official opening of the exhibit on the life and United Nations career of Ralph Johnson Bunche on Friday, 24 October 2003 -- United Nations Day -- in the Visitors' Lobby of the General Assembly Building.

⁴⁷ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 31; also see direct quote from an interview with Mr. Kennedy with Ralph Bunche, May 7, 1968.

Figure 20

Anyabwile with his daughter, Maia, on her birthday



Source: Anyabwile Love

Frequently, the word relationship and responsibility was repeated during the interview. Anyabwile indicated that throughout Maia’s educational development, he purposely fosters a sense of relationship with African people, culture, history and spiritual ways of knowing. At the end of the interview, when asked about her career goals Anyabwile stated, “Whatever she becomes it doesn’t matter, as long as she has a sense of responsibility and relationship to African people.”

If raising a young Black girl to have a sense of African consciences isn’t hard enough, the same can be said for raising young Black boys. While crime, drugs, materialism, and mental illness continue to rise, Kevin and Kilolo Moyo-White find peace in knowing that they are raising their son with an African way of knowing and moral sense of reciprocity. When asked about her future educational goals for her son Kilolo stated,

My goal for him, right now (laughing) is to learn how to read before he goes to kindergarten (laughing). He knows education is important because we feel education is important. ...My goal is for him to be a conscience socialized African Child that loves who he is and his heritage... A socialized African child is a child who acknowledges and understands who he is in this Americanized society. Knowing his heritage and traditions of his past, and respecting and honoring that. So for me everything is an educational experience. So even today being election day and he's three, he can remember. So, I took him into the poles and I'll do that every year for him to know as a black man the power of voting...we also go read books: *The Day: Gogo Goes to Vote*.⁴⁸

Understanding, he is an African living in America by acknowledging his heritage through rituals, dress, speech and action creates a sense of identity. Even at the young age of three many of the books in Ida's personal library have pictures and narratives of Black and brown people. In involving him in political activities as voting, Ida is also exposed to his responsibility not only on a community level, but a national level. As he grows up, in forging these early memories, Kevin and Kilolo hope these activities do not become alien or meaningless when he becomes an adult. Like the Ancient Kemets, Gikuyu and Henry Highland Garnet the goal is for Ida to be accustomed to imitating his elders. Modeling Black moral responsibility in speech and action becomes critical when the media and society dictate a polar image the Black community.

As Black youth face a flood of instructors that simply "teach for the test," the motivation and dedication to achieve and perform educational well becomes complicated

⁴⁸ *The Day Gogo Goes to Vote* is a children's book about the main character Thembi who accompanies her hundred-year-old great-grandmother Gogo to the polling place in the first election in which black South Africans are allowed to vote. Infirm and housebound, Gogo is determined to vote and does so with a little help from her community. The Zimbabwean born author, Elinor Sisulu, is a human rights activist, and political analyst involved in many political and social initiatives in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and other parts of the African continent.

and deceitful.⁴⁹ However, when knowledge is understood to come from God and have a required responsibility to solve the problems of our people, a dynamic sense of motivation is leveraged. How do people of African descent through the MAAFA to the inner cities of Philadelphia, in the midst of the most intense danger and disruption have a sense of educational excellence? It is in the unseen spaces that have guided our ways of knowing and protected our sense of identity.

I close with an interview of Bernie Reagon Johnson, founder of the musical group Sweet Honey in the Rock, by European journalist Bill Moyers about how Black music has shaped the African-American experience and identity.

Bill Moyers: The astonishing thing to me, you keep saying that they would celebrate this moment...If these were people suffering, these were people in slavery, these were people who had nothing to possess of their own except their tradition and their-- so these were not first-class citizens. And yet you keep talking about their celebrating the moment.

Bernice Reagon Johnson: You might not have money. You might not have blah-blah-blah. But you've got this culture that empowers you as a unit in the universe, and places you, and makes you know you are a child of the universe. Even though you're not free? When the culture is strong, you've got this consistency where Black people can grow up in these places, with this voice just resonating about our specialness in the universe. And I always say you're in trouble if you get too far away from that core that grounds you.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Teaching to the test is an educational practice where curriculum is heavily focused on preparing for a standardized test.

⁵⁰ Bernice Reagon Johnson, *The Songs Are Free: Bernice Johnson Reagon and African-American Music*, DVD, Directed by Bill Moyer (1990).

CHAPTER 6

CONTENT MASTERY

Introduction

In understanding educational excellence for African people, having the opportunity to be trained by the collective and gaining a strong sense of spiritual and moral balance are both critical. Nevertheless, what unites and emerges as the chief element is content mastery. The ability to retain and keep content through listening and reading, and presenting a level of mastery on that information through speaking, writing and action to solve problems, completes the reciprocal process of educational excellence. Through historical narratives hearing wisdom is exhibited at the highest level of performance when a student is able to master the subject through giving back. In other words, being trained and understanding what wisdom is used for means nothing when you cannot show for it.

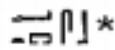
Content: Listening, Reading, & Keeping

Read and write yourself into freedom! Read and write to assert your identity as a human! Read and write yourself into history! Read and write as an act of resistance, as a political act, for racial uplift, so you can lead your people well in to the struggle for liberation!”

—Theresa Perry¹

¹ Theresa Perry, “Freedom for Literacy” in *Young Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement Among African-American Students* by Theresa Perry, Claude Steele, & Asa G. Hilliard III, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 19.

Intellectual pursuit constituted the very fabric of life in Ancient Kemet society. Everyone was not given the ability to go to school, receive scribal training, or even write on scrolls, yet on a human level “intellectual pursuit” meant the ability to know something. For a scribe known as a “sesh,” it was understood that a “scribe did not separate his skill or profession from his spirituality and intellectual tradition... consequently, the scribe was not only interested in showing excellence and efficiency in his skill, but he was always interested in preserving and perpetuating the culture and history.”² A scribe was the protector and developer of Ancient Kemet culture. Students spent a lot of time practicing by listening and reading in addition to writing and rewriting the words of others. From the writings of Ancient Kemet, *seba* symbolizes school—literally, house for teaching. From Obenga’s *African Philosophy* in Table 6, the determinative image of the teacher shows a man wielding a stick, indicating that whipping was a practice in the school system.

Table 8: Ancient Kemet translation of <i>seba</i>		
Transliteration	Translation	Glyphs
<i>seba</i>	School, house for teaching	

Source: Data from Theophile Obenga, African Philosophy The Pharaonic Period: 2780-330 BC (Popenguine, Senegal: Per Ankh, 2004), 250.

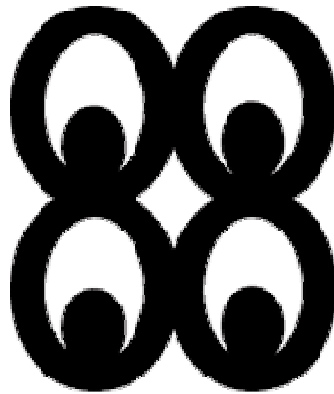
Obenga also goes on to state that “the resulting educational system was rather authoritarian...the teacher teaches, the learner learns, with no pointless argument....And

² Obenga, *African Philosophy*, 249.

yet the literate Egyptian was a constant seeker after the kinds of culture which could open up the mind, exalt the feelings, and give wealth and wisdom, even potency and power.”³ Kentic educational wisdom begins with the assertion that “no one is born wise,” therefore through listening, reading and keeping the words of others, wisdom is gained. Whether the listening came from God, elders, officials or reading books and sacred texts, what was critical was a scribe’s ability to listen and obey.

The Akan use the Adinkra symbol *Mate Masie* as a representation of wisdom, knowledge and prudence. As a form of movement and memory the Akan use this symbol to preserve the memories of what they have learned to pass it on to the future generation.

Figure 21
Mate Masie



Source: Adinkra Symbols of West African Wisdom

The direct meaning of the phrase "mate masie" is “what I hear, I keep” and “I understand.” The proverb, *Nyansa bun mu ne mate masie* translated means “Deep wisdom comes out of listening and keeping what is heard.” Understanding indirectly

³ Ibid., 247.

means wisdom and knowledge, but it also represents the forethought of gaining wisdom and knowledge from others through hearing. In the course of the Akan educational system, one learns wisdom through listening to God and other wise individuals. If you learn to hear and keep what is wise and good, you attain the esteem of others. If it is kept it will never be lost or hidden. It is only when one does not hear and not keep, one ends up doing some of the most foolish things.

For the Gikuyu, the early education of children was entirely delivered through hearing and experience. As stated in chapter 4,

The education of very small children is entirely in the hands of the mother and nurse....In these the whole history and tradition of the family and clan are embodied and, by hearing these lullabies daily, it is easy for the children to assimilate this early teaching without any strain. This is one of the methods by which the history of the people is passed on from generation to generation.⁴

For a child to be educated he or she must have an ear to hear and keep the information. It is the same vein, a Gikuyu proverb *Ūgakundĩre nĩwe ũũĩ karĩ riita* emphasizes that “The man who has tasted something can speak of it with authority. Experience is the father of learning.” To experience learning one must also have an open mind to be trained. For the Gikuyu, education, hearing and experience were inseparable. The dynamic relationship overlapped under the cultural understanding that “By doing we learn.” It was even believed that until death a Gikuyu man’s education still continues.⁵ With that known, there is always a constant open ear to hear and mind to learn.

⁴ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 96 – 97.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

As African people moved across the waters gaining wisdom in a new space still required a level of listening, reading, and keeping. Timothy Thomas Fortune, a writer and activist, born into slavery in Marianna, Jackson, Florida to Emanuel and Sarah Jane Fortune, took a firm initiative in the acquisition of knowledge despite the social structure of enslavement. From his biography, *T. Thomas Fortune Militant Journalist* by Emma Lou Thornbrough, she states,

His scholastic record at Stanton was excellent, but the greater part of his education was acquired outside the classroom. He enlarged his knowledge by reading avidly anything which came his way and from various jobs which he held during this period of his life...Fortune had taken the post for the purpose of earning more money so that he could attend Howard University...When he entered Howard, Tim had less than three years of formal schooling, and his education had been spotty, to say the least. He had read a great deal on variety of subjects but was totally untrained in some fundamentals...In this department Fortune was enrolled in Latin, algebra, grammar, and history classes.⁶

Fortune “enlarged his knowledge by reading avidly anything which came his way” outside of school. Reading equipped Fortune with the power of language, culture and wisdom. In reading books written by other scholars, the writers were able to speak to him through their words. Upon entering college, he then continued on that same path and took a wide range of courses to gain more knowledge. Like the Ancient Kemites, Thomas dedicated his time listening, reading, and writing. Being mostly self-taught he bridged what he was hearing and learning with experience by working at the Marianna Courier and later the Jacksonville Daily-Times Union. Fortune would later build a

⁶ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune Militant Journalist* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 23, 24-25.

reputation as a successful writer, journalist and editor, even hiring the likes of another political giant in the journalism field, Ida B. Wells.

Henry Highland Garnet began to commune around groups of people that would shape his radicalism during his early teenage years. According to Alexander Crummel, a member of this small group of thirteen to sixteen year old intellectual New York African Free School students, states,

For years, our society met on that day [July the Fourth], and the time was devoted to planning schemes for the freeing and upbuilding of our race. The other resolve which was made was, that when we had educated ourselves we would go South, start an insurrection and free our brethren in bondage. Garnet was a leader in these rash but noble resolves; and they indicate the early set and bias of his soul to that quality of magnanimity...⁷

Aside from his schooling, Henry Highland Garnet at a young age would organize and govern himself around an ingenious community of folk. These folk were a group of young people directly representing his and African people's worldview. The study group was focused on reading and writing as much as they could to better gain wisdom and solve their problems. Similar to the Gikuyu in imitating elders in the community, "the children also took up the burden of their fathers, and their dreams and their plays were of freedom, and they hated the 'kidnapper' worse than the father of evil."⁸ From this study group, Garnet would build a strong intellectual grounding in who he would become.

⁷ Joel Schor, *Henry Highland Garnet A Voice of Black Radicalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 6. From Alexander Crummell, *The Eulogy on Henry Highland Garnet, D.D.*: Presbyterian minister, late minister resident of the U.S. to the Republic of Liberia, Delivered Under the Auspices of the Union Bethel Literary and Historical Association in the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, May 4, 1882, (Washington, D.C., 1882), 8.

⁸ Henry Highland Garnet, *A Memorial Discourse* (Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1865), 21.

Garnet also attended the New York African Free School six days a week from morning until 5:00 P.M with the study group. At school he was instructed in “reading, grammar, arithmetic, writing, oral instruction, geography, and lessons from Scripture,” in addition to “navigation and astronomy.”⁹ Henry Highland Garnet spent much of his early education listening, reading and keeping information about Black people. He would use this knowledge to later on become an abolitionist, minister and a dynamic orator. His renowned skills as a public speaker were fostered early on from his study group experience and rigors educational development.

The same could also be said about Kwame Ture. As a young man in high school, aside from his family and the barbershops of New York, Kwame Ture very much listened and gained much of his conciseness from community street orators, and the many books that lined the libraries and bookstores of Harlem. Coming up, what he describes as Harlem stepladder orators like Queen Mother Moore, May Mallory, Charles X Kenyatta, and later on Malcolm X spoke and directly taught him¹⁰.

The effect of the speakers on me was more than political, it was rhetorical. That is, beyond the message there was the influence of style. Important elements of my adult speaking style – the techniques of public speaking in the dramatic African tradition of the spoken word, can be traced to these street-corner orators of Harlem. To them and the Baptist preachers of the rural South.¹¹

Listening and keeping the wisdom of speakers like Malcolm X influenced the Civil Rights and Black Power movement leader. Kwame spent days listening from the streets

⁹ Schor, *Henry Highland Garnet*, 6.

¹⁰ Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 100.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 101 -102.

of Harlem, to yards of Howard, then the streets of Alabama as a leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and back to the streets of New York with the Black Panther Party. From his autobiography, Ture recalls listening and keeping the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer. In addition to listening, Ture was also an immense reader. His mother would,

Buy all kinds of books that seemed to her “educational.” She certainly bought a lot of encyclopedias, seduced no doubt by the salesman’s line about “giving your children every educational advantage. I also spent hours in the library enduring the taunts of the neighbor kids about being ‘a bookworm.’ With Olympian impartiality, I read everything and anything.”¹²

Academically, listening and reading everything he could get his hands on proved to be of great success for Ture.

For Benjamin Carson, the process of hearing and keeping would be a learned experience. Referring to himself as “the most stupid kid in fifth grade,”¹³ he was one day told by his mother,

“The Lord told me what to do,” she said “So from now on, you will not watch television, except for two preselected programs each week.”... “In addition,” she said, “to doing your homework, you have to read two books from the library each week. Every single week...When you finish reading them, you must write me a book report just like you do at school. You’re not living up to your potential, so I’m going to see that you do.”¹⁴

¹² Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 68.

¹³ Carson and Murphey, *Think Big*, 13.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17,18.

After being fed up with her children's low academic performance, Sonya Carson, with only a third-grade American education unable to help them meet their educational potential at that time, decided to go back to what she knew. Reading and Writing.

After attempting to commit suicide, a woman by the name of Mary Thomas in the hospital, helped Sonya learn to read the Bible. "If anybody else can do it, I can do it better...that powerful thought became so important that I couldn't forget about it. I said to my sons again and again as they were growing up."¹⁵ Sonya Carson, like Elizabeth "Lizzie" Warrenton Wells, learned to read and write alongside her children and that became her stepping stone.¹⁶ After Sonya had given her book assignment from the Lord to her children, for Ben Carson,

Two things happened in the second half of fifth grade that convinced me of the importance of reading books...One Friday, though, Bobby Farmer, whom everyone acknowledged as the smartest kid in our class, had to spell "agriculture" as his final word. As soon as the teacher pronounced his word, I thought, *I can spell that* word. Just the day before, I had learned it from reading one of my library books. I spelled it under my breath, and it was just the way Bobby spelled it.

When Mr. Jack, the science teacher, was teaching us about volcanoes, he held up an object that looked like a piece of black, glass-like rock. "Does anybody know what this is? What does it have to do with volcanoes? Immediately, because of my reading, I recognized the stone...I raised my hand. "Yes, Benjamin," he said.... "Obsidian," I said. That's right! ...In a year and a half – by the middle of sixth grade – I had moved to the top of the class.¹⁷

Through reading and writing, Ben Carson was able to leverage more knowledge. The more he read, the wider he expanded his mind. At a point, Carson states, "Finally, I

¹⁵ Ibid., 44.

¹⁶ Sonya later studied, obtained her GED and attended junior college.

¹⁷ Carson and Murphey, *Think Big*, 20, 21, 23.

grasped that Mother had been trying to get me to understand simply that I had to do my best – just my best – and that my best was all she wanted or that anyone could expect.”¹⁸At a point when he was performing low, reading gave him the ability to rise to the top spot. Eventually at the top is where he would remain through high school, college, medical school and even in the field of medicine.

Figure 22

Benjamin Carson celebrates his graduation from Yale University in 1973, with his mother, Sonya, and his wife, Candy.



Source: Academy of Achievement Courtesy of Dr. Ben Carson

Presently, the cultural strivings of governing what Black youth listen to, read and keep is critical. In an interview with Kwadwo Osei-Asibe, when asked about his early educational development, he states,

My parents are both teachers. I remember when I use to struggle [in school] ... then my dad was like, “you just have to believe you can do it.” So when I went back to school, all of a sudden a guy who was like number two (#2), number

¹⁸ Ibid., 26.

three (#3), now I'm number one #1. People are wondering, "Oh he is just smart." No. It's not, because I'm just smart. I was learning a lot at home. And then even with the language, [my father] was like, "the only way you know how to speak English well is to reading book." So, teachers don't buy toys for their kids (laughing). All you see on your dining table is a pile of books, and you find yourself just going through them and it becoming second nature to you.

Kwadwo's educational development was not only nurtured through his parents being his primary educators, but he was surrounded by books. Through reading he held conversations with the writer and was able to develop a stronger vocabulary.

When I asked his wife, Akua Osei-Asibe, about her confidence in the public school her son Kwesi attends, she stated, "Kwesi just picks up stuff so quickly and Kofi picks up things so quickly so we just continue to expand on it. We find that when it comes to school they're there because of the structure; they're there because of their peers and learning how to socialize with their peers. I really don't feel like their school pushes them." So, every night, Kwadwo and his wife Akua read to their two sons Kwesi (4 years old) and Kofi (19 months). In observing their home, both boys have select books for reading and a playroom with many books. When dad even reads the paper, Kofi at a very young age has his section to gaze at.

For Aura Townsend, at a young age she was not afforded the opportunity to listen, read and keep lots of wisdom and knowledge. Yet, in her words "when I had this baby, on November 30th, 1996. Eight (8) pounds six (6) ounces (smiling), I knew I had to change." As a teenage parent she didn't really trust the daycare or feel 100% confident that her daughter would receive all the educational development she needed. In asking about how she was able to raise such an academically advanced young girl, Aura said,

I didn't have those opportunities. I didn't play an instrument or I didn't grow up reading a whole lot of books or have a home with books...that wasn't my experience. But with Maijah I said, I wanted to go beyond what I knew. If that looked like food, music, or what have you I wanted her to try different areas, doors that may have been closed...I really genuinely wanted something different so her...so I brought her books...lots of books.

Aura governed and organized herself to be able to educate her daughter. Instead of purchasing materialist objects like other teenagers her age were interested in, Aura purchased books for her daughter. Books, books, books. Reading books, writing books, coloring books and even books in the tub. During the interview, the books Maijah had read became cultural and historical markers in her life. At age five she would read *I Love My Hair*, and her mother would do her hair and that would forever stay with her. "We would sit—she would moisturize my hair and just tell me how beautiful I was. And that is still something that is significant today (crying)." When Maijah was in the fourth grade, Aura would purchase *Honey I Love* by, Eloise Greenfield, as Aura herself was reading the same book in high school. They would sing and have deep discussions together. When Maijah entered high school, Aura would expose her to her own college classrooms and professors. One significant professor was the musical and broadcasting genius, Dr. Harrison Ridley. Aura would bring Maijah to the music studio and listen to different types of music. By the age of fifteen Maijah had played five different instruments, "violin, chello, piano, drums and the clarinet." Aura, was guided by the reality that,

In terms of education...one thing opens the door to another... so we would get a book and I was at Community College at the time and I would hear that every February there was a children's Book Fair. So, we would go and Maijah would meet [writers such as] E.B. Lewis.

I just wanted the world to be real to her. One door opened and then you go through and there is just more wealth and knowledge waiting there for you.

Figure 23

Aura Townsend and Daughter II



Source: Aura Townsend

Even though Aura did not have the same types of exposure to reading, like Sonya Carson, she made sure she created that experience for her daughter. What Aura didn't have the knowledge base to speak to her daughter about certain issues at a young age that Maijah was able to piece together from books and cultural experiences. Now a sophomore at Julia R. Masterman Laboratory and Demonstration School, the most highly ranked school in the School District of Philadelphia that scores at the highest level on the Pennsylvania System of Statewide Assessment, for Maijah reading and exposure has proven to be very beneficial.

In looking at statistical data, in 2011 of Black fourth grade students, 84% scored below the proficient level in reading, as measured and defined by the National Assessment of Educational in the United States.¹⁹ Table 9 shows the top states with the highest percentage of Black Fourth Grade Students scoring below the proficient level in reading.

Table 9 : Percent of Black 4th Graders Scoring Below Proficient and Below Basic on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Test, by Top States: 2011

State	Percent
Louisiana	91%
Michigan	91%
Wisconsin	91%
Mississippi	90%
Illinois	89%
Oklahoma	89%
South Carolina	89%

Source: Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.

Why are reading proficient scores at the end of the third grade so critical? Researchers argue that “Failure to read proficiently is linked to higher rates of school dropout, which suppresses individual earning potential as well as the nation’s competitiveness and general productivity.”²⁰

¹⁹ KIDS COUNT Program “4th graders who scored below proficient reading level by race: Black or African American (Percent) – 2011” <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?loct=2&by=a&order=a&ind=5126&dtm=11557&ch=9&tf=867> (accessed April 1, 2013). Annie E. Casey Foundation, See also Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.

²⁰ KIDS COUNT, “Early Warning! Why reading by the End of Third grade Matters Executive Report.” The Annie E. Casey Foundation (Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010), 1.

Listening, reading and keeping have been the primary forms of gaining wisdom. Sojourner Truth, listened and kept the advice of her mother and God to gain her freedom. Mary McLeod Bethune “heard the story of slavery from the lips of her older brothers and sisters...In her innermost consciousness Mary Jane knew the story of slavery. She had heard the story, she had felt the story, in effect, she had lived the story. She became as proud of her family’s independence as of her African heritage.”²¹ Today, Maia Love a member of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) and Medicine designed to produce candidates for M.D. programs and M.D./Ph.D. dual degree programs, recalls wondering why her father had her read books during the summer, while all the other young children were on break. The primary thread throughout all the narratives was developing an ear to hear, a mind to read and the capacity to keep that knowledge, was and still is very powerful.

Mastery: Speaking, Writing & Acting

When we sing, we announce our existence.

— Bernice Reagon Johnson²²

Once more, not everyone was given the ability to receive a scribal training, but “intellectual pursuit” meant the ability to know something. Not just know it, but have content mastery in it. From the Papyrus Lansing, a school text dating back to the 20th

²¹ Bolt, *Mary McLeod Bethune A Biography*, 7.

²² Johnson, *The Songs Are Free*.

Dynasty, the teacher addresses a scribe in the importance of him mastering his profession.²³

*Cherish study, avoid the dance, so you'll become an excellent official.
Do not yearn after outdoor pleasures, hunting and fishing;
Shun boomerang throwing and the chase.
Write diligently by day; recite at night.
Let your friends be the papyrus roll and the scribal palette; such work is sweeter
than wine.*²⁴

The teacher and official Royal Scribe, whose name is Neb-Maâ-Re Nakht, instructs the student Wnn-m-di-I Imn, WenimdiAmun, to take pride and praise in developing and mastering his training in writing. A scribe's central job was to write, draw and create. So, students were held to a very high standard in order to master that skill and be able to be called a scribe. A scribe was not one who just knew how to write, but one who had mastered the skill of writing and is able to present it. Mastery took dedication day in and day out. For the Ancient Kemites, the importance of mastery was extremely enforced, because writing guaranteed real immortality, for the name of an author would "remain for eternity."

As a community, the Gikuyus believed young children were taught their "present comforts and their future prospects depend[ed] on knowing their place, giving respect and obedience where it is due."²⁵ Knowing your place required the mastery of a genealogical knowledge. Kenyatta describes in *Facing Mount Kenya*, a high level of mastery required as soon as a child is able to speak.

²³ Obenga, *African Philosophy*, 251.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 243.

²⁵ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 103.

When the child is able to speak, he can answer many questions which are asked gently and naturally to test how much he has learnt. Such questions as these might be asked: What is your name? Who is your father? What is his age-group? What is the name of your grandfather? And your great-grandfather? What is the name of your grandmother? What are their age-groups? Why were they given such-and-such names for their age-groups? This type of question goes back for several generations, and small children are able to answer freely without any effort or strain on their part.²⁶

Implicitly and explicitly, children were required to know and speak about their people and cultural history. This level of mastery was as critical of a skill, as being able to sit and walk properly. When it came to practical skills, young boys and girls were constantly being trained and evaluated inside and outside of the home by family members and the community.

As African people forcefully migrate to a new world with different forms of content, the cultural understanding of mastery and knowing is still keenly developed to attain excellence. As a racially biased society was about the intellectual capacity of people of African descent, Black people strived to master whatever skills they deemed necessary to solve the problems of their problem.

Before Du Bois excelled exceptionally well at Fisk and Harvard, he had mastered the same academic skills as a child first. From his autobiography he writes,

...I found it easy to excel most of my classmates in studies, if not in games. The secret of life and the loosing of the color bar, then, lay in excellence, in accomplishment...On this my mother quietly insisted. There was no real discrimination on account of color – it was all a matter of ability and hard work...This philosophy saved me from conceit and vainglory by rigorous self-testing, which doubtless cloaked some half-conscious misgivings on my part. If visitors to school saw and remarked on my brown face, I waited in quite

²⁶Ibid., 97.

confidence. When my turn came, I recited glibly and usually correctly because I studied hard. Some of my mates did not care, some were stupid, some excelled, but at any rate I gave the best a hard run, and then sat back complacently.²⁷

Figure 24

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, second from left, class picture at Fisk University



Source: Fisk University

Upon entering public school at the age of about five or six, Du Bois always worked hard and excelled preparing for the moments to exhibit his level of content mastery. Throughout primary, secondary, high education and post-graduate school Du Bois would generally be the youngest and darkest student in the room. Despite society's social and governance structures, Du Bois worked hard to excel which later opened the door to Fisk, Harvard and becoming the "Race Man" we speak of today.

²⁷ Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois*, 75-76.

The narrow accounts we generally hear about the gallant pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church and the civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. many times leave out the time and dedication at a young age Martin took to master his skills. At the age of fifteen, Martin entered Morehouse College on September 20, 1944 and graduated at nineteen on June 8 1948. From his autobiography he recalls, the hardships he went through to excel. He states,

I shall never forget the hardship that I had upon entering college, for though I had been one of the top students in high school, I was still reading at only an eighth-grade level. I went to college from the eleventh grade. I never went to the twelfth grade, and skipped another grade earlier, so I was a pretty young a fellow at Morehouse.²⁸

Figure 25

Martin Luther King, Jr., third from left, listens to a speaker during an assembly at Morehouse College in Atlanta.



Source: Morehouse College

²⁸ King, Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 13.

At school Martin spent a great deal of time reading social philosophers and learning amongst professors. Yet, what would prove to be particularly crucial during his development in college were the days and nights he spent wrestling with the Bible. “My studies had made me skeptical, and I could not see how many of the facts of science could be squared with religion. I revolted, too...I didn’t understand it...I had seen that most Negro ministers were unlettered, not trained in seminaries... [I wondered], whether religion could be intellectually respectable.”²⁹ It was not until he took his studies deeper, with the help of Rev. Dr. Benjamin Mays, his mentor and former president of Morehouse College, and Rev. Dr. George Kelsey, a professor of philosophy and religion, that Martin was able to resolve his conflict. “I came to see that behind the legends and myths of the Book were many profound truths which one could not escape...I felt a sense of responsibility which I could not escape.”³⁰

Figure 26

Martin Luther King, Jr., in the middle, posing in cap and gown at his Morehouse College graduation



Source: Morehouse College

²⁹ Ibid., 15

³⁰ Ibid., 16.

In his senior year of college he entered Crozer Seminary in 1948, graduated and entered Boston University's School of Theology in 1951, and in 1955 upon graduating with his doctorate and becoming pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Rosa Parks was arrested and Martin Luther King, Jr. became the head of the newly formed protest group, the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) on December 5, 1955.

Martin Luther King, Jr. took pride in mastering his skills, not just being able to know it for himself, but being able to use it. When Dr Benjamin Mays' eulogized Martin Luther King, Jr. at Morehouse College on April 9, 1968 he would state, "Too bad, you say, that Martin Luther King Jr. died so young. I feel that way, too. But, as I have said many times before, it isn't how long one lives, but how well. It's what one accomplishes for mankind that matters."³¹ Martin's performance was a in his presentation of character intellectually, spiritually, politically and socially. Not in how much he knew, had, or believed, but about his attitude about what you knew, had, and believed.

As a young girl, Fannie Lou Hamer would have a thirst for knowledge that she earnestly, looked everywhere to quench. From her biography, it states,

"she left school after the sixth grade to help support her family, but she always wanted to read and know what was going on in the world...Years later, she recalled jumping off moving trucks full of workers "to retrieve newspapers and pieces of magazines caught in the cotton along dirt roads between fields and of picking through the trash behind the big house just to have something – anything – in print to read"...After she left school, Fannie Lou worked long days with her family. At night they would roast peanuts. They made up their own entertainment. Fannie Lou's father would tell jokes, or she would sing.³²

³¹ Benjamin E. Mays, *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 360.

³² Kay Mills, *This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Kentucky: The University of Kentucky, 2007), 12 – 13.

Fannie Lou knew that it was very difficult to be formally educated, when her family needed her financial support. Hence, the question becomes where could a woman who was a sharecropper for eighteen years and less than a sixth grade education attain the wisdom to speak on behalf of Black people in front of a nation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention? The simple answer is through speaking and listening to the stories of others. Fannie Lou Hamer had mastered the narratives of her people. The level of detail and description in her testimony was nothing but mastery.

Mr. Chairman, and to the Credentials Committee, my name is Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, and I live at 626 East Lafayette Street, Ruleville, Mississippi, Sunflower County, the home of Senator James O. Eastland, and Senator Stennis. It was the 31st of August in 1962 that eighteen of us traveled twenty-six miles to the county courthouse in Indianola to try to register to become first-class citizens.

We was met in Indianola by policemen, Highway Patrolmen, and they only allowed two of us in to take the literacy test at the time. After we had taken this test and started back to Ruleville, we was held up by the City Police and the State Highway Patrolmen and carried back to Indianola where the bus driver was charged that day with driving a bus the wrong color...

And June the 9th, 1963, I had attended a voter registration workshop; was returning back to Mississippi. Ten of us was traveling by the Continental Trailway bus. When we got to Winona, Mississippi, which is Montgomery County, four of the people got off to use the washroom, and two of the people - to use the restaurant - two of the people wanted to use the washroom.

The four people that had gone in to use the restaurant was ordered out. During this time I was on the bus. ...³³

Fannie Lou Hamer was not a decorated academic scholar, yet she mastered the narratives of her people. She walked, worked, helped, fought and sang along side her people.

³³ A Project of The Southern Poverty Law Center, "Fannie Lou Hamer's Testimony at the 1964 Democratic Convention (Transcript)" *Teaching Tolerance* <http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/fannie-lou-hamer-s-testimony-1964-democratic-convention-tran> (accessed April 7, 2013).

Also, known very well for her singing, before she was able to sing and lead congregational hymns during the civil rights movement, she had mastered the songs of her people. “I have got to always talk about Fannie Lou Hamer singing and the power of her voice because there was a mission behind it and in it” says Harry Belafonte.³⁴ From her mother and the church Hamer heard and mastered the songs of the Black Church. If Fannie Lou Hamer had a theme song, it was “This Little Light of Mine,” says Mills.³⁵ When Fannie Lou spoke or sang, she announced not only her existence, but ours as well.

For Kwame Ture, a similar level of mastery was also fostered at a young age in the classrooms of New York. As a student, Ture recalls,

...whenever we would take these tests, I'd whup the class. I mean, I'd whup'em hands down....By about my junior year I figured out the course of my advantage: my uncle Lew..."I'm thinking of being a doctor like you." Uncle Lew would say, "In that case, study Latin. A lot of medial and anatomical terminology is based on Latin... So I studied Latin and continued to do so all the time at Science. I studied Latin for four years. I read Cicero in Latin. I read Caesar in Latin...So even where I a C student in Latin while you were an A student in French, if we took a vocabulary test, I should whup you, hands down."³⁶

Similar to the the Congolese-Angolan Africans in South Carolina, Ture had learned to not just master his history, but their history as well. Latin was the language that framed European discourse. So, in order to excel within that system, one just has to master the master switch that controls everything. By the end of his primary education, Ture was selected to attend one of the most “elite” schools in the city, Bronx High School of Science.

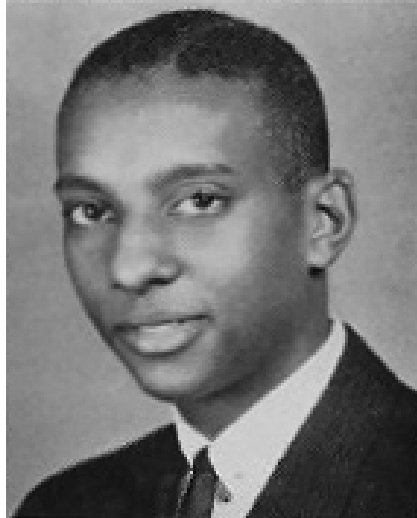
³⁴ Kay Mills interview with Harry Balafonte, Los Angeles, Calif., Jan. 28, 1991 from her book *This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer*, 19.

³⁵ Mills, *This Little Light of Mine*, 20.

³⁶ Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 85 - 86

Figure 27

Kwame Ture, Stokely Carmichael, as a senior in high school, 1960.



Source: Bronx High School of Science

Today more than ever, having a level of content mastery is critical for Black youth. As Aure made sure Maji was given many opportunities to listen, read and learn as much as possible, Maji has also developed a high level of performance.

My goals personally, right now I am a sophomore in high school. I plan on finishing high school, going to college; maybe an HBCU. The only one I would go to is Howard or Spelman possibly. But, overall I want to go to college, and major in Pre-Med. Be a doctor of some sort; the kind of doctor changes every day (laughing). Right now I think it is an OBGYN. As far as education that is not the max, I want to get my PhD.

Maia Love, Anyabwile Love's daughter, also has similar results as well. As a honors student at the academic rigors magnet school, Central High School—the only high school

in “the nation authorized to grant its graduates Bachelor of Arts college degrees instead of ordinary high school diplomas” she states,³⁷

Maia: Some goals that I have are becoming valedictorian, that’s definitely one of my goals. Also, graduating from Howard and NYU. Maybe starting out in Howard as undergrad and going to NYU for graduate. Also, becoming a very famous and very accomplished geneticist, that would be very nice. And teaching my children the things my father has taught me. Being able to

Anyabwile: What your children
(laughing)

The task of closing the excellence gap is consequently linked to the ability and primary reality that at the end of the day student must master some form of content. Whether, they want to be a musical artist or a scientist, the core content of that field, area or occupation must be mastered. Thomas Fortune entered Howard with less than three years of formal education, but several years of self-taught reading and experience. Ralph Bunche didn’t have many people supporting him in and outside of school besides his grandmother, but he became valedictorian in high school and college. Martin Luther King, Jr. started Morehouse College at fifteen years old with an eighth grade reading level, studied hard enough, and eventually to attained his Doctoral degree. Lastly, both Kwame Ture and Ben Carson would read anything they could get their hands on, which provided them with an insatiable attitude to reach for academic excellence. These tasks dictated a range of behaviors that created the capacity to develop a level of content mastery, necessary to close the excellence gap.

³⁷ Central High School website, “About CHS,” http://www.centralhigh.net/pages/CentralHigh/Main_Menu/School_Info/About_CHS (accessed April 10, 2013).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

A child lacks wisdom, and some say that what is important is that the child does not die; what kills more surely than lack of wisdom?

— Yoruba Proverb

This study sought to answer the question of closing the excellence gap between the actual performance of Black students and their deeply rooted cultural expectations for excellence, using the methodological framing questions of Africana Studies' to examine the *long-view* experiences of African people, and a three tier critical ethnographic research methods approach. Thus, what others currently describe as an issue with the Black child, Black family, Black communities or Black schools, when asked the right questions, the answer is in the many approaches, adaptations and improvisational elements of (1) Collective Training, (2) Spiritual and Moral Balance, and (3) Content Mastery.

Too often Black families and community members take for granted that we know what is best for our children. However, in the American public schooling system, which first shut Black people out, slowly integrated us into the deprived schools, and now wants to put us back out again, many Black students are crying out for help. With the obvious historical legacy of educational excellence from people of African descent, the thrust of closing the excellence begins inside the home and community.

Inaugurating with the templates of African educational excellence that emerged from the Ancient Kemetic, Akan and Gikuyu people, various normative thoughts, practices, and traditions have forged similar patterns within the Black experience. In Ancient Kemetic society, the aim of learning was the spiritual and physical balanced acquisition of wisdom. Educational excellence was the fabric of life, which required a level of reciprocity and mastery. From the wisest of the Greeks: Solon, Thales, Plato, Eudoxus, Pythagoras who came to Egypt and consorted with the priests, “The Egyptian model [was] the best, it is the one that ought to be adopted for the physical, moral and intellectual education...”¹ Ancient Kemet was the cradle of *history, wisdom* (philosophy), the *arts and science* (arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy), *writing, games* (draughts), *music, or dance*, and the Greeks implicitly and explicitly learned from Africa.

From this historical truth, a power flowed up the Nile to the Akan and Gikuyu people of west and east Africa. Transforming to a highly dependent oral tradition, African genius of educational excellence was still passed on from generation to generation through ways of meaning, cultural meaning making, movement and memory. Long before the advent of Islam, Christianity and Colonialism the Akan people located in what we know call Ghana, held their own systems of training and education formally and informally. For the Akan educational excellence embodied the development of the anthropological human soul. For the Gikuyu educational excellence called for a social and political responsibility to your people. As a community, the Gikuyus believed young

¹ Obenga, *African Philosophy*, 264.

children were taught their “present comforts and their future prospects depend[ed] on knowing their place, giving respect and obedience where it is due.”²

While embracing the essential questions and solutions of closing the excellence gap that has been raised by previous generations of scholars, I have argued that Black people’s improvisational efforts to educate their children and close the excellence gap primarily reside in the same normative thoughts, practices, and traditions that were forged in the many approaches, adaptations and improvisational elements of (1) Collective Training, (2) Spiritual and Moral Balance, and (3) Content Mastery of the Ancient Kemetic, Akan and Gikuyu people.

Collective Training

When one looks prior to European episodic disruptions and beyond Western assumptions of knowledge and education, Black people individually and collectively have always valued education. Female and male representatives and the Black family as a collective have historically been the primary authority in training, instructing and educating Black children. The only way we can restore balance is by deciding to be the primary educators of our children. Pati Delany went against the law making sure her children, especially Martin Delany, would be educated. Harriet Bailey walked twelve miles in the middle of the night just to pass on the love of knowledge to her son, Frederick Douglas. James Wells would have his daughter Ida Bell Wells, read newspapers about the Ku Klux Klan to him and his friends, before she even knew who

² Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 103.

the Ku Klux Klan were. Ralph Bunche always claimed that he would never have gone to college, but for Nana's foresight and insistence.³ Benjamin Carson's when asked would say, "It would be impossible to tell about my accomplishments without starting with my mother's influence. For me to tell my story means beginning with hers...."⁴ And Aura Townsend and Anyabwile Love are still doing it today. The task of closing the excellence gap is consequently linked to the issue of governance—attempts to forge collective unity, organize to make decisions, resolve disputes, reestablish relationships, and establish common methods within the collective to be the primary educators of our children.

Spiritual & Moral Balance

Secondly, educational excellence begins with the assertion that "no one is born wise" and wisdom comes for God. Mau-mau Betty, taught her daughter Sojourner Truth to ask God for help, instruction and protection whenever she needed it, and she did. Henry McNeal Turner, at age twelve, dreamed "that millions of people would come to him for instruction and that he would teach them while standing on a mountain," and God guided his educational excellence.⁵ Today Kevin and Kilolo Moyo-White foster in their son a similar spiritual understanding of social order that they hope settles in his *spirit* and continue to guide him. As we have and continue to face episodic disruption, there must be honest dialogue with the understanding that intellectual warfare for educational excellence today is not only fought face to face, in classrooms, or at the school district

³ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 31, 36.

⁴ Carson, *Gifted Hands*, 14.

⁵ Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner*, 9.

building, but on spiritual grounds between God, the devil, ancestors, angels, demons, mental illness, suicide, bullying, peer pressure and stray bullets, etc. Who our children choose to ask and answer to is important. The question of “whom we as a people speak and answer to spiritually” should not be inferred to as a religious debate, but more of a question of “if” one believes life is just about the seen and not about the unseen.⁶

As much as the *spirit* leads one to wisdom, Black people must also be drawn to reciprocally solving the problems the souls of back folk. The *soul* of Alexandria, Tennessee spoke to Du Bois, and he was called to give back the wisdom he attained. After two summers of teaching in Alexandria, Du Bois went on to finish his Bachelor's degree at Fisk, earn a second Bachelor's, a Master's degree and become the first African American to be awarded a Ph.D. from Harvard. Similarly, 15 year old Maia Love desires to become a geneticist to find and prevent medical diseases of the Black community.

If we believe, “Knowledge is power,” then when it is gained the question then becomes who is the power used for and who is the power used against. Having a sense of a spiritual social order creates a framework that considers one getting A’s because they answer to a God that is excellence, and they want to be excellent like God. Morally having grounds for who one is responsible to, changes the dynamic of what you are attaining. Who we choose or have our children be held responsible to impacts their level of motivation and success. If students believe that their responsibility and motivation for academic success are worldly materials and objects the goals the power of wisdom becomes meaningless. In other words, if the graduation rate in high school and college is

⁶ I am proud to be an ordained Deacon at the Bright Hope Baptist Church.

a hundred percent for Black people, what does it matter if the graduates don't support, build, organize, create, govern, establish or generate idea for the humanity of Black people? And this does not mean we put down or destroy any other racial or ethnic group. Educational excellence embodies an understanding of spiritual presences and moral responsibility. If we don't choose who to show our children to be responsible to, society and mainstream media has no problem choosing for us.

Content Mastery

Lastly, what unites and emerges as the chief element is content mastery. The ability to retain and keep content through listening and reading; and present a level of mastery on that information through speaking, writing and action to solve problems, completes the reciprocal process of educational excellence. The question becomes, what do you know? What have you learned? With your degree, which one of our problems can you solve? The academic and career requirements to become a mathematician and hydrologist have changed over time, however the mastery of counting and dealing with water has remained the same since the Ancient Kemites were measuring flood levels. At a time when information can easily be searched on the web, downloaded, copied and pasted or simply purchased for a fee, Black youth must be encouraged to listen, read, write, speak, act and present a certain level of content mastery in a subject or skill.

T. Thomas Fortune, "enlarged his knowledge by reading avidly anything which came his way" outside of school. This afforded him the opportunity to gain more access to knowledge at Howard University. Kwame Ture heard the voices

of the Harlem stepladder orators like Queen Mother Moore, May Mallory, Charles X Kenyatta, and Malcolm X. Fannie Lou Hamer, jumped “off moving trucks full of workers ‘to retrieve newspapers and pieces of magazines caught in the cotton along dirt roads between fields and of picking through the trash behind the big house just to have something – anything – in print to read.’”⁷ At the age of fifteen, Martin Luther King Jr. entered Morehouse College reading at an eighth grade level, but worked hard studying, writing and wrestling this certain intellectually issues to master his skills. Aura purchased books for her daughter. “Reading books, writing books, coloring books, and even books in the tub.” We must develop in our children the ear to hear wisdom, and the capacity to thirst for a level of mastery. Knowing how to search for information on Google, is not the same as knowing information. As learning becomes distant and knowledge placed in a “cloud,” to close the gap we must continue to train our students to know, have and be able to present knowledge for themselves. It is understood that, “No man is born wise,” so student must first know the knowledge, not just know how to Wiki or spell-check it. Technology should be looked upon as a tool to aid in the mastering of the content, not the master and the student just a keeper of the tool waiting to gain knowledge from it. Being trained and understanding what wisdom is used for, means nothing when you cannot show for it.

⁷ Mills, *This Little Light of Mine*, 12.

Implications for Further Study

The challenge I see before us today is not how many public schools they are thinking about closing down, but how much power we as African people are willing to take back? Instead of asking what others are doing, we should be asking why aren't we doing what has already worked for over thousands of years for us? Knowing how the American public schooling system was historically constructed, the priority is not whether we choose to send our children to public schools or not. The priority must be to primarily train our own children in the ways of educational excellence despite the disruption.

What more evidence do we need to understand that since we have been on earth and in America what we know and have done in the past, we are the ones who can close the excellence gap for Black students, in the face of disruption? On March 26, 1996, John Henrik Clarke and Mary Lefkowitz would debate about her book *Not out of Africa*. Yet, in the first ten minutes Clarke answers the overarching question of further research.

I am not here to debate with anyone...I only debate with my equals all others I teach... Last year it was the *Bell Curve*, this year it's *Not Out of Africa*, next year it will be something else. This is part of a world war and against the role of African people and the history of the world. If we [African people], began history, began mankind, how is it that the last branch of the human race to enter that arena marked civilization, now think they brought civilization.⁸

To clarify the need for further research, last year it was *No Child Left Behind*, which has clearly left most Black students behind. This year its mass public school closings and

⁸ Talk Back "John Henrik Clarke and Mary Lefkowitz: A Debate on the Source of Western Civilization and the Debt it Owes to Africa - March 29, 1996" video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm4pzEY9ntA> (accessed March 3, 2013).

charter school privatization. Next year it will be something else. We cannot leave the education of our children in the hands of a system that “leaves us ignorant of our past, strangers to our people, apes of our oppressors, and creatures of habitual, shallow though, and trivial values.”⁹ Further research must be taken to look into ways to help families equip themselves to educate their children and receive support on a second level from institutions and organization that mirror the thoughts, practices, and traditions of the Black experience. Homeschooling programs, African Centered Charter Schools and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) also harvest approaches, adaptations, and improvisational ways to educate Black children and strive for excellence.

Instead of school districts closing schools, what if we as a community decided to not send our children to public schools at all. The National Education for Education Statistics reports, “The percentage of the school-age population that was homeschooled increased from 1.7 percent in 1999 to 2.9 percent in 2007. The increase in the percentage of homeschooled students from 1999 to 2007 represents a 74 percent relative increase over the 8-year period and a 36 percent relative increase since 2003.”¹⁰ In 2007, some 220,000 of those students were African-American. Further research should also be taken into expanding homeschooling programs as a superior form of alternative to public schooling.

⁹ Hilliard, *SBA*, 8.

¹⁰ The National Education for Education Statistics, “Fast Facts Homeschooling,” in the <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=91> (accessed April 2, 2013). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2009). *The Condition of Education 2009* (NCES 2009-081)

Du Bois argues “Negro history must be taught for many critical years by parents, in clubs by lecture courses, by new Negro literature which Negroes must write and buy...Negro communities, Negro private schools, Negro colleges will and must be organized and supported.”¹¹ Further research should be taken in examining the role of African Centered Schools and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). These non-Western spaces theoretically become the institutional support to the primary training done in the home and the community. As an alternative to public schooling, African Centered schools systems present promising results grounding in African ways of knowing. Murrell refers to these institutions as fostering a pedagogy that develops a conscious, caring, and rich learning experience in the intellectual heritage and cultural of Black children.¹² Not everyone will be provided the opportunity to have a strong in-home educational foundation, but having external institutions that do not conflict with or bring down the expectation of educational excellence of Black student is beneficial. More research should be done to support and fund institutions as such.

The vision is for the primary education of Black children to start in the family among the collective, grounded in cultural, spiritual and moral practices to develop a level of content mastery. After that, then if we choose, public educational institutions can come into the conversation. This model will positively impact students and empower them to gain wisdom and solve the peoples of our people.

¹¹ Du Bois, “Whither Now and Why,” 195.

¹² Peter C. Murrell, Jr. *African-Centered Pedagogy: Developing Schools of Achievement for African American Children* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

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APPENDIX A:
**CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL FOR A PROJECT INVOLVING
HUMAN SUBJECTS**



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Office for Human Subjects Protections
Institutional Review Board
Medical Intervention Committees A1 & A2
Social and Behavioral Committee B

Student Faculty Conference Center
3340 N Broad Street - Suite 304
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19140
Phone: (215) 707-3390
Fax: (215) 707-9100
e-mail: irb@temple.edu

Certification of Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Number: **20603**
PI: **NORMENT, NATHANIEL**
Approved On: 17-May-2012
Review Date: 17-May-2012
Committee: B BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
School/College: LIBERAL ARTS (1800)
Department: CLA:AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES (18310)
Project Title: Young, Gifted and Black: Understanding Traditional and Alternative Ways of Improvisational Resistance for Organizational Governance to Educate Africana Children

In accordance with the policy of the Department of Health and Human Services on protection of human subjects in research, it is hereby certified that protocol number 20603, having received preliminary review and approval by the department of CLA:AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES (18310) was subsequently reviewed by the Institutional Review Board in its present form and approved on 17-May-2012 with respect to the rights and welfare of the subjects involved; appropriateness and adequacy of the methods used to obtain informed consent; and risks to the individual and potential benefits of the project.

In conforming with the criteria set forth in the DHHS regulations for the protection of human research subjects, and in exercise of the power granted to the Committee, and subject to execution of the consent form(s), if required, and such other requirements as the Committee may have ordered, such orders, if any, being stated hereon or appended hereto.

It is understood that it is the investigator's responsibility to notify the Committee immediately of any untoward results of this study to permit review of the matter. In such case, the investigator should call the IRB at (215) 707-3390.

This is the Certificate of Approval. Supplemental documentation will follow under separate cover. Enrollment may not begin until all documents have been reviewed and processed by the IRB and received by the study team.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zebulon Kendrick'.

ZEBULON KENDRICK, Ph.D.
CHAIRMAN, IRB

APPENDIX B:

ADDENDUM TO CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL



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Office for Human Subjects Protections
Institutional Review Board
Medical Intervention Committees A1 & A2
Social and Behavioral Committee B

Student Faculty Conference Center
3340 N Broad Street - Suite 304
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19140
Phone: 215.707.3390 Fax: 215.707.9100
e-mail: irb@temple.edu

MEMORANDUM

To: **NORMENT, NATHANIEL**
CLA:AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES (18310)

From: Institutional Review Board

Date: 22-May-2012

Re: Expedited Request Status for IRB Protocol:
20603: Young, Gifted and Black: Understanding Traditional and Alternative Ways of Improvisational Resistance for Organizational Governance to Educate African Children

This addendum is to be affixed to the IRB Approval Certificate

45 CFR 46 Protection of Human Subjects.

Expedited review is a type of review that can be conducted by the IRB Chair, other IRB members designated by the Chair, or a subcommittee of the IRB. A major criterion for research that can initially (initial review) reviewed through expedited process is that it must involve no more than minimal risk. The DHHS regulations and FDA regulations define minimal risk to mean that "the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in the daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests."

This research protocol was reviewed under the following Expedited Review Category:

Expedited Category #7: Research on group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.



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**Office for Human Subjects Protections
Institutional Review Board**
Medical Intervention Committees A1 & A2
Social and Behavioral Committee B
Unanticipated Problems Committee

Student Faculty Conference Center
3340 N Broad Street - Suite 304
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19140
Phone: (215) 707-3390
Fax: (215) 707-9100
e-mail: irb@temple.edu

Modifications are Approved

Protocol Number: **20603**
PI: **NORMENT, NATHANIEL**
Review Date: 02-Oct-2012
Committee: B BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
School/College: LIBERAL ARTS (1800)
Department: CLA:AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES (18310)
Project Title: Young, Gifted and Black: Understanding Traditional and Alternative Ways of Improvisational Resistance for Organizational Governance to Educate Africana Children

On 02-Oct-2012, the IRB approved the following modifications:

1. Recruitment has been increased to 40 participants.
2. The following statement has been added to the Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: "Respondents who fit the above-listed criteria and want to participate will be eligible to participate in the study."
3. Under Study Procedures & Data analysis-the observations will also be conducted and pictures taken of the African Centered Schools and homes of homeschooled families (classrooms, work/desk station, structure, culture, uniforms and curriculum and/or teacher materials).
4. Additional questions have been added for both the parents and student (Homeschooled or African Centered School) as described in the memo.
5. New consent forms for minors, parents and guardians for the minor and administrator. The standard consent form will be used for other adults (teachers and staff).

Please contact the IRB at (215) 707-3390 if you have any questions.

APPENDIX C:
CONSENT FORMS

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM
For Non-Recorded or Recorded Participation Options

TITLE

Young, Gifted and Black: Understanding Traditional and Alternative Ways of Improvisational Resistance for Organizational Governance to Educate Africana Children

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Dr. Nathaniel Norment, Jr.
Chair, African American Studies Department
Temple University

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR/ CONTACT:

Amy O. Yeboah, M.A.
Doctoral Student, African American Studies, Temple University
Aoyeboah@Temple.edu, 215-204-4503

ABOUT INTERVIEW

A consent form gives you information about the study and seeks your agreement to participate in a study. I will read the form aloud to you as you follow along. Please ask me to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand. If you prefer to take this consent form home before signing to think about or discuss with family or friends before making your decision you may do so. After a week's time, I will contact you to find out your decision, and if necessary, set up an interview. If you prefer to sign the consent form now, you will take with you a copy of this consent form.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

One of the top issues families face concerning their children is education—quality education on an individual, family, community and institutional level. A majority of the research done on the education of African American students' compares their experiences to other racial and ethnic groups, not taking into consideration systems of learning, engagement and standards that mirror African American youth's level of potential. Among African American youth there exists a gap in achievement, which alone deserves as much and even more attention than the "Black-White" or "Black-Asian" gap. It is evident that public schooling was not

created, banned the education of, denied equal resources and still fails to properly educate children of African descent. Heeding the call for community engagement, by the discipline of African American Studies, I feel an obligation to help improve the quality of education for children of African descent. Based upon research and the examination of traditional and alternative approaches to learning known to African people, I seek to meet this goal by interviewing adults who have been involved in the process of educating African American children on a community, institutional and home-schooling level. The purpose of this research study is to understand the role traditional and alternative ways, aside from public schooling, contribute to educating African American students. I will use the results of this research to develop informed solutions and a DVD-based documentary.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked a series of questions about your observation of and/or involvement in the education of African American children. As a participant in this study, you may choose to have your interview written, tape-recorded, or video-taped. In later pages of this consent form, you will be told in detail about those options.

The interview for this study will be very much like a conversation in that after we ask a few opening questions, you will get to tell your story on your own terms without a lot of interruption except for a clarifying questions we may ask now and then. We expect that most interviews will last about an hour; however, the length of the interview will depend upon how much you want to share. The estimated duration of the study is three (3) months. If the interview ends and you have additional items to add or questions to ask, subsequent interviews can be scheduled as your time permits.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may discontinue your participation at any time by telling me you will not participate in an email, by phone or face-to-face within two (2) months of your original interview by contacting Amy Yeboah by any of the contact means listed on the front page of the consent form, and requesting that your interview no longer be used.

BENEFITS & COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

There are no direct material benefits or payments for your participation in this study. However, in giving your testimony, you will be adding to the historical record of African people in America and the role traditional and alternative ways,

aside from public schooling, contribute to educating African American students. I, the researcher, plan to show my gratitude by providing each participant with a copy of the completed doctoral dissertation as well as a small gift of appreciation.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

I do not anticipate any risk, however, for some people; it is possible that discomforts may directly result from remembering and recounting events that occurred. If you feel uncomfortable talking during the interview about a certain subject or that your recounting a particular incident or event may be putting yourself, your family and/or loved ones in danger, you may elect not to answer. You may also skip questions, and come back to them later, or not at all, if you wish. You may take breaks or even terminate your participation at your will. Should you want to participate in this historical project without giving your name, that option is available to you and will be discussed further on later pages.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Temple University Institutional Review Board. Please contact them at (215) 707-3390 or e-mail them at: irb@temple.edu for any of the following: questions, concerns, or complaints about the research; questions about your rights; to obtain information; or to offer input.

SELECTING YOUR AUDIO, VIDEO, OR WRITTEN INTERVIEW AGREEMENT OPTIONS

Before starting your interview, I want to tell you about your various options. You may choose whichever option you are most comfortable. You can choose to have your interview video-taped, audio recorded, or handwritten.

If you permit me to interview you, you may tell me if your name may or may not be used. If you choose not to reveal your name, I will use a false name that you may choose from a list.

If you choose not to be identified by name, I ask that you try not to use real names in reference to yourself or others, and I will do the same. If you should happen to use your name or the name of someone else who you do not want to have included in the study, I can dub it out of the final presentation.

If you wish to tell your story in your video or voice but do not wish to have your video or voice played in public, I can also use technology to distort your voice or write out your story, and then use someone else's voice to narrate your story and your video or voice would not be used at any point in the documentary.

I will now go over what each type of interview involves. If you have any questions,

please feel free to stop me and I will answer them before moving forward.

1. Video-Taped Interview

This option means that in public presentations of this study both your face and your voice will be captured on film and viewed by the public—just like on television. However, with this option you can also choose to:

- A. _____ be filmed facing the camera without concealing my true name, face and distorting my voice.
- B. _____ be filmed facing the camera with my face revealed using a false name.
- C. _____ be filmed facing the camera, but I want to have the researcher use computer technology during the tape editing stage to conceal my voice, with my identity concealed using a false name.

2. Tape Recorded Interview

The second option you may choose is the tape-recorded option. Even if I tape-record your interview, you get to decide how I use that tape and whether it is ever heard in public beyond the interview. However, with this option you can also choose to:

- A. _____ be audio- recorded without concealing my true name or distorting my voice.
- B. _____ be audio-recorded, using a false name.
- C. _____ be audio-recorded interview in public presentations of this study; but I want to have the researcher use computer technology during the tape editing stage to conceal my voice, with my identity concealed using a false name.
- D. _____ be audio-recorded, however, the researcher may not play the audiotape of my voice in public. The researcher may obtain actors to read my interview information for the study.

3. Written Interview

The third option is that you can tell me your story and I can write it with pen or paper and/or type it into a laptop computer. With this option neither your face nor voice will be recorded. Although this option may require more time, it is the best way of completely concealing your identity if you feel the need to do so.

- A. _____ written interview without concealing my true name.

B. _____ written interview, using a false name.

Do you have any questions about the interview options?

Now have heard the three interviewing options, please place a check mark in the space next to the option you prefer.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All documents and information pertaining to this research study will be kept confidential in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Because this project is aimed at contributing to the history and legacy of African educational traditional and alternative movements, this researcher, like all historical research, plans to use participants' names in recording their stories. However, should you wish to not have your name used, you may elect this option. This would mean that when the results of this study are presented publicly or published, the researcher would not identify you by name. The results may also be kept confidential in that, when the results of this study are presented publicly or published, the researcher would not give your name, or any other information that would allow anyone to associate that information with you—if you wish.

Signature Block for Capable Adult

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THIS DATE →

Signature of subject

Date

Printed name of subject

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Signature Block for Adult Unable to Consent

Your signature documents your permission for the named subject to take part in this research.

DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THIS DATE →

Printed name of subject

Signature of legally authorized representative

Date

Printed name of legally authorized representative

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

**PARENT OR GUARDIAN
RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM
For Non-Recorded or Recorded Participation Options**

TITLE

Young, Gifted and Black: Understanding Traditional and Alternative Ways of Improvisational Resistance for Organizational Governance to Educate Africana Children

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Dr. Nathaniel Norment, Jr.
Chair, African American Studies Department
Temple University

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR/ CONTACT:

Amy O. Yeboah, M.A.
Doctoral Student, African American Studies, Temple University
Aoyeboah@Temple.edu, 215-204-4503

ABOUT INTERVIEW

A consent form gives you information about the study and seeks your agreement to participate in a study. I will read the form aloud to you as you follow along. Please ask me to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Your child is invited to participate in a research study conducted by Amy Yeboah, from the Temple University Department of African American Studies. I hope to learn. The purpose of this research study is to understand the role traditional and alternative ways, aside from public schooling, contribute to educating African American students. I will use the results of this research to develop informed solutions and a DVD-based documentary. Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because he or she attends an African Centered School or is Homeschooled.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to have your child participate in this study, they will be asked a series of questions about attending an African Centered School or being homeschooled.

As a participant in this study, they may choose to have their interview tape-recorded or video-taped. The interview for this study will be very much like a conversation

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow our child to participate will not affect your or your child's relationship with their school, etc. If you decide to allow your child to participate, you and/or your child are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

BENEFITS & COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

There are no direct material benefits or payments for your participation in this study. However, in giving your testimony, you will be adding to the historical record of African people in America and the role traditional and alternative ways, aside from public schooling, contribute to educating African American students. I, the researcher, plan to show my gratitude by providing each participant with a copy of the completed doctoral dissertation as well as a small gift of appreciation.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

I do not anticipate any risk, however, for some people; it is possible that discomforts may directly result from remembering and recounting events that occurred. If you feel uncomfortable talking during the interview about a certain subject or that your recounting a particular incident or event may be putting yourself, your family and/or loved ones in danger, you may elect not to answer. You may also skip questions, and come back to them later, or not at all, if you wish. You may take breaks or even terminate your participation at your will. Should you want to participate in this historical project without giving your name, that option is available to you and will be discussed further on later pages.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Temple University Institutional Review Board. Please contact them at (215) 707-3390 or e-mail them at: irb@temple.edu for any of the following: questions, concerns, or complaints about the research; questions about your rights; to obtain information; or to offer input.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Subject identities will be kept confidential. All documents and information pertaining to this research study will be kept confidential in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Because this project is aimed at contributing to the history and legacy of African educational traditional and alternative movements, this researcher, like all historical research, plans to use participants' names in recording their stories. However, should you wish to not have your name used, you may elect this option. This would mean that when the results of this study are presented publicly or published, the researcher would not identify you by name. The results may also be kept confidential in that, when the results of this study are presented publicly or published, the researcher would not give your name, or any other information that would allow anyone to associate that information with you—if you wish.

GUARDIAN AUTHORIZATION:

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to allow your child to participate, that you and/or your child may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THIS DATE →

Signature of subject

Date

Printed name of subject

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

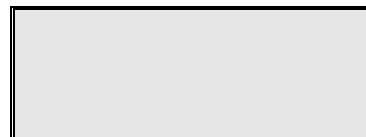
Printed name of person obtaining consent

Note on permission by guardians: An individual may provide permission for a child only if that individual can provide a written document indicating that he or she is legally authorized to consent to the child's general medical care. Attach the documentation to the signed document.

GUARDIAN AUTHORIZATION:

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to allow your child to participate, that you and/or your child may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THIS DATE →



Signature of subject

Date

Printed name of subject

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

**MINOR
RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM
For Non-Recorded or Recorded Participation Options**

TITLE

Young, Gifted and Black: Understanding Traditional and Alternative Ways of Improvisational Resistance for Organizational Governance to Educate Africana Children

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Dr. Nathaniel Norment, Jr.
Chair, African American Studies Department
Temple University

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR/ CONTACT:

Amy O. Yeboah, M.A.
Doctoral Student, African American Studies, Temple University
Aoyeboah@Temple.edu, 215-204-4503

ABOUT INTERVIEW

A consent form gives you information about the study and seeks your agreement to participate in a study. I will read the form aloud to you as you follow along. Please ask me to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to understand different ways of schooling outside of public schooling for African American students. I will use the results of this research to develop informed solutions and a DVD-based documentary.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked a series of questions about attending an African Centered School or being homeschooled. As a participant in this study, you may choose to have your interview tape-recorded or video-taped. The interview for this study will be very much like a conversation

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you can stop at any time.

BENEFITS & COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not get anything from this study, but I will be sure to show you your words before I show anyone else.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is no risk but if you feel uncomfortable let me know so we can stop.

SELECTING YOUR AUDIO, VIDEO, OR WRITTEN INTERVIEW AGREEMENT OPTIONS

Before we start you have two choices to be interviewed by

4. Video-Taped Interview

This option will show both your face and your voice will be captured on film and viewed by the public—just like on television.

D. _____ be filmed facing the camera with a fake name.

5. Tape Recorded Interview

The second option you may choose is the tape-recorded option. Even if I tape-record your interview, you get to decide how I use that tape and whether it is ever heard in public beyond the interview.

E. _____ be audio-recorded, using a false name.

Do you have any questions about the interview options?

Now have heard the three interviewing options, please place a check mark in the space next to the option you prefer.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All documents and information pertaining to this research study will be kept safe..

Signature Block for Minor

I am willing to take part in the study called “Young, Gifted and Black.” I understand that the researchers from Temple University are hoping to learn more about African Centered School and Homeschooling. I understand that I will be a subject. I will be asked about my experiences. I am taking part because I want to. I have been told that I can stop at any time, and if I do not like a question, I do not have to answer it.

Your signature documents your permission for the named child to take part in this research.

DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THIS DATE →

Printed name of child

Age of Minor

Date

Note on permission by guardians: An individual may provide permission for a child only if that individual can provide a written document indicating that he or she is legally authorized to consent to the child’s general medical care. Attach the documentation to the signed document.

Signature of person obtaining consent and assent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent and assent

Date

APPENDIX D:
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

I. Abstract of the Study

Much of the educational research on African American youth has focused on a European perspective of racial differences, which perpetuates the myth of African intellectual inferiority and ignores or degrades the tradition systems of education in place. Not to deny the clear challenges African American students in the face of European hegemonic powers and structures, Dr. Asa Hilliard in his text *Young Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement among African-American Students*, challenges researchers to not examine the gap between Black and white students, but the gap in excellence among African American students and provides ways to judge us based on our standards of excellence and system of learning. This achievement gap should be thought of as the gap between the current performance of African students and our levels of African excellence. In addition to the ways in which European power have created educational institutional structures to not promote our culture but destroy it.

II. Protocol Title

Young, Gifted and Black: Understanding Traditional and Alternative Ways of Improvisational Resistance for Organizational Governance to Educate African Children

III. Investigators

A. Principal Investigator

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B. Student Investigator

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IV. Objectives

A. Describe the objectives and/or goals of your research.

One of the top issues families face concerning their children is education—quality education on an individual, family, community and institutional level. A majority of the research conducted on the education of African American students’ compares their experiences to other racial and ethnic groups, perpetuating the myth of African intellectual inferiority; but not taking into consideration systems of learning, engagement and standards that mirror African American youth’s level of potential. Not to deny the clear challenges African American students there exists a gap in achievement, which alone deserves as much and even more attention than the “Black-White” or “Black-Asian” gap. It is evident that public schooling was not created, banned the education of, denied equal resources and still fails to properly educate children of African descent. Heeding the call for community engagement, by the discipline of African American Studies, I feel an obligation to help improve the quality of education for children of African descent. Based upon research and the examine of traditional and alternative approaches to learning known to African people, I seek to meet this goal by interviewing adults who have been involved in the process of educating African American children on a community, institutional and home-schooling level. The purpose of this research study is to understand the role traditional and alternative ways, aside from public schooling, contribute to educating African American students. I will use the results of this research to develop informed solutions and a DVD-based documentary.

V. Rationale and Significance

A. Describe the relevant prior experience and gaps in current knowledge.

With the literature about the educational experience of African American children much of the focus has been on the failures and/or short comings of African American children, compared to Whites and Asians in public schooling. Research such as the Bell Curve, Moynihan report, and Acting White theories, and Black-White has flooded the conversation on African American students potential and education experiences. Looking back at traditional systems, this research looks to fill in the gap surrounding alternative mode of learning and expose avenues from African American still close the excellence gap.

B. Describe any relevant preliminary data.

Ayi Kwei Armah, one of Africa's most well noted scholars, born in Ghana and academically trained at Achimota, Groton, Harvard and Columbia, in his memoir *The Eloquence of the Scribes*, writes as a child:

Some of the information my grandmother was so silent about I was able to piece together from evening story-telling sessions. Mostly, these began with riddles, conundrums, word and memory games, animal fables, especially the cycle of stories about the anti-hero Ansanse, prototype of the human being as pure, selfish ego. ... I grew up knowing I possessed a physical and spiritual connection to human beings who lived centuries and millennia ago...It is difficult to persuade African children growing up with such a background of family history that they come from a people without history¹³.

In comparing the educational reality of Armah to present day African American students in the United States, it was reported in July 2011 that an African American student is suspended in public school every 4 seconds, drops out of high school every 27 seconds, faces corporal punished every 57 seconds¹⁴, and is more likely to attend a racial segregated, lower performing and disadvantaged school. In looking at the data there is a clear gap between the African educational experiences that Armah received African American children receive systematically today. Where have these traditional forms of educational learning gone? How can we regain them to help more African American children?

C. Provide the scientific or scholarly background, rationale, and significance of the Human Research based on the existing literature and how will it add to existing knowledge.

Most of the structural educational research on the education of African American student's has focused on the standard public education system. With collapsing and failing system in areas such as Philadelphia, New York, Atlanta, and the District of Columbia, more research should be invested in connecting and organizing with traditional alternative systems. With traditional and alternative educational systems being so limited Human Research, through interviews with organizations, African centered

¹³ Ayi Kwei Armah,. *The Eloquence of the Scribes* (New York: Per Ankh, 2006), 23, 37.

¹⁴ "Every day in America: Black Children," last modified July 2011, <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/each-day-in-america-black-children.html>. Retrieved December 7 2011.

schools administrators and teachers on their contributions will add to the existing knowledge of ways to improve.

VI. Resources and Setting

A. Describe the number and qualifications of your staff, their experience in conducting research, their knowledge of the local study sites, culture, and society.

Staff - Amy O Yeboah, Student Investigator

Qualifications

Doctoral Student, Department of African American Studies

Experience in conducting research

Qualitative Methods, Fall 2007

Research Methods, Fall 2010

Ethnography, Spring 2011

Knowledge of the local study sites, culture, and society

Professional and Leadership Memberships:

Philadelphia Freedom Schools

Urban League of Philadelphia

Association of Study Classical African Civilizations

Mid-Atlantic Region

B. Describe the sites at which your research team will conduct the research. If applicable, describe:

The site at which the research will be conducted is Temple University, main campus. All interview data will be stored and analyzed on a password protected computer in my office, located in Gladfelter Hall, Room 813. As well as an external hard-drive, that will be locked in a file cabinet. Original transcripts will also be locked in the same file cabinet. Only the Student Investigator will have access.

VII. Prior Approvals

A. Describe any approvals that will be obtained prior to commencing the research. (e.g., school, external site, funding agency, laboratory, radiation safety, or biosafety approval.)

For teachers and African centered school admin, presently working, I will first:

1. Check if the institution is independent from the district's board of education
2. Contact the directors, manager or principals of the institution
3. Provide a description of the study and prior research
4. Request approval from a directors, manager or principals to conduct interviews

VIII. Study Design

A. Recruitment Methods

i. About how many subjects will you need

I will need a total of forty (40) participants distributed as listed below.

African Centered School Admin:	n = 6
Community/Home School Admin:	n = 6
Teachers:	n = 10
Students:	n = 8
Parents:	n = 10

Total:	40
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Currently I have access to ten (20) potential subjects.

ii. Describe when, where, and how potential subjects will be recruited.

During the summer, when school is not in session, and at the beginning of the fall semester potential subjects will be recruited. To provide a diverse sample, subjects will be recruited from Philadelphia, PA, Washington, DC and Atlanta, GA (South).

iii. Describe the source of subjects.

In the Philadelphia region; I have contacts with five (5) non-profit/ community organizations that serve African American families and three (3) African Centered Schools.

In the Atlanta region; I have contacts with two (2) African Centered Schools, one (1) home schooling institution, and the National Council of African Centered Schools.

In the Washington D.C. region; I have contacts with two (1) African Centered Schools, and one (1) community/ educational institution.

iv. Describe the methods that will be used to identify potential subjects.

Participants will be obtained through:

1. **Personal References and Literature Review:** Interviewer will contact subjects based on personal references and literature review finding, who fit the various respondents' categories.
2. **Snowballing:** Researcher will ask interviewees to give my contact information to their associates who fit my selection criteria. If any of those associates who fit the criteria contact me, I will invite them to participate in the study.

v. Describe materials that will be used to recruit subjects. Include copies of these documents with the application.

All subjects will be recruited verbally (by phone or face-to-face) or in writing by email. A sample email is below.

Greeting _____:

One of the top issues families face concerning their children is education—quality education on an individual, family, community and institutional level. A majority of the research done on the education of African American students' compares their experiences to other racial and ethnic groups, not taking into consideration systems of learning, engagement and standards that mirror African American youth's level of potential. Among African American youth there exists a gap in achievement, which alone deserves as much and even more attention than the "Black-White" or "Black-Asian" gap. It is evident that public schooling was not created, banned the education of, denied equal resources and still fails to properly educate children of African descent. Heeding the

call for community engagement, by the Department of African American Studies, I feel an obligation to help improve the quality of education for children of African descent. Based upon research and the examine of traditional and alternative approaches to learning known to African people, I seek to meet this goal by interviewing adults who have been involved in the process of educating African American children on a community, intuitional and home-schooling level. The purpose of this research study is to understand the role traditional and alternative ways, aside from public schooling, contribute to educating African American students.

Based upon (my research/ by recommendation by _____) I would like to schedule a time to sit down and interview you for this study, because of your expertise and knowledge on this subject. If you are interested, please reply by email or phone (215) 204 - 4503.

Thank you,

Amy Yeboah

Student Investigator

Department of African American Studies

Temple University

- vi. Describe any payments to subjects, including the amount, timing (at the end of the study or pro-rated for partial study participation), method (e.g., cash, check, gift card), and whether subjects will experience a delay in receiving the payment.**

No compensation will be provided to participants. I expect that most interviews will last about an hour; however, the length of the interview will depend upon how much you want to share.

B. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- i. Describe the criteria that define who will be included or excluded in your final study sample.*

Respondents who fit the above-listed criteria and want to participate will be eligible to participate in the study.

C. Study Timelines

The duration of a subject's participation in the study is three (3) months.

The duration anticipated to enroll all study subjects is five (5) months.

The estimated date for the investigators to complete this study including primary analyses is one year.

D. Study Procedures and Data Analysis

- i. Describe and explain the study design.*

I will conduct face-to-face interviews with participants at a location and time mutually agreeable to both parties. I will also conduct observations and take pictures of the African Centered Schools and homes of homeschooled families (classrooms, work desk/station, structure, culture, uniforms, and curriculum and / or teacher materials).

- ii. Describe the time that you will devote to conducting and completing the trial within the agreed trial period.*

I will devote three (3) months to conduct and complete the interviews, upon approval of the study by IRB.

- iii. Describe your process to ensure that all persons assisting with the trial are adequately informed about the protocol, the investigational product(s), and their trial-related duties and functions.*

Upon meeting with the subject:

The researcher will read the **RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM** (attached) aloud.

The research will ask the participant if they have any questions.

After the participant has had the opportunity to ask questions, they will then sign the **RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM**.

The interview will then begin the interview with based upon the **PROTOCOL INTERVIEW ITEMS** (attached). Please note that depending upon participants' responses; interviewers may have to create follow-up questions to gain clarity.

iv. Provide a description of all procedures being performed and when they are performed, including procedures being performed to monitor subjects for safety or minimize risks.

1. The following script will be read to potential subjects prior to their agreeing to be interviewed.

Hello, I am Amy Yeboah, a graduate student conducting research for my dissertation at Temple University. As an educator and African American Studies graduate student, it is my intention to examine the role that traditional and alternative ways, aside from public schooling, contribute to educating African American students. With that being said, I am contacting you because you have been mentioned as a key administrator/ community figure/ teacher, and/or participant involved in the education of African American students.

I would like to schedule a time to sit down and interview you for this study because of your expertise and knowledge on this subject. Would you be willing to be interviewed and audio and/or video recorded?

2. If the subject does not want to be interviewed:

Thank you for your time and have a nice day.

3. *If the subject agrees to be interviewed:*

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study. What date and time will you be available to meet?

Wait for response.

May we meet at a central location to conduct your interview?

Wait for a response.

Thank you (subject's name). I look forward to our meeting on (date) at (time).

v. ***Describe procedures taken to lessen the probability or magnitude of risks.***

I do not anticipate any risks, however I will avoid topic which may trigger an emotional response such as personal issues.

vi. ***Describe the source records that will be used to collect data about subjects. Attach all surveys, scripts, and data collection forms.***

The respondents will be asked the following questions:

Administration questions:

What lead you to be involved in the process of educating African American children? What is the nature of your work?

In your opinion—there are no right or wrong answers—is there an educational gap among African American students? What do you think contributes to this gap?

In what ways do you or the work you do contributes to closing the education gap among African American students?

What in your opinion are the most important factors to closing the education gap among African American students?

There is a great deal of debate about the role of traditional public schooling. Tell me your position on/beliefs about public schooling and the impact it has on African American students?

In looking at the traditional public schooling system, what do you believe is the role you play in educating African American students that is different?

What, in your opinion, would be needed to close the education gap, among African American students?

Is there anything I have not asked or that we have not talked about that you feel is important for me to know in achieving our purpose?

Additional parents questions:

When did you decide you did not want your child to attend a public school?

How did you go about getting your child (ren) enrolled in homeschooling/African Centered school?

What are the strengths and weakness of homeschooling/ African Centered school?

As a mother/ father what roles do you believe you play in the education process?

How did your mother impact your educational experience?

How did your father impact your educational experience?

Additional student (Homeschooled or African Centered School) questions:

Describe it is like being Homeschooled or attending an African Centered School?

How did your mother impact your educational experience?

(If attending an African Centered School) What do you like about your teachers?

(If attending an African Centered School) What do you like about your classroom?

vii. *Describe the data that will be collected, including long-term follow-up.*

Face-to-face interview data will be collected. If required I may conduct a single follow-up interview with participants in a three (3) month window, from their original interview.

E. Withdrawal of Subjects

i. *Describe anticipated circumstances under which subjects will be withdrawn from the research without their consent.*

Within two (2) months from the original interview, participants will have the opportunity to withdraw their interview from the research study. These stipulations will be indicated in the consent form.

ii. *Describe any procedures for orderly termination.*

Participants may terminate from the research study by email or phone correspondence to the Student Investigator. These stipulations will be indicated in the consent form.

iii. *Describe procedures that will be followed when subjects withdraw from the research, including partial withdrawal from procedures with continued data collection.*

Upon withdraw from the research study the participant's interview data will be destroyed within a week.

F. Privacy & Confidentiality

i. *Describe whether the study will use or disclose subjects' Protected Health Information (PHI).*

N/A

- ii. ***Describe the steps that will be taken to secure the data (e.g., training, authorization of access, password protection, encryption, physical controls, certificates of confidentiality, and separation of identifiers and data) during storage, use, and transmission.***

All interview data will be stored and analyzed on a password protected computer in my office, located in Gladfelter Hall, Room 813. As well as an external hard-drive, that will be locked in a file cabinet. Original transcripts will also be locked in the same file cabinet. Only the Student Investigator will have access, be responsible for and transmit the data. All file names will be identified by a location, position and number. For example, "Philadelphia – Teacher – 1."

Upon completion of all interviews during travel, recorded data will be transported by Amy Yeboah, Student Investigator, on a password protected laptop and then transferred to the password protected computer upon arrival to Temple University.

- iii. ***Describe the steps that will be taken to protect subjects' privacy interests. "Privacy interest" refers to a person's desire to place limits on whom they interact or whom they provide personal information.***

Should the subjects wish to remain anonymous, they will be allowed to do so. In the attached consent forms are different options they may choose from regarding the type of interview that can be conducted. They may wish to have their faces and names disassociated with the information given during their interviews. In cases such as these, the researcher will oblige the subject and will not disclose their identities.

Anonymity

Individuals who wish to remain anonymous will receive from the researcher a list of pseudonyms from which they will select a name that I will use for them throughout the interview and in the research report. I will ask them to avoid using their real names or other identifying information throughout their contact with us. Should I come to know a participant's name or if a participant accidentally provides this

information while being interviewed, I will not attach this information to interviews and will erase this information should it be recorded.

If participants choose to not use their voice, we will offer a voice over option to distort their voice. If they choose to not use their face we will just use an audio recorder.

- iv. Describe what steps you will take to make the subjects feel at ease with the research situation in terms of the questions being asked and the procedures being performed. "At ease" does not refer to physical discomfort, but the sense of intrusiveness a subject might experience in response to questions, examinations, and procedures.*

Participants will have the ability to select the time and place of the meeting to conduct the interview.

Within the consent form, participants in this study will also have the right to:

1. skip any question that they do not wish to answer;
2. quit the study;
3. change their mind about allowing the interviewer to keep their original interview.

IX. Risks to Subjects

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- A. List the reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, hazards, or inconveniences to the subjects related the subjects' participation in the research. Include the probability, magnitude, duration, and reversibility of the risks. Consider physical, psychological, social, legal, and economic risks.**

I do not anticipate any serious risks; however some topics or recounting a particular incident or event about their family and/or loved may elect some minimal discomfort.

B. If applicable, indicate which procedures may have risks to the subjects that are currently unforeseeable.

If participants happen to feel any discomfort, I will allow them to skip questions, come back to them later, or not at all, if you wish, take a break or even terminate their participation in the study.

C. If applicable, indicate which procedures may have risks to an embryo or fetus if the subject is or becomes pregnant.

Not applicable.

D. If applicable, describe risks to others who are not subjects.

Not applicable.

X. Potential Benefits to Subjects

A. Describe the potential benefits that individual subjects may experience from taking part in the research. Include the probability, magnitude, and duration of the potential benefits.

Individuals involved in educating African American children, families and student will benefit from the study because the research will provide information on way to close the education gap and create a resource of best- practices, systems, plans and alternative methods to create stronger pathways to educate African American children.

I will disseminate the results of this study to selected local organizations, selected secondary schools, and families. I will also make specific recommendations as to how various entities can use my results to improve the quality of education for the African American children.

B. Indicate if there is no direct benefit. Do not include benefits to society or others.

No subject will monetarily benefit from participating in this study. Any subject whose data we use in the documentary will be offered a copy of the DVD-based documentary when it is finished.

XI. Costs to Subjects

A. Describe any costs that subjects may be financially responsible for due to study participation.

No compensation will be provided to participants.

XII. Informed Consent

The consent process will take place at the time of the interview or email/mail prior at most a week before the interview.

The maximum waiting period available between informing the prospective subject and obtaining the consent will be a week.

Upon a follow-up interview, the consent form will be read again to ensure clarity and ongoing consent.

Attached you will find a copy of the consent form to be used.

Since the students will be minors under 18, informed consent forms will be obtained from both parents unless one parent is deceased, unknown, incompetent, not reasonably available, or only one parent has legal responsibility for the care and custody of the child.

XIII. Vulnerable Populations

The research study will involve minors at a minimal risk.

APPENDIX E:
INTERVIEW QUESTIONER

Introductory Script to Parents

As you know, the purpose of this interview is to understand your perspective on alternative ways, aside from public schooling, that contribute to closing the educating gap among African American students. We'll start by having you tell us a little something about yourself, how you came to decide to not to involve your children in public schooling, and from there, you can tell me whatever you think is relevant to my gaining an understanding on ways to better educate African American children. I may step in every now and then to ask a question, but for the most part, I want to let you tell your story on your own terms.

- *When did you decide you did not want your child to attend a public school?*
- *How did you go about getting your child (ren) homeschooled/ charter school?*
- *What are the strengths and weakness of homeschooling/ charter school?*
- *As a mother/ father what roles do you believe you play in the education process?*
- *How did your mother impact your educational experience?*
- *How did your father impact your educational experience?*

Introductory Script to Students

As you know, the purpose of this interview is to homeschooling/ attending an African Centered School. We'll start by having you tell us a little something about yourself, how you feel about your educational experience, and from there, you can tell me whatever you like about your education. I may come in every now and then to ask a question, but for the most part, I want to let you tell your story.

- *Describe what it is like being Homeschooled or attending an African Centered School?*
- *How did your mother impact your educational experience?*
- *(If attending an African Centered School) What do you like about your teachers?*

- *(If attending an African Centered School) What do you like about your classroom?*

Closing Script to All Participants

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. The information you have provided will help make a positive difference in the quality of education for African American students. Should you have any follow-up questions or comments, please do not hesitate to use my contact information on the consent form. Do you have any questions for me?

[Answer all questions.] *Thank you for your time.*