

Educational Lynching: Critical Race Theory and the Suspension of Black Boys

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SECTION ONE

Introduction

An abundance of research demonstrates that Black male students are disproportionately suspended from schools nationwide compared to White male students (Mosca & Hollister, 2004; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Skiba, 2000). Nationwide, the suspension rate for Black males is 29%, almost three times the rate of White males whose rate is at 10%, according to the UCLA Civil Rights Project (2010). Black males are 17%, less than 1/5 of the national student population but represent 36%, over 1/3 of all suspensions in 2009. According to the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), the disproportionate suspension ratio between Black and White students, also commonly called the discipline gap, is even worse. Black students make up a little over one third (36%) of the student body but account for over two thirds (70%) of all suspensions in 2009-2010. While one out of every 100 White students were suspended, seven out of every 100 Black students were suspended in Oakland in 2007. From another view: Black students accounted for 613 out of 875 suspensions in Oakland during 2007 school year (Fatt, 2009). It is also evident that being sent home doesn't help, but harms students academically (Cartledge, G., Tillman, L. C., & Johnson, C. T. 2001; Christle, C., Nelson, C. M., & Jolivette, K. 2004), and that suspensions don't make schools safer (Ashford, 2000; Breunlin, 2002). The lopsided suspension rate for Black students is not only ineffective and harmful, but it may also be unlawful discrimination on the basis of race. The rate of suspension has become a critical issue for Black boys as it is a predictor of high academic failure and increased risk for going to prison later in life (Foster 1986; Morrison, & D'Incau, 1997; Noguera, 2003).

At Barack Obama Academy, an alternative school in OUSD, suspensions have disproportionately affected Black boys systemically. With an all Black and Latino student body, 85% and 15% respectively, 75% of the Black students are male. As an alternative school, the primary criteria for being admitted to the school, was having been previously suspended or recommended for expulsion. Since OUSD is only 36% Black students and 17% Black male students, it is already a disproportionately biased segregation of students, creating a discriminatory pattern.

Looking at this trend through the lens of critical race theory (CRT), this paper examines how Black students are disproportionately suspended in schools as a result of structural racism, particularly through the legal system and how it reflects how Black male students are treated in schools. Divided into three parts, first I will examine this problem of disproportionate suspension of Black boys. Then, borrowing from supporting theories and frameworks, I will explain why this is happening to Black boys, highlighting what is happening locally in OUSD. In section two I delve deeper into an analysis of the problem, focusing on 3 aspects of CRT in education and how they show up in the classroom. Finally, in section three, I propose a solution that addresses the problem from an organizational leadership approach and a classroom pedagogy approach.

Examining The Problem

Most schools in America have exclusion policies with suspension usually designated as a last resort, while relying on interventions first (Black, 1999; Henault, 2001). Interventions include conferences between the administrator; the teacher, the student and their family are standard steps before suspension. With student behavior as the primary focus, suspension policies aim to discourage behavior that goes against

school rules. Because state, district and school guidelines for suspension are not exact, teachers and administrators are tasked with determining which behaviors are serious enough to warrant referral and suspension to address those behaviors (Bowditch, 1993). School safety is most frequently cited as the most urgent priority in schools, and a primary justification for the use of suspension (Noguera, 2003). However, suspension rates for serious offenses that pose safety issues such as fighting, bringing a weapon, and destruction of school property are relatively small for Black and White males indicating suspension is not primarily used for school safety (McAndrews, 2001). Recent research by Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera (2010), found that Black students tend to be suspended for subjective offenses (disruption, defiance, disrespect, threat, excessive noise) while White students are primarily suspended for more objective, observable offenses (smoking, vandalism, cutting class). While some may argue that this finding simply reveals that Black males exhibit a different set of behaviors than White males, research on referrals show that White students are referred less frequently for the same behaviors exhibited by Black students (Monroe, 2005). The disparity is not just in the rate, but the frequency of referral and suspension of Black males over White males for the same behavior. This data adds to a body of evidence revealing more of a bias against Black males, rather than a trend rooted solely in behavior patterns of Black male students.

Certainly the argument could be made that Black male students' can and should bear responsibility for some of the factors that contribute to the rate of Black male suspension, especially their behavior. However, this paper illuminates that the disproportionality of Black male suspension rates, compared to White male suspension rates, even when controlled for the same offenses, reveals a much broader problem in

schools that cannot be explained solely by the behavior of Black boys but more so the behavior of teachers and administrators. Thus, it is further logical that any intervention to eliminate the disproportional suspension of Black males in schools be aimed primarily at the school system and its' adults, not Black male students. CRT in education as well as supporting theories, provide evidence supporting the claim that this problem does not originate with Black males but stems from a larger system failure to protect the rights of Black males. This failure to protect, results in harm to Black male students in the form of exclusion from school through suspension.

Supporting Theories

Bowles and Gintis (1976) frame how schools reproduce societal dynamics, particularly employment and workforce dynamics. Their contention is that schools implicitly are structured to prepare students for the roles they will likely inherit as adults. Their future is dim in the areas of employment, higher education, health, and safety, upon reaching adulthood. Compared to White males, Black males earn college degrees at half the rate. Black males have twice the unemployment rate, 10 times the incarceration rate, and 16 times the murder rate of White males (Kaiser, 2006). The concept of preparation for adult roles translates into a discouraging schooling process for Black boys. Faced with these indicators and the inherent social inequality they signal, Black boys can easily disengage from school, and thus be perceived as not caring about education. This becomes a cyclical process with Black boys perceiving most adults and teachers as not caring about them (Noguera, 2003). The impact and effect of this phenomenon nationwide reflects what Bowles and Gintis (1979) call 'correspondence theory', connecting educational practice (low interest/engagement in school and high suspension

rates of Black males) with social inequality (low employment opportunity and high incarceration and murder rates of Black males).

Health, education and employment gaps in society are environmental factors in Black boys lives that contribute to the racial achievement gap (better framed as the opportunity gap) and the racial suspension gap in schools. The racial achievement gap, where White students perform and graduate at a much higher rate than Black students (McKinsey, 2009), is one of the strongest indicators that there is an institutional bias against Black boys that is racial. The McKinsey report shows that White students fare better than Black students even when the data is controlled for income. In other words, rich Black students still lag behind their poorer White counterparts, indicating that race is a problem.

The negative long-term effect of the racial achievement and discipline gap has a real economic cost to the country. The lack of educational attainment and unrealized wage earning potential for Black boys costs the country billions of dollars in lost GDP (McKinsey, 2009). The lack of educational attainment and the increased criminalization of Black students produce dismally low graduation rates. Large numbers of these students are ill prepared for the emerging workforce in California. This is troubling for Black male students who are not ready academically for the workforce and if it is not reversed, it will be disastrous for the future of the State economy (McKinsey, 2009).

Suspension of Black male students in schools can be viewed as an indicator of a larger social dynamic that is mirrored by gross negative outcomes for Black males in society. The high rate of Black male gun violence and incarceration of Black males contributes to a pervasive perception that Black males are dangerous and bad (Foster,

1986). Black boys internalize this image in schools as well, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy (Rhem, 1999). This Black male trajectory is also characterized as the ‘school to prison pipeline’ (Nicholson-Crotty, 2009). This is a process where Black males, facing discriminatory treatment, are inordinately criminalized in schools, being referred for arrest and criminal charges for behavior that outside of school, would not warrant an arrest (Noguera, 2003). The result is the social reproduction process in schools, preparing and routing Black males for prison, more so than for college or the workforce. These theories give context to disproportionate suspension rates of Black males in schools and suggest how Black males are pushed and pulled into the trap of failure in schools and society. CRT in education adds an additional frame to view the problem, highlighting the education system and the legal system as the primary culprit for continued discrimination of Black males in schools.

CRT In Education

CRT is best described by Bonilla-Silva (2001), who explains that white privilege and institutional racism (the foundation for discrimination against Blacks in schools) in this country has transformed from an overt and explicit process to a very subversive and subtle, yet fundamentally intact process. Today, this subtle process of institutional racism in education is very complex and dynamic, making it difficult to detect. School suspension policies today would never explicitly determine a separate set of discipline guidelines for students according to race or gender. This would be considered race or gender based discrimination and is explicitly illegal. However, according to Bonilla-Silva, the very notion of a “color blind” system of justice and legal standards actually help to keep a system of White racial domination and discrimination in place by denying

that racial discrimination exists (in schools).

Ladson-Billings (1998) expands the concept of CRT, which puts structural racism at the center of the American legal system, into a critical race theory in education. This is supported by Bonilla-Silvas claim that the U.S. racial structure began as one that openly purported white supremacy and domination. Ladson-Billings looks specifically at the institution of public education and its racist beginnings. While these institutions have gone through considerable change and adaptation through the laws, the notion of white supremacy and domination has never been fundamentally reversed or eliminated in effect and outcome. The persistent disparities in education by race are indicators that the *impact* of racist policies and practices continue, even if the *intent* appears to have changed.

Naysayers would claim that race has nothing to do with it and suggest that the parents of these Black males are to blame, not realizing that these very same parents and their parents are also the victims of overt discrimination, segregation and racist educational experiences in the 1950's and 1960's. This type of rationale is like depriving a tree of proper water and sunlight and later blaming the tree for bearing so little fruit. Considering the racial suspension gap in schools from this premise of historical institutional racism (i.e. formal segregation and current inequity), it reflects that something is still wrong with how Black students are being treated on the basis of race in the schools as well as the broader society.

Local Institutional Issue

At Barack Obama Academy, an alternative school, the environmental context of poverty and race and the impact of racism are evident. The school is located in a zip code in Oakland, which carries one of the highest rates of homicide as well as the worst

employment rates for Black males in the County of Alameda (Brown, 2006). These negative indicators and poor outcomes are reflected nationally in similar urban areas that are densely populated with Black males. Black boys at BOA, recognizing that their educational opportunities are more limited than the vast majority of other Black boys in the City, find their futures systematically limited. This trend validates that this problem for Black males in communities is rooted in a systemic problem and not in the boys referred to Barack Obama Academy.

SECTION TWO

Critical Race Theory

As stated earlier, the data surrounding disproportionate suspension suggests there is more to this problem than Black male students not knowing how to behave in school. Conclusions drawn from viewing this problem from the lenses of social reproduction and social inequity explain a fair amount of the phenomenon but stop short of actually explaining why Black males would be treated differently than White males in society and in education. CRT offers a deeper approach to examining racial suspension inequity than simply looking at educational practice. Applying a CRT lens allows us to go beyond focusing on the deficits of students, or even school staff. CRT examines the fundamental flaws and biases within societal institutions (educational and legal) as a way to understand what happens to Black boys (Ladson-Billings, 1995). I will examine three aspects of CRT in education: lack of rights, negative perception, and exclusion. These forms of CRT describe what happens to Black boys and why they continue to be suspended at an alarming rate, despite research indicating that they are no more objectively disruptive than White students (Bowditch, 1993).

By discussing what is happening to Black boys in the classroom, I will focus on how these aspects of CRT look in schools and how they connect to the larger impact of what CRT names as “white supremacy” being the ideological foundation of the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). What happens to Black boys in schools will be deconstructed by CRT and the constructs of white supremacy as the racial ideological foundation of public schools’ in the U.S. and how this ultimately constitutes harm and therefore discrimination of Black boys in the educational system.

Lack of Rights

Borrowing from the legal field (Crenshaw, 1995), CRT in education is rooted in the notion of rights. The civil rights movement began with a landmark legal decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, mandating that Black students be educated side by side in the same schools with White students. The ruling found that it was not possible for all aspects of schooling to be equal if students were educated in separate environments. The “separate but equal” policy was in fact very unequal but since the full implementation of remedies to force integration in the early 1970s, schools in America are now even more segregated by race (Orfield, 2004).

This groundbreaking ruling that sought to protect the right of Black students to be educated as equally as Whites, ignored the reasons why Blacks were receiving an inferior education in the first place. Ladson-Billings (2005) notes during slavery Blacks were established as property, having no rights and were not considered fully human. Only White males who owned property (land or humans) had fundamental rights of citizenship such as voting. Later, all White males were granted these rights. The precondition for possession of the right to vote changed from possessing land to possessing “whiteness”.

Early on, the notion of white supremacy was widely accepted and the construct of whiteness (being white) became the ultimate property. Possession of this “property” was the prerequisite for possession of all rights, not just the right to vote. By default, Blacks could never fully *possess* rights, even if they were granted. When slavery was abolished, the deeply held conviction of white supremacy and whiteness as property remained.

Indeed, public school segregation in the southern states, legally denied Black students the right to the education that White students were afforded in schools’ up until 1954, years after slavery was completely abolished. For Black students to even have an opportunity to be educated in the same building with White students took 89 years after slavery and a Supreme Court ruling. Segregation in public schools was stopped but did not reverse its effects in a way that repaired the harm, failing to abolish white supremacy as a notion.

Negative Perception

Another aspect of CRT that demystifies the disproportionate suspension of Black boys is the negative way in which school personnel perceive the boys and their families. Because Black boys who are suspended and expelled are often from low-income families (Skiba, 2000), school personnel may make assumptions about poverty and lack of parental engagement when considering such actions. Whether or not this is truly the fact, a *perception* of poverty is highly correlated with a higher rate of suspension (Foster, 1986; Gregory, Skiba, Noguera, 2010). Educators assume that students that are disengaged in school and disruptive in class are not getting support from home. Because of this assumption, school personnel feel justified in dispensing a harsher treatment of a student, based on preconceived notions about that student’s class status and assumptions about the level of parental support (Gregory, 2010). In such cases where parental support

is thought to be absent, school personnel are likely to gamble that it is easy to suspend without being challenged by parents. In this example, the rights of Black students are less likely to be respected by school officials if there is no advocate to challenge the school. Although this negatively affects ADA funding, it can indirectly increase API scores by pushing out lower performing students before the test (Gregory, 2010).

Exclusion

CRT in education explains a primary tenant of white supremacy as the 'right to exclude' (Yosso, 2005). Nonwhite groups who have been granted certain rights or access can have these same rights revoked. For Black males this means that they are excluded from an education equal to other groups, because they are disproportionately excluded or suspended from school. Mosca and Hollister (2004) talk about one example of how exclusion happens through zero tolerance policies (ZTPs). ZTPs were enacted after incidents in which White students began shooting in schools but ironically have become a tool used by administrators to exclude Black boys from the classroom. Because the guidelines for zero tolerance were applied unequally to Black over White males, Black males could be excluded according to mandatory school policy. ZTP's were also originated by the United States Drug Enforcement Agency and even after the DEA abandoned ZTP's as ineffective, ZTP's were enacted by Congress and adopted by school districts across the country as a means of keeping schools safe. Initially intended for serious safety infractions such as fighting, bringing a gun or bringing drugs to school, the criteria became very broad, including disrespect, defiance, and disruption. The result has been a sharp increase in the suspension rate of Black boys for minor infractions while the suspension rate for White males remained the same (Mosca & Hollister, 2004). Because

of this unequal treatment, the rights of Black males are compromised and revoked through policies not directly aimed at Black males but applied in a way that target them disproportionately.

The final outcome of a fundamental lack of rights is overall exclusion from the educational process. Suspension as a form of exclusion is a tool that school officials have virtual unrestricted use. This tool is used against Black males resulting in the reduction or elimination of students' access to an education. The framework of CRT links this exclusion of Black students to the initial forms of exclusion from education. Initially, it was illegal for Blacks to even be educated during slavery. This original form of overt exclusion has obviously changed but Black male students remain significantly excluded from accessing an education. Blacks and other groups have been granted access and inclusion in education. They have been allowed to "borrow whiteness" through emancipation from slavery, inclusion in a separate but unequal education system, and ultimately access to equal protection at least in principle. However, "whiteness" remains at the center of the institution of education (90% of teachers nationwide are White). Blacks students can gain temporary access but can never fully possess whiteness. An example is the tendency for Black students to view other Black students who achieve in school and are successful as 'acting white' (Ogbu, 2004). This borrowed whiteness granted to Black students can and has been revoked through segregation, zero tolerance policies, and disproportionate suspensions via the CRT tenant of the right to exclude.

The discipline gap in schools, the unequal treatment of Black males compared to White males in suspension is a persistent problem. Viewed from the lens of CRT, this problem traces its' origins to the ideology of white supremacy. Today, white supremacy

is no longer overt but proves just as powerful and pervasive as a covert force of discrimination. One can relate the persistent negative outcomes of Black males in education today, to the residual effects of past legal exclusion from education. Examining the data reveals this to be true from multiple angles.

The disparity in offenses that Blacks are suspended for compared to Whites, the prevalence of suspension according to the perception of poverty or lower class, and the unequal exclusion of Blacks from school through suspension indicate that there is a fundamental issue with how schools treat Black males. By viewing this problem through the CRT in education framework, a true solution can be explored that will address the roots of the problem and not the symptoms. The ideology of white supremacy in education must be acknowledged as the root of the Black/White suspension gap. Otherwise, as history shows, suspensions can be eliminated, as a problem of equity and the unequal treatment of Black students will simply manifest in some other way.

SECTION THREE

Solutions

Addressing race-based marginalization and discrimination of Black male students through suspension cannot be addressed with race-neutral remedies. Interventions in the past have resulted in race-neutral outcomes, preserving disparities according to race. An issue that is clearly race-based in effect and outcome must have a race-based intervention that directly targets reversing harm that was caused through discrimination. The exception is if using a race based strategy violates the law, in which case a creative strategy must be used.

Working in OUSD, the suspension gap is urgently in need of an intervention that directly addresses the needs of Black male students. Recognizing that disproportionate suspensions is one of a number of issues negatively affecting Black males in the school district, I am proposing that the school Board and the superintendent create an African American Male Achievement Office (AMMAO). This cabinet level position and office would be tasked with addressing the numerous achievement and discipline gaps, now more appropriately being called the opportunity gap. Because of the limits of this paper, this section will detail the 2 primary approaches of this AAMAO for addressing school suspensions specifically. Using a series of leadership frameworks, the first approach will deal with the institution, outlining strategies of leadership to shift the fundamental culture of the school system from top to bottom. The second approach will focus on altering the instructional core, applying a critical pedagogy framework to redesign critical engagement and inclusion of all students in the education process.

Leadership Strategy

The first strategy, leadership change, is situated in what Crenshaw (1995) calls the ‘expansive view’ of addressing antidiscrimination. The expansive view, which emphasizes equality as a result, is counter to the ‘restrictive view’, which focuses on equality as a process, not tied to any particular results. For example, if hypothetically the expansive view would mandate that if Black students make up 35% of students in the district, then they can’t exceed 35% of the suspensions by mandate or law. Conversely, the restrictive view would merely ensure that the written policies and procedures around suspension were not discriminatory, regardless of how the procedures are actually followed. Expansive view focuses on impact or outcomes whereas restrictive focuses on

specified process rather than impact. The restrictive view approach could be achieved (fair, race-neutral rules for suspension) and the inequity could remain firmly in place (biased application of suspension towards Black boys).

Another way of looking at expansive vs. restrictive views of leadership is described with a 'restrictive view' stopping inequitable and discriminatory treatment and practices. 'Expansive view' on the other hand, seeks to address disparity in a way that not only stops but reverses the negative effects of discrimination, i.e. eliminate the disparities through external controls and direct action. History shows us that even when discriminatory practices against Blacks are stopped, the inequitable outcomes persist for decades because of the ill-gotten gains that Whites received during decades of discriminatory practices. Katznelson (2005) reveals how initial social security legislation passed in the early half of the 20th century allowed states to discriminate against Blacks in a race-neutral way, not by excluding Blacks by race but by excluding agricultural and domestic workers from receiving benefits, a labor force that included 90% of southern Blacks. The GI Bill provided a bevy of benefits to mostly White war veterans (Blacks were restricted from service), including home loans for over 4 million vets, and has been credited with the creation of the American middle class. Fifty-five years after the sunset of this initial bill, the gap in homeownership and financial equity gap is still wide between White and Black Americans. This is the result of a restrictive view of remedying past discrimination. The southern states effectively denied Blacks all benefits through the administration of the GI bill, taking away what was considered a great opportunity for Black veterans.

Brown vs. Topeka board of education was also a restrictive view remedy that

stopped the laws that enforced racial segregation. This remedy however never reversed the harm that resulted from an inferior social status caused by generations of overt, legal racial discrimination. The Mamie and Kenneth Clark doll study from the 1940's which tested Black children's' attitudes about race was reproduced in 2006, generations later, with the same results of Black children demonstrating attitudes of racial inferiority to Whites (Edney, 2006).

Applying the historic lessons about the benefits of expansive versus a restrictive view of leadership is useful in understanding remedies/solutions to the disproportionate exclusion of Black boys from schools. Using the expansive view to remedy discrimination in discipline is a critical first step if we truly expect to see different results. The AAMAO should explicitly address disparities for Black males. Accountability measures (reduced or increased funding) will also need to be a part of the intervention. This type of accountability that is attached to the outcomes (reduction of Black male suspensions) however would likely need to be race-neutral and should focus on the lowest performing students in the district to avoid potential discrimination lawsuits charging 'reverse discrimination' (Time, 1971). These types of legal challenges are common with race-based efforts that seek to correct past discrimination through expansive view. Employing a strategy of identifying a race-neutral category (students with the lowest grade point average) that has a high overlap with the target group, Black males (90% of Black males have the lowest grade point averages) then the impact of the intervention will also have a high overlap because the Black boys getting suspended the most also have the lowest GPA's.

Evidence shows how the achievement gap and the suspension gap are "two sides

of the same coin”, with a higher than 90% overlap with the majority of the lowest academic achievers accounting for the majority of the suspensions (Gregory, 2010). Grubb (2009) uses a similar example to describe this as an ‘exogenous effect’ where external factors to the problem (low GPA) have a high correlation to the impact of that problem (Black boys getting suspended the most).

This kind of strategic change is not without significant obstacles. For the AMMAO to be able to effect change, it will require addressing change from multiple leadership lenses. Bolman & Deal (1997) feature DePree’s work called *Leadership Jazz* (1992) and its symbolic frame, which sees change happen through the use of “symbol, myth and magic”. Drawing from social and cultural anthropology, this frame departs from viewing organizations as rational, logical entities that follow explicit rules, but sees them more as tribes, operating from a cultural set of patterns. From this view, change doesn’t occur simply from policy changes and decree by leadership. Rather, significant change is thwarted by an arsenal of seemingly invisible forces (symbol, myth & magic) within the district and externally in the community (Eckel, et. al, 1999). In OUSD, the ‘magic’ can be found in the pockets of engagement that produce results that fly in the face of the parade of pathology about Black boys. These ‘magic makers’ are teachers, principals, parents, community members and students that successfully resist the oppressive environmental factors to produce outcomes that represent the expansive view. This is in contrast to the symbols and myths in OUSD. Black boys symbolize the ‘bad apples’; the truant delinquents that don’t care for learning and only come to school to ‘start trouble’ (Foster, 1986). They symbolize the group of students that can’t be saved and are doomed for failure. The ‘myth’ is that Black boys are defiant and dangerous and

that suspending them from school is the only effective way to save the rest of the students that want to learn.

AAMAO, using DePree's symbolic frame would expose the negative symbolism of Black males in OUSD and offering a counter narrative. Asserting that Black boys contribute to safer communities and safer schools by keeping them engaged in school and not on the street or at home. Through massive outreach, school staff and volunteers would call homes and make home visits whenever they are absent or late from school. The 'myth' of getting rid of Black boys through suspension for other students' sake will be replaced with the 'magic' of authentic care, higher expectations and unprecedented support through volunteer mobilization.

The AAMAO would need to build a groundswell of support for this effort. The AAMAO primarily must generate the 'magic' required, demanding the change necessary to eliminate suspensions but also compel the people who will be needed to make this change to do it willingly and enthusiastically. The AAMAO would lead a charge to turn the discipline culture of OUSD around by modeling recent successful efforts like in Baltimore where through a multi-pronged approach, mobilizing over 1,000 volunteers reaching out to truant Black boys, suspensions were brought down from 16,752 overall to 11,059 total. (Baltimore, 2010). The goal is not only getting Black boys back in school but encourage and support them to stay there.

This doesn't solve the issue of classes that were not conducive to Black boys in the first place or change the teachers who were biased against Black boys. In fact, some could argue that corralling Black boys into the same schools that pushed them out in the first place is ill conceived and doesn't address the core issue. This argument is a common

strategy employed to kill legitimate efforts that seek to reverse a gross injustice. By attacking initial efforts that set out to address a grand scale inequality, naysayers isolate individual efforts as inadequate in an effort to maintain the status quo. However this is not an isolated effort and its success requires multiple separate interventions addressing other aspects of this problem to take place in the District at the same time. The goal of this specific effort is not to solve all problems for all Black boys, but specifically to eliminate the wide disparity in suspensions.

Identifying needs and recruiting volunteers to fill the need would be coordinated on a large scale. The AAMAO would call upon volunteers to organize this level of coordination in the district. Through public events and community efforts to publicize this initiative and internal district processes for accounting for these youth, the goal would be to establish as many supportive adult connections for Black males in the district as possible. With limited funding, this initiative could not rely heavily on simple resources but tap into complex resources (Grubb, 2009) by coordinating existing staff, experienced volunteers and programs already funded to assist Black boys.

Classroom Strategy

The second strategy aimed at classroom pedagogy is very different, yet complementary to the first strategy. Borrowing from the authentic caring framework (Valenzuela, 1999), the teachers will be trained and prepared to work with the students on a level deeper than the restrictive view of simply showing up and teaching, commonly referred to as “doing my job”. By reframing the instructional core (Elmore, 2008) teachers will be charged with developing a level of teacher-student accountability that represents the expansive view of learning. Making extraordinary efforts to ensure that all

students learn is not a cliché but a practice that is demonstrated by ‘Ridas’ (Duncan-Andrade, 2007), teachers that demonstrate optimal passion, devotion and success to the craft of teaching. This level of caring and accountability in the classroom will not be easy and will require alignment with the district vision of community schools (OUSD, 2010), a notion that calls on schools to be ‘full service’, not only supporting students, but their families and the communities they live in as well. Many teachers resist focusing on family and community, claiming that they are teachers not social workers. Teachers however must be charged to adopt the expansive view to ensure educational outcomes of their students. Using the expansive view approach, teachers are responsible for all of their students learning and consider the challenges facing many of the students; this makes the job of teaching considerably more intense but equally more rewarding. The restrictive view approach merely requires the teacher to show up and teach, which almost always results in a teacher being ineffective.

Under DePree’s symbolic frame, schools are seen through multiple frames. The symbolic frame of schools as a “community” and the classroom as a “family” is reinforced by the legal term ‘in loco parentis’ that is assigned to school officials. This phrase means “in place of parent”. ‘in loco parentis’ is part of a statute (1997) that gives school officials authority to act in place of a parent. Using the symbolic frame of the class as a family, this concept would be referenced as a way to view the students as being in school officials (authentic) care and requiring every effort everyday to keep Black boys engaged and a part of the ‘family’, which is in the school community. This could take the form of calling the parent to the school to shadow their child for the rest of the day instead of sending them home. If the parent is not available, then a relative, neighbor or

educational advocate, could be designated by the family for such a purpose. Teachers, who sometimes have a difficult time memorizing the names of the 100 + students they have within the first 30 days, would likely remember them quicker if the principal encouraged someone from each child's life to visit the school in the first month at least once. Teachers should also be encouraged and supported to make home visits to students. There are many strategies to encourage authentic caring in the frame of school as community, not just between the teacher and student, but also between the family, extended family, and community of each student. Everyone would be involved in caring for the student at school, not just teachers.

Ultimately the expectation would fall on the teachers (with as much support as possible) to keep their students in their classroom no matter what, reserving referrals for extreme, imminent safety concerns. The 'magic' is that through the entire effort of connecting the adults better with the students, there would be more investment in the relationship from both the student and the teacher. Reversing the cyclical dynamic of students being disengaged, teachers perceiving this disengagement as intolerable disrespect (rather than a reasonable response to a disengaging lesson), and the students viewing the teacher's intolerance as aesthetic caring at best and outright disdain for them at worst, is the heart of this strategy. Employing authentic caring, generating systems of support, utilizing complex resources (community members) and bringing the community into the school turns the classroom into a sacred temple that it symbolically needs to be, with education of children and caring adults at the center of the community's development and rebirth. This of course, would have a direct impact on the suspension rate of Black male students in particular but would likely impact all other suspensions as

well.

Conclusion

It is clear that there is a problem with Black boys and suspension. Through examining what happens to Black boys, I have found evidence that there is discrimination. Viewing this problem through the CRT framework gives us a clear reasoning for why the gross inequalities continue to happen despite decades of interventions to address the discrimination. According to CRT, White supremacy as an ideology manifested in key ways in the classroom, even in the 21st century. Historic white supremacy and racial discrimination in the form of suspension of Black boys can't be resolved in a race-neutral solution. In adopting a race-based approach, the creation of a new office, with a charismatic leader, will symbolize the value OUSD places on Black boys, and signal new determination to not only stop current discrimination but also seek to reverse the effects of many years of past discrimination and harm through suspension.

The solution within the local context of OUSD involves the creation of an African American student achievement office and a movement to bring authentic caring into the classroom. It is difficult to address race and racism, and even more difficult to reverse white supremacy as an underlying ideology still influencing the American institution of education. Nevertheless, imbedding a race-based office to address this locally, institutionalizes the issue of race as something that must be addressed from within and over a long period of time.

Utilizing leadership frameworks that address organizational symbols and myths, a true culture shift can be initiated. The ultimate change that needs to happen in the classroom between the oftentimes-White teacher and Black boy can only begin with an

authentically caring relationship with a deep level of accountability present. Eliminating the suspension disparity between Black and White males is merely one of many important goals, but in concert with other worthy efforts, it would prove good not only for Black boys but for all students.

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