Addressing Racism

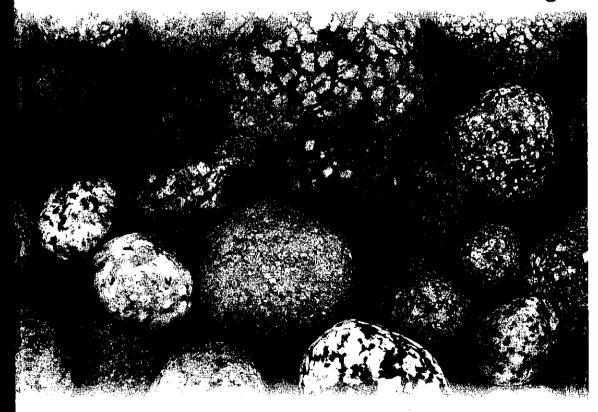## Facilitating Cultural Competence in Mental Health and Educational Settings

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CHAPTER 8

The Impact of Racialized Schools and Racist (Mis)Education on African American Students' Academic Identity

Kevin Cokley

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Having recently commemorated the 50th anniversary of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, scholars, educators, and pundits have offered numerous reflections on the meaning and significance of the decision, as well as critical commentary on whether the goal of racial integration in education has been met. The Brown decision declared that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal and unconstitutional. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the majority opinion, when he wrote that "segregation generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone" (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954).

With the declaration that separate was inherently unequal, it was assumed that desegregation and integration would result in African American students having equal opportunities under the law to receive the same quality of education as their White counterparts. It was also assumed that simply removing the legal sanctions of segregated education would instill African American students with the feelings and beliefs that they were not inferior to their White counterparts. In short, the dismantling of segregation was supposed to create feelings of equality

among African American students. Has desegregation been the panacea that many people thought it would be? In numerous discussions that I've had with African Americans of varying ages, I have heard the sentiment that desegregation has not been the solution for providing African Americans a quality education. In my opinion, while desegregation was ultimately the right thing to do, it also made African Americans more . susceptible to negative messages about their academic and intellectual abilities. In this way, desegregated schools facilitated the racialization of African American students. Racialization includes processes by which racial beliefs are "transformed into active instruments of categorization and judgment" (Jones, 1997, p. 358). Racialization gave meaning to what society dubbed as racial differences. Ironically, desegregated schools became highly racialized spaces where African American students have constantly dealt with perceptions about their so-called inadequacies and pathologies. Thus, schools wield a tremendous amount of influence in shaping how African Americans see themselves.

PURPOSE OF SCHOOLING

Outside of the family, schools are among the most important socializing institutions in our society. Beginning in kindergarten, on average we spend 7 hours a day, 5 days a week, 4 weeks a month, and 9 months a year, which amounts to over 16,000 hours of school. That does not include the 4 years of college (or in some cases 5 or 6 years of college), plus the years of graduate and professional school that many of us pursue. We spend a significant amount of time in classrooms, where we are taught the academic and presumably critical thinking skills that we will need to successfully negotiate the world around us. Any segment of our society that is struggling to acquire these academic skills becomes a matter of concern, particularly as we become an increasingly globalized society, where strong reading, writing, mathematical, and analytical skills are essential for the workplace. Going to school and getting an education is believed to serve the common interests of society in three areas: (1) fostering the development of skills in literacy, numeracy, and the humanities; (2) instilling citizenship skills and teaching democratic values; and (3) providing accurate historical overviews of the nation, continent, and the world and documenting the contributions of all ethnic groups (Lee, Lomotey, & Shujaa, 1990).

A strong argument can be made that schools have largely failed African Americans in all of the aforementioned areas. For example, while the gap in reading scores between African Americans and Whites decreased

slightly in the 1990s, data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that only 56% of African American eighth graders have basic reading skills compared to 85% of Whites; and only 13% of African Americans are reading proficient compared to 42% of Whites (E. Gordon, 2004). The gap in scores between African American and White students of every age group is greater in almost every NAEP subject area than it was in the late 1980s (D. Gordon, 2002). While schools broader purposes are to instill citizenship skills and to teach democratic values, it can be argued that they really serve to indoctrinate and produce obedient citizens who are socialized to support the power structure and not challenge the status quo. Macedo refers to this process as "education for domestication" (Chomsky, 2004, p. 5). This process is not only germane to African Americans. As Chomsky discusses, the refusal of a 12-year-old (presumably White) student to recite the Pledge of Allegiance because of what he believed to be hypocrisy was mind-boggling to teachers and administrators because of the deep level of indoctrination that takes place in schools (see Chomsky, 2004, for an excellent discussion of this point of view).

EDUCATION OR SCHOOLING?

Mwalimu Shujaa has observed that the community of African-descended people in the United States makes a distinction between education and schooling (Shujaa, 2003). Shujaa notes that while it is often assumed that getting an education is the by-product of going to school, people of African descent understand that schooling "can both serve as well as betray their interests" (Shujaa, 2003, p. 245). Shujaa defines schooling as "a process intended to perpetuate and maintain the society's existing power relations and the institutional structures that support those arrangements" while defining education as a "means of providing for the intergenerational transmission of values, beliefs, traditions, customs, rituals, and sensibilities along with the knowledge of why these things must be sustained." Schooling thus simply becomes education for domestication. Shujaa goes on to say that "Through education we learn how to determine what is in our interests, distinguish our interests from those of others, and recognize when our interests are consistent and inconsistent with those of others" (p. 246). If African American students can go through years of schooling without learning more about who they are and how they are going to use the training and knowledge they received to make life better for other African Americans, the socializing functions of a non-emancipatory and hegemonic schooling (or training as Carter G. Woodson, 1933, called it) have been achieved. However, predictably the media,

scholars, and educators have not focused on this issue as an educational crisis. Instead, the most pressing educational issue is framed as closing the racial achievement gap.

CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Fifty years after the *Brown* decision, while we commemorate desegregating schools, the most talked about educational issue in educational and political circles is undoubtedly closing the achievement gap. We have all heard about it. By the time African American and Hispanic/Latino students get to the 12th grade, they can only do math and read as well as the average White eighth grader (E. Gordon, 2004). The average high school graduation rate for African Americans and Latino students hovers around 50 to 55%, while for White students the rate is around 75 to 80% (E. Gordon, 2004). There are persistent and intractable differences in standardized test scores and practically every academic indicator. In their controversial book *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning*, Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom (2003) write that there is something about the lives of Black children that limits their intellectual development. Abigail Thernstrom said in the Boston Globe that the average Black student entering college has the skills of an eighth grader (A. Thernstrom, 2004).

No other racial or ethnic group has received as much attention about its educational struggles as African Americans. In his 1897 essay "Strivings of the Negro People," W. E. B. Dubois asked a simple but provocative question "How does it feel to be a problem?" He says:

> Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, how does it feel to be a problem? They say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, how does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word. (Dubois, 1904)

The achievement gap has become a code word for dealing with the problematic African American student, and by extension, Black culture. Every African American student spends most of her or his academic life being problematized if they struggle academically, or being exceptionalized if they experience academic success, because academic success is not

intrinsic to Black culture. How does it feel to be a problem? How must it feel knowing that every time you walk into a classroom, you are unconsciously (and sometimes consciously) consigned to a status of academic and intellectual inferiority? If we again consider that we spend over 16,000 hours in the classroom by the age of 18, how strong and resilient must an African American student be to constantly combat and resist the internalization of these racist messages? I've struggled with these messages myself, carrying with me the burden of my socially ascribed race, always feeling as though my academic performance as a student, or my intellectual output as a scholar, made some social and political statement about the capabilities of all African Americans.

Forty years after the *Brown* decision, the journalist Ellis Cose (1994) wrote that researchers often assume that cultural messages about Black inferiority have no impact on intellectual development because there is no scientific way to quantify their effects. What if cultural messages about Black inferiority do impact intellectual development? Cose asks "How can we control for the effects of environment when being identifiably Black in America automatically puts one in a different environment than Whites?"

Frankly, this is a question that most psychologists never address in our research methods training. When I teach students about the challenges of conducting multiethnic and multicultural research, I often discuss the problems of conducting comparative research. When comparing any two ethnic groups on a particular dependent variable, even if they have been matched on all seemingly relevant variables such as education, income, socioeconomic status, professional status, age, geographical location, and so on, you can never fully control for the effects of culture, race, and racism (see Azibo, 1988; Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; and S. Sue, 1999, for excellent discussions on the challenges of conducting ethnic research).

As we saw a few years ago in Diane Sawyers' Primetime special (1993) on race and discrimination involving two men—one African American and one White—with similar educational backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and credentials, there were profound differences in their experiences with trying to buy a car, trying to rent an apartment, trying to shop in a department store, and trying to get a job. In a number of instances, the African American man was quoted a higher price for the car than his White male counterpart; was told that there were no available apartments for rent while his White male counterpart was offered an apartment immediately afterward; was followed around in a department store while his White male counterpart was not; and was turned down for a job while his White male counterpart, with the exact same credentials, was offered the job. What effects do these racist microaggressions have on the psy-

chology of African Americans? What do you tell an African American student who, as I recently encountered, expressed concerns about her identifiably "ethnic" name because a recent study (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004) showed that applicants with ethnic sounding names were less likely to get a job interview than applicants with nonethnic sounding names? In the educational realm, how do we measure racist microaggressions against African American students, and how do we assess the accumulation of their effects on the psychology of African American students?

HIGH SELF-ESTEEM OR INFERIORITY COMPLEX?

I have argued, and research has shown (Cokley, 2002, 2003; Cokley, Komarraju, King, Cunningham, & Muhammad, 2003; van Laar, 2000) that the motivation and academic self-concept of African American students differs in important ways from European American students. Returning to Chief Justice Earl Warren's statement that "segregation generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone," an important psychological question is "do African American students suffer from an inferiority complex?" Paradoxically, this is both an easy and complicated question to answer.

On the one hand, research would suggest that the answer is no (Cokley, 2002; van Laar, 2000). If self-esteem is an indicator of an inferiority complex, most empirical studies involving African Americans and European Americans show that African Americans are usually equal or higher in self-esteem, despite their relatively lower academic performance. Grade point average tends to not be related to the self-esteem of most African American students, contrary to the findings among many European American students. This finding has been supported by several researchers (e.g., Cokley, 2003; Graham, 1994; van Laar, 2000). In a further clarification of the meaning of self-esteem among African Americans, Hughes and Demo (1989) state that African Americans do not lack in self-esteem because of relationships with family, friends, and community. They argued that Black self-esteem is insulated from racial inequality because of this system of relationships; however, they argue that while high in Black self-esteem, Blacks' sense of personal self-efficacy is compromised because of experiences in racial inequality. From this perspective, it can be argued that African American students do not suffer from an inferiority complex.

On the other hand, what if the measurement of self-esteem is not sensitive enough to detect the presence of a deep-seated, unconscious inferiority complex? What if the high self-esteem of most African American

students comes from reinforcement in nonacademic domains? What if the cultural messages of Black intellectual inferiority were internalized on an unconscious level and resulted in African American students feeling little confidence in their ability to do math, statistics, or science? What would this look like? Could years of cultural messages of Black intellectual inferiority result in African American graduate students avoiding empirical research, especially quantitative research? Could internalization of negative cultural messages, combined with other factors (Allen, 1992; Nettles, 1988), impact African American students' majors and career choices?

Additionally, the way many African American students reflexively dismiss all standardized tests is very instructive here. Consider how guarded African American students are when they talk about their SAT scores, GRE scores, MCAT scores, LSAT scores, or IQ scores. In many instances, they become uncomfortable, as if that score reveals some negative hidden secret about their intelligence and ability and that, ultimately, they are impostors undeserving of the education they are receiving. Because of standardized test scores, African American students often have to defend their right to even be in school and receive an education.

STEREOTYPE THREAT

The Stanford social psychologist Claude Steele has revealed a very interesting psychological phenomenon about the performance of African American students on standardized tests (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). While some believe that so-called racial differences in test performance suggests innate, genetic differences in intelligence and ability (Jensen, 1973; Rushton, 1997), Claude Steele has conducted a series of experiments that show that there is another, more compelling reason for the differences. He has identified a phenomenon, which he calls stereotype threat, where individuals of a certain group will underperform on these tests relative to their abilities because of their fear of confirming the stereotype. In other words, students who belong to groups that are stereotyped are likely to perform less well in situations such as standardized tests in which they feel they are being evaluated through the lens of that stereotype. Although this phenomenon is more prevalent with ethnic minorities and women, it can occur with any individual who is in a group that is being stereotyped. In Steele's experiments, he took a group of African American students and White students at Stanford, and matched them on objective academic criteria. He took students who were equally prepared and had equal skills. He then had one group of high achieving African American and White students take a very challenging

literature section of the GRE. When the students were told that the test measured verbal ability, African American students did not do as well as White students. He then took another group of high achieving African American and White students and gave them the same challenging literature section of the GRE. This time, the students were told that the tests do NOT measure verbal ability. Instead, they were told that the test is something used to study problem solving in the laboratory and is not diagnostic of ability. This time there were no significant differences in the students' scores. These findings have been found in numerous experiments under different conditions. You see the same phenomenon with women and math. The point is that we have scientific evidence that different performances on standardized tests often times can be explained by social psychological processes, in this case stereotype threat, rather than some notion of intellectual inferiority. This type of research needs to be shared with African American students to empower them and to help them not internalize notions that they are intellectually inferior.

BELIEFS ABOUT BLACK INTELLIGENCE

On the matter of intelligence, given the social stigma attached to blatant racists, very few credible scholars and educators would publicly state that people of African descent are genetically less intelligent. In a survey of over 1000 IQ experts, Snyderman and Rothman (1988) found that the majority of experts on intelligence and intelligence testing agree that genetic inheritance accounts for part of the Black-White differences in IQ. In a recently published article, Rushton and Jensen (2005) argue that the IQ difference between Blacks and Whites has not narrowed, and that the difference is due to differences in brain size more than stereotype threat and racism. However, with the exception of scholars such as Arthur Jensen and Linda Gottfredson, most experts privately hold beliefs about racial differences in IQ and would never share them publicly (Gottfredson, 1994).

We have to be honest that despite the good intentions and the commitment to social justice that many liberal-minded scholars and educators share, these same scholars and educators teaching African American students (and other students of color) may be privately critical of what Gottfredson (1994) calls an "egalitarian fiction," or the belief that racial-ethnic groups never differ in average developed intelligence. Gottfredson, a very prominent and highly cited researcher on intelligence, fairness in testing and racial inequality, argues that enforcing an egalitarian fiction hurts Blacks by producing negative racial stereotypes that result from a denial of the obvious role of intelligence in important insti-

tutions such as the public schools, higher education, and high-level executive work. Gottfredson boldly stands by her assertions in the name of science that is not beholden to sociopolitical agendas. However, while Gottfredson has no angst about her beliefs, in the deep recesses of some very progressive minds, individuals privately struggle with notions of racial differences in academic ability. To entertain or acknowledge this, even privately to themselves, would seriously damage their social justice self-concept and potentially cause them to decompensate into an existential crisis of identity (D. W. Sue, 2003). Gottfredson further argues that this intellectual form of political correctness (my words, not hers) has resulted in self-censorship and a refusal to make connections between subspecialties (e.g., intelligence research and employee productivity). Although Gottfredson and others of her ilk are quite open about their beliefs about race and intelligence, others would never publicly share these beliefs. An interesting research study would be to identify educators who privately share these beliefs and examine how they approach teaching and mentoring African American students. Relatedly, it would also be interesting to see how African American students perceive and experience these educators.

NOTIONS OF CULTURAL DEFICIENCY

Given the politically charged and publicly unacceptable view of racial differences in intelligence, a more socially acceptable explanation that has received widespread support is the cultural deficiency explanation. In short, the cultural deficiency explanation has taken on several permutations. The most popular manifestation of this line of thinking can be most attributed to Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu (1986), who argued that the burden of acting White and an oppositional culture and collective identity were largely responsible for the differences in school performance between African American students and White students. This idea has resurfaced in McWhorter's (2000) book *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America,* which argues that an ethos of anti-intellectualism permeates African American culture. Most recently, the cultural deficiency explanation has been voiced by Bill Cosby, who criticizes poor parenting, unwed mothers, men engaged in criminal activities and impregnating women, misplaced priorities, poor English, and illiterate millionaire athletes for betraying the legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Arguably, the scholar who has wielded the most influence in this arena is John Ogbu.

Despite his earnest attempt to challenge blaming the victim and culture of poverty deficit theories, some would argue that nonetheless

Ogbu's analysis is rooted in a blaming the victim and deficit model of African American culture. To be fair to Ogbu, his work has not always been fairly critiqued. Foley (2004) points out that Ogbu's work has often been used and abused by conservatives and liberals to promote their own sociopolitical agendas. For example, Foley says that it is not accurate to characterize Ogbu as a deficit thinker because Ogbu believes that the dysfunctional aspects of African American culture are adaptations to the destructive legacy of racial oppression and not inherent cultural traits. Foley's attempt to rehabilitate and rescue this underlying premise of Ogbu's work is notable. However, let us not be misguided. Deficit theories assume that the people in question have problems to be solved, and they draw correlations between the levels of educational achievement and the amount of motivation of the people and their culture (Claveria & Alonso, 2003). In short, deficit theories don't discriminate between notions of dysfunctional adaptations or lack of inherent cultural traits. Whether mutable or immutable, the fundamental belief is that there is a deficiency in African American culture. Lundy (2003) argues that the belief that Black culture needs to be altered is essentially a culture-of-poverty argument. Simply put, a rose called by any other name is still a rose.

In defending his work from charges of blaming the victim, Ogbu stated that his work is not politically correct (Burdman, 2003). By that, presumably, he meant that any analysis that locates the cause of African American students' underachievement in (a) the attitudes and behaviors of the students themselves and (b) the lack of appropriate guidance and support from their parents will automatically be viewed as blaming the victim. Ogbu argued that by virtue of his anthropological training, he does not think that any culture or language is superior to any other culture or language. Therefore, the language that is spoken in the homes of many Black students, Ebonics, was not viewed by Ogbu as inferior. However, Ogbu, like many African Americans, believed that to be successful and accomplish certain goals in this country means that one has to adopt the norms of White culture. Ogbu believed that Blacks could instrumentally adopt the norms of White culture without losing their Black identity. To the extent that Black students do not adopt the norms of White culture, Ogbu believed that Black students are contributors and participants in their academic shortcomings.

A comprehensive critique of Ogbu, McWhorter, and Cosby that provides an analysis of the problematic nature of their assertions is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that all three seem to lack a very sophisticated understanding of how the society that we live in and the schools that we are educated in fail, both literally and figuratively, African American students. I mention them only to provide the psychological and

sociocultural milieu that faces African American students, where analyses for their educational underachievement fall solely and squarely on their shoulders, with no mention of how culturally irrelevant curricula and culturally insensitive teachers combine to negatively impact the intrinsic motivation and academic identity of African American students.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS OF THE EFFECTS OF RACISM

It is not always easy to document the effects of racism at the individual or institutional level because of the attributional ambiguity often surrounding each critical incident. For example, consider the importance of mentoring relationships. In my own graduate experience, I can recall that several doctoral students in my cohort had developed close relationships with faculty. These close relationships resulted in informal research teams, which resulted in numerous opportunities for these students to make presentations at conferences and publish in journals. As I observed these wonderful opportunities, there was one consistent observation that I made: The majority of the students were White, and all of the faculty were White. As much as I tried to deny it, I could not help but become envious of the opportunities of my White classmates and other fellow students as I reflected on my perceived lack of similar opportunities. Sadly, years after this observation, I continue to have conversations with African American students who report similar experiences.

When certain students are getting opportunities to publish or present with faculty, some African American students may see this as an example of a racialized environment that caters to students from certain racial or ethnic backgrounds and is unsupportive of the career development of African American students. Not being asked to be a part of research opportunities can stigmatize African American students by activating feelings of racial self-doubt. As an African American student once told me, she was never asked to join any research team, and she wondered if it had anything to do with doubts about her ability as a Black woman. This was one of several experiences that contributed to her not pursuing a research-oriented career in academia.

Although incidents such as these happen frequently, it is difficult and perhaps inappropriate to label them racism proper. Because of the attributional ambiguity of situations involving individuals of different races, African American students never really know why they aren't exposed to certain opportunities, or why faculty may not mentor them as actively and enthusiastically as non-African American students. They suspect it may be racism, but short of something demonstrably racist they can never be 100% certain. This constant state of not knowing can eventually

take its toll on African American students, sapping their enthusiasm and motivation for the educational process. Given the parameters of racism as defined by scholars such as Jones (1997), these incidents may not meet the definitions of racism per se. However, they represent cases of the benign neglect of African American students, which in some ways is equally as detrimental to African American students because it has the psychological effect of causing African American students to passively accept their treatment and to not expect the level of mentoring that their peers are receiving.

To complicate matters even more, subtle racial dynamics in interracial advising or mentoring relationships can undermine or compromise the ability of professors to provide critical feedback that could facilitate an African American students' self-efficacy in areas such as research. As Cohen, Steele, and Ross (1999) point out, the ability to provide scholastic feedback that is potentially threatening to ethnic minority students becomes a dilemma given the negative stereotypes that exist about certain racial minority groups' intellectual capabilities. These situations also create an attributional ambiguity whereby students do not know whether the lack of invitations to be a part of research teams and the critical feedback from a mentor are because of academic shortcomings or racial bias.

In an experimental study, Cohen et al. (1999) compared the responses of Black and White students to critical feedback about a writing task. Students were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: (1) unbuffered criticism, where a reviewer provided a general critique of the student's performance using statements such as "your letter was vague and rambling—long on adjectives and short on specific illustrations"; (2) wise criticism, where the aforementioned general critique was prefaced by comments such as "the comments I provide are quite critical but I hope helpful . . . based on what I've read in your letter, [I think] you are capable of meeting the higher standard I mentioned"; and (3) positive buffer, where the aforementioned general critique was prefaced by such comments as "Overall, nice job. . . . You have some interesting ideas . . . and make some good points. . . . I've provided some specific feedback and suggested areas that could be improved." Consistent with the hypotheses, results indicated that Black students receiving unbuffered criticism rated the reviewer more biased than White students. Also consistent with the hypotheses, when the critical feedback was accompanied by the combination of high standards and assurance, Black students rated the reviewer as less biased than did the White students. There was not a significant difference in the positive buffer condition. This study underscores the challenges White mentors face when providing critical feedback to African

it is placed in a context of high standards and the mentor's belief that the student has the capacity to reach them. It can easily be seen how critical feedback can be perceived by African American students as a racist slight. This contributes to the difficulty for African American students of knowing when feedback is racially motivated versus when it is not.

In a book examining personal accounts of racialized and racist experiences of graduate students and faculty, Milner (2004) describes the graduate school experiences of African American students as often unsupportive, alienating, and tense. He recounts a conversation with an African American doctoral student who was unhappy in the program she had only been enrolled in for a few weeks. Milner describes her as fighting back tears while her voice was cracking in describing the emotional strain she was under in the program. Milner goes on to say that this was not the first time an African American student had expressed these sorts of feelings to him.

(MIS)EDUCATION: THE GREATEST THREAT TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY?

The aforementioned issues of schooling, the achievement gap, internalizing racist notions of Black intellectual inferiority, and critical racialized or racist incidents all represent interlocking themes that represent the greatest educational challenges facing African American students. Each theme is a necessary component to understand the educational challenges facing African American students, but no theme can stand on its own as the most important theme. For example, the urgency felt by educators and politicians to close the achievement gap can be seen in President Bush's *No Child Left Behind* (2001) initiative. Closing the achievement gap only demonstrates that African American students have achieved the same academic skills as their European American (and Asian American) counterparts. While racialized and racist incidents are deplorable and deserve our condemnation, they also serve to remind African American students that White supremacy is still alive and, ironically, to facilitate a level of Black consciousness and community that might not exist otherwise. These themes all combine to result in the *miseducation* of African American students. The product of miseducation for African Americans includes individuals (a) who are driven by materialism, (b) who do not question the hypocrisy of America's tenets, (c) who blindly embrace rugged individualism, (d) who believe that racism is no longer a problem for African Americans, (e) who do not have strong feelings of pride and belongingness toward people of African descent, (f) who feel no sense of responsibility for other African Americans, and (g) whose hopes and

ago when Carter G. Woodson said, "The large majority of the Negroes who have put on the finishing touches of our best colleges are all but worthless in the development of their people" (Woodson, 1933, p. 2).

I'm arguing that the most important educational crisis that faces African Americans is combating years of miseducation that end up producing individuals who are strangers to the communities from which they come. Black folks (and I suspect other folks as well) have always been concerned about the elitism and the social distance that education often creates between the highly educated and the uneducated or undereducated. As I was pursuing my education, my mother would always remind me to not forget where I came from. This was her attempt, I believe, to keep me humble and connected to my family and modest upbringing. I can fully appreciate now the importance of her message. While it may be a false dichotomy, the reality is that the pursuit of higher education often creates tensions with those who we have left behind. Chomsky (2004) argues that "once you are well educated, you have already been socialized in ways that support the power structure, which, in turn, rewards you immensely" (p. 16). If, on being "educated," we forget about the struggle of our people, or we develop a rugged individualistic philosophy that minimizes the impact of external factors on the outcome of people, the observation by Chomsky and the concerns of the less educated in our communities are valid. It is this tension that I think has not garnered enough intellectual scrutiny. I believe that there is, and always has been, a fundamental concern among African Americans that the pursuit of education not result in an existential disconnection from our families, from our communities, and from our people. Until we truly understand this dynamic, we will never understand the psychology of African American students or the Black communities that many of them come from.

The quintessential question then becomes what should be the purpose of education for African Americans, if not all people? Is the current educational experience designed to produce the types of individuals that Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois warned us about? Woodson's commentary that on the completion of their education Negroes are equipped to begin the life of an Americanized or Europeanized White man is as relevant in 2005 as it was in 1933.

STRATEGIES TO COMBAT EFFECTS OF A RACIALIZED ENVIRONMENT AND RACIST (MIS)EDUCATION

Given this survey of issues that overtly and covertly impacts the intrinsic motivation of African American students, there are several strategies that educators can use to increase their awareness of the impact of a racialized

and racist miseducation on African American students and to help eradicate the effects of these environments. I believe that in many instances faculty, particularly White faculty, are simply unaware of how challenging and culturally incongruent educational environments can be for African American students. Thus, for faculty who are genuinely concerned about the educational experiences and academic achievement of African American students, I recommend that faculty read books that give voice to African American students who feel inhibited in expressing their experiential and cultural reality. Two good books to read are *Journey to the PhD: How to Navigate the Process as African Americans* (Green & Scott, 2004) and *A Long Way to Go: Conversations about Race by African American Faculty and Graduate Students* (Cleveland, 2004). For example, it is very powerful to read the personal narrative of one young African American female scholar who talked about the competing messages she received from her home and community environment versus her school environment, where collective communalism was fostered at home while a staunch individualistic competition was fostered in her school environment (Watts, 2004). Reading these types of books will raise the awareness of faculty who often lack awareness of how they unwittingly may contribute to an environment that is not culturally affirming or worse, hostile to African American students.

A second and related strategy for faculty is to critically reevaluate the entire teaching, research training, and mentoring environment as it relates to African American students. Does the curriculum specifically address issues pertaining to African Americans? Are contributions of African American scholars part of the required reading for classes? Are classes taught in ways that make the content meaningful and relevant to the lives of African Americans?

In terms of research training, I recommend that faculty reach out to African American students to give them opportunities to be involved in research. If professors have research teams, there should be a concerted effort to invite African American students to join these teams. Similarly, if professor are working on research projects, African American students should be asked if they would be interested in working on these projects. Professors underestimate the impact simple acts such as these have on the self-efficacy of African American students. I recall an occasion where I asked several African American students for feedback on a manuscript that I was preparing. I was met with complete surprise by their responses because they were flattered that I, a tenured professor, believed that they could provide me valuable feedback. While this was not an example of a collaborative research effort per se, it underscores the importance of communicating a belief in an African American student's ability to contribute, even in a small way, to a professor's scholarly activities

Also, faculty (if they haven't already done so), could develop multicultural research interests and expertise that would be appealing to African American students. Through my conversations and experiences with African American students I have come to realize that an important factor that prohibits their pursuit of research experience is not being interested in or feeling connected to the research interests of faculty. While I am not suggesting that faculty should change their entire research programs to involve African American students, I am suggesting that some multicultural interests, and advertising these interests, will likely be more attractive for many African American students.

Finally, in response to Cohen, Steele, and Ross's (1999) research regarding the dilemma of cross-racial mentoring, faculty mentors should have expectations for African American students and communicate a belief in the ability of African American students to reach the high standards they have set for them. It is incumbent on educators to be knowledgeable about and sensitive to the history of racist beliefs about Black intellectual inferiority and to unequivocally express a belief in the intellectual capabilities of African American students. African American students, like all students, will not shun academically challenging work when an environment of high expectations has been created that provides the tools necessary for them to be successful.

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