"Life Skills": A Single-Sex Classroom Intervention for Black Boys Transitioning from Middle School to High School

Terry Flennaugh
Michigan State University

ABSTRACT: The transition from middle school to high school can be difficult for many students due to increases in school size, the structure of an academic schedule, and the complexity of social interactions in high school. However, Black boys face unique challenges during this transition period due to racism and structural inequalities. In response to these obstacles, schools across the country have created single-sex spaces specifically for Black boys to improve academic and social outcomes for students. The current study examines one such intervention located in an urban school district in the San Francisco Bay Area through interviews with four students to better understand how they make sense of their experiences within a specific single-sex classroom as they transitioned into high school. Findings from the study address the important role teachers play in shaping students' transitional experiences. Implications for single-sex learning spaces for Black boys are also discussed.

Keywords: Black boys; single-sex classrooms; high school; transitional experiences; student voice

The transition from middle school to high school can be difficult for many students regardless of their social identity. Researchers have characterized this time period as being particularly risky for adolescents who are developmentally vulnerable to social stressors, especially as they move from a familiar schooling environment with peers they have known for years to a larger schooling environment often populated with students coming from different feeder schools (Chung, Elias, & Schneider, 1998; Erath, Flanagan, & Bierman, 2008; Evans & Eder, 1993; Pellegrini & Van Ryzin, 2011). Transitioning students must find ways to cope with dramatic increases in school size, the structure of an academic schedule, and the complexity of social interactions in high school (Felner & Adan, 1989). Due to these stressors, students can experience a drop in their academic performance as they move into secondary schools (Willens, 2013). However, consequences of these barriers are felt more dramatically by Black boys attending school in urban communities.

Roderick (2005) argues that Black boys face unique challenges during the transition from middle school to high school for three notable reasons. First, Black boys, on average, have the fewest resources to meet new academic and social challenges. Persistent disparities in teacher expectations, curriculum, and structural support have produced significant gaps in the level of academic preparation of Black boys compared to their peers (Delpit, 2010). The second reason Black boys are particularly at risk is because they, more than any group, "experience the most dramatic declines in support and the quality of relationships and school experiences as they make the move to high school" (Roderick, 2005, p. 157). Urban adolescents' perceptions of degree of challenge from their coursework, expectations from their teachers, and quality of both their environment and relationships with teachers significantly decline as students transition into high school (Reyes et al., 1994; Seidman et al., 1994; Simmons et al., 1991; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Finally, Roderick notes that, even if they have skills and supports similar to their peers, Black boys "would remain at risk because they have fewer positive coping resources and are more

likely to adopt negative coping mechanisms, such as avoidance or withdrawal" (p. 158). Negative previous schooling experiences and an awareness of teachers' negative perceptions can lead to active resistance of teachers and poor academic performance (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

One response to the challenges faced by Black boys as they transition into high school that has been growing in popularity in recent years has been the creation of single-sex learning spaces. Defined by Terry, Flennaugh, Blackmon, and Howard (2014) as "any educational setting in which students are separated by sex as a component of a broader strategy developed to achieve one or more educational objectives associated with students' academic performance outcomes and/or overall 'citizenship' within the school community" (p. 669), schools in urban communities across the country have implemented single-sex learning spaces to meet the needs of Black boys. One such space is the Life Skills course taught by Mr. Graham for all ninth grade Black boys at Wolverine High School.[1] Mr. Graham's Life Skills class includes lessons that cover students' basic rights and liberties; thoughtful analysis of writings from key figures in African American poetry and literature; the history of Black people in the U.S. with particular attention being paid to the life story of Malcolm X and the Willie Lynch letters; and the current state of Black education in their school district and nationwide. While Mr. Graham's efforts can be positioned as part of a growing effort to create programmatic interventions aimed at addressing the challenges faced by Black boys as they transition into high school, more research is needed to understand the impact of these single-sex spaces on the schooling experiences of students. Additionally, research is needed that prioritizes analysis of the voices of Black boys as they make sense of their experiences in single-sex spaces while transitioning from middle school into high school.

Research Questions

1) How do Black boys make sense of their experiences in the Life Skills class, specifically within a broader context of their high school?

2) What can we learn from the voices of Black boys about how the components of the Life Skills class hold promise for impacting their schooling experiences as they transition from middle school to high school?

Critical Race Theory

A key theoretical framework that guides the current study is Critical Race Theory (CRT). Originally developed by scholars of color seeking to challenge legal orthodoxy concerning people of color in the criminal justice system, CRT within the field of education aimed to address the role that race and equity play in educational research, scholarship, and practice (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The inclusion of a critical race framework is especially warranted when one considers the unique challenges faced by Black boys transitioning into high school that are a direct result of the subjugated status of these students, which often manifests in lowered expectations and fewer education resources in U.S. institutions of education due to their race. CRT acknowledges the permanence and pervasiveness of race, racism, and the lack of equity and social justice for communities of color. As Ladson-Billings (1998) argued, racism is "so enmeshed in the fabric or our social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture" (p. 11). Sadly, the academic underperformance of Black boys in secondary education is viewed as both natural and normal, leading to a sense of helplessness and an orientation by some educators to adopt deficit frameworks for understanding and responding to the challenges faced

---

[1] Pseudonyms are used for the research site and all participants.

by this population of students.

Within the field of education, CRT is used as a methodological, conceptual, and theoretical tool to disrupt racism and other forms of oppression in educational theory and practice (Solórzano, 1998). An essential component of Critical Race Theory that has important implications for research on the educational experiences of Black boys is the importance of counter storytelling and narrative as a methodological tool (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Counter storytelling and the inclusion of students' voices as a mode of inquiry allow for a methodology embedded in the social realities and lived experiences of these Black boys transitioning into high school (Matsuda, 1993). As participants in the current study reflect and share their experiences within a schooling context where they are positioned as a problem (Howard, 2013), a conceptual framework and methodology focused on student voice becomes vital.

Student Voice

Students' perspectives on their schooling are often marginalized, neglected, and limited in education research. Cook-Sather (2002) stresses that student perspectives are least often consulted when creating and reforming education policy and practice, even though students are most directly affected by them. Cook-Sather's work is supported by other researchers who believe that tapping into student perspectives can empower and enhance our understanding of schooling practices (Chambers & McCready, 2011; Clark, 1995; Davies, 1982; Finders, 1997; Heshusius, 1995; Mitra & Gross, 2009; Nieto, 2002; Rodríguez & Brown, 2009; Terry, 2011; Yonezawa & Jones, 2009). As Oldfather and Dahl (1994) argue, "when students are given voice, they are able to gain a sense of epistemological empowerment: a sense of agency, and the ability to 'know' that emerges from a strong sense of the integrity of one's process of constructing meaning" (p. 132). Furthermore, scholars such as Mitra (2004) found that "student voice activities can create meaningful experiences for youth that help to meet fundamental developmental needs—especially for students who otherwise do not find meaning in their school experiences" (p. 651). In this study, Black boys attending a large majority-minority high school located in the San Francisco Bay Area shared their perspectives on a course designed to assist with their transition from middle school to high school. They also discussed the challenges that exist in their high schools that serve as barriers for their overall success. This study seeks to contribute to a growing field of scholarship that documents Black students' perspectives of their learning environments.

Methodology

This qualitative case study utilizes narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to unpack the experiences of four Black boys in a single-sex classroom to better understand how they make sense of their transition into high school.

Research Context

Located in the ethnically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse San Francisco Bay Area, Wolverine High School's all-Black boys ninth grade "Life Skills" class stands as one example of a growing trend among community leaders and educators across the nation to develop and implement curricular initiatives aimed at supporting marginalized populations in school, particularly Black boys (Terry et al., 2014). The school has a population (n=3,800) made up of Hispanic or Latino (34%), Filipino (23%), Asian (22%), African American (8%), and White (6%) students with 40% of students being eligible for free and reduced lunch. The course, which has been taught by Mr. Graham since its inception nearly a decade ago, focuses on

engaging ninth grade Black boys in lessons that cover basic rights and liberties, as well as lessons on African and African American history and literature, including discussions about current events impacting the Black community locally and in the U.S. The course's origin can be contributed to school leaders who, feeling compelled to address the issues of poor academic performance and engagement of Black boys at Wolverine High School, asked Mr. Graham to create a course as an intervention. All incoming ninth grade Black boys are automatically enrolled in Mr. Graham's first period Life Skills course in the fall and continue into his African American Studies course in the spring of their freshman year.

As the class continues with its ninth cohort of freshman Black boys, it is important to take note of its success. As a former Wolverine High School principal notes, "The graduation class of 2014 had an improved graduation rate and the students from the class performed as well as their white counterparts on the CAHSEE [California High School Exit Exam]." Further, rates of disciplinary referrals and suspensions for Black boys at Wolverine High School have declined since the course began during the 2007-2008 academic year. Mr. Graham utilizes Margery Ginsberg and Raymond Wlodkowski's (2000) Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching to emphasize four key supports for the students: establishing inclusion, building security, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence (Lindsey & Mabie, 2012). It is also important to note that Mr. Graham has over 30 years of teaching experience in the school district, is one of only a handful of Black teachers at Wolverine High School, and is the only teacher on the campus who is a Black man.

Participants

Four self-identified Black boys participated in the current study. All participants were enrolled in Mr. Graham's Life Skills class during their freshman year at Wolverine High School and were at least one year removed from their experience in the Life Skills class.

Bob. Bob is a junior at Wolverine High School who aspires to find a career in the music industry. As a student who commutes to the high school from a neighboring city, Bob knew very few students when he arrived on campus.

David. David is a quiet sophomore at Wolverine High School who also commutes to campus from a neighboring city. David comes from a single-parent home and he currently plays on the school's football team.

Devon. Devon is a senior at Wolverine High School. He is a sprinter on the track team and is in the process of applying for admission into college. Devon lives near the school and he also participates on the speech and debate team, for which Mr. Graham has been the coach for the past 20 years.

Smith. Smith is a senior at Wolverine High School, whose family is originally from Nigeria. Smith is also in the process of applying for admission into college.

Data Collection

The primary data source for this study were semi-structured interviews with students previously enrolled in the Life Skills class. After receiving parental consent, students were interviewed once by the researcher during a 30- to 45-minute session about their experiences in Mr. Graham's class and their experiences transitioning to Wolverine High School. This included questions about students' experiences in classes and their relationships with peers and adults at Wolverine High School. All interviews took place in a classroom at Wolverine High School not far from Mr. Graham's class. Additionally, interviews took place during students' lunch period or after school and were transcribed in their entirety.

Data Analysis

Qualitative coding techniques that included member checking and coding for recurring themes were used to analyze interviews with students from the Life Skills class (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Creswell, 2013). All student interview data were entered into a Word document and coded thematically. The two major themes that were identified as a result of an inductive coding of student interviews (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) were (1) demonstration of care from teachers and (2) school and life preparation.

Results and Findings

This study's findings are organized by recurring themes that were identified during the data analysis process. Moments from transcripts that served as thematic examples provided insight on the experiences of Black boys in Mr. Graham's Life Skills class and their transition into Wolverine High School more broadly. These examples are highlighted in the results and findings below. Through the analysis of themes from students' interview responses, results indicated that participants could see clear distinctions in the demonstration of care from Mr. Graham and other teachers, and that participants framed their experiences in the Life Skills class as contributing to their preparation for Wolverine High School and for life more generally.

Demonstration of Care from Teachers

All participants in the study made it a point to comment on the way they felt a sense of caring (or lack thereof) by teachers a Wolverine High School. Students reported many of their teachers seemed to be simply going through the motions in their course instruction, with three of the four participants insinuating that teachers were satisfied "just collecting a paycheck." For example, David notes:

[The teachers] don't care. It's like they do what they have to. They don't really do anything extra. Like if you ask for help, they'll tell you to come in at lunch and then tell you the same thing that they told in class and like without trying to re-word it.

David's comments are noteworthy in that they articulate two issues that seemed to be common across participants. First, there is a sense that some teachers do not care to make an "extra" effort for students in their classes. This observation could be a major source of discouragement for students that could otherwise benefit from thoughtful engagement from teachers in their school. Also important to note about David's comments is the circumstance of him actively seeking out additional academic support and feeling like his teacher was not responsive. This contradicts and complicates prevailing narratives about school disengagement among Black boys and challenges assumptions that might allow us to ignore the issue of disengagement on the behalf of teachers.

Perhaps more disturbing than the comments about the sense of detachment students felt from their teachers as they transitioned into high school were the comments from Bob about one his teachers:

Most of these teachers are here just because they are getting paid…Like for example, my biology teacher, it doesn't seem like he cares to be honest. It just seems like he is there to teach us the basics, not really care about the other students. Not trying to get to know us and stuff like that…The first day when I walked into my biology class…it seemed like he already didn't like me to be honest because like I feel he is kind of racist, I'm not going to lie…There are four Black guys in that class and so like we all sit in the front sometimes and so I guess he got mad or something, he was like "You damn niggers!"

Bob's experience serves as a sobering reminder of the significance of race and the pervasiveness

of racism in schools today. Bob's read of the teacher on the "first day" and the subsequent racial attack suggest that Black male students like Bob may find it necessary to develop mechanisms that guard against racialized aggressions from teachers. This can create additional barriers for educators looking to engage Black boys as they transition into high school.

However, it should be noted that all participants in the student juxtaposed instances of teacher disconnection and disengagement with stories about the sense of caring that felt with Mr. Graham.

> [Mr. Graham] doesn't just like, he's not just there but he's there to help us, not even just in school but like life problems and stuff like that and he cares about the problems we're dealing with and he is always there to help us…Let's say if we look down or something like that, he would ask us, he'd pull us aside and ask us how we're feeling and stuff like that and he'd be very connected with the family, other people's families…He would call, check up on us, check up on the family.

All participants in the study talked at length about how Mr. Graham was different than other teachers at Wolverine High School and how Mr. Graham's concern for students' academic and personal well-being manifested in the Life Skills class. Students reported that Mr. Graham's concern, coupled with high expectations, made them feel cared for as they transitioned into high school. Devon states:

> My experience here was interesting in the sense that Mr. Graham was probably the only teacher that didn't let me get away with doing stuff, cause he would just catch the BS instantly and not let it fly. Whereas a lot of teachers would just let you get by, as long as you're not bothering them they just want to get their check. Just let you get by as long as they can get that 54 minute period over, like I use to get over on a lot of teachers but it's cause I don't think they had that drive to really want to be there anymore because they were tenured at that point. So they were just like well if you don't want to be here, I'm not going to keep you here.

Again, echoing this sentiment that many teachers do not really care about students' well-being, Devon adds that Mr. Graham's high expectations of students and his unwillingness to deal with "BS" served as a powerful motivator for students to respect and listen to Mr. Graham, specifically in the Life Skills class.

School and Life Preparation

In addition to the theme of teachers demonstrating care (or lack thereof) to transitioning Black boys at Wolverine High School, participants also commented on the ways they felt the Life Skill class contributed to their preparation for high school and for life. When asked about the content of the Life Skills class, Bob notes that students would learn about African American history. He adds, "We would learn like how to write, like format of writing and how to work on, how to express our feelings on paper…it would be just whatever is on our mind or just to express ourselves." Three of the study's participants commented specifically on aspects of the class that resonated with them even after leaving the course. Noting the classroom visitors that talked about attending college, the reading of Malcolm X's autobiography, researching African kings, and discussing current events, participants described how much they enjoyed the content of the Life Skills class, in addition to how much they could tell that Mr. Graham cared about the students and the subject matter. In response to an interview question about how (if at all) the Life Skills course contributed to his own academic success, Bob states:

> Mr. Graham taught me how to like stay in school and stuff like that and I started taking class more serious, by like doing my homework more often, turning it in, asking for help

> and like I usually don't even ask for help to be honest…[Mr. Graham] would help us on Wednesdays. He would get all the students to bring their work to first period for all the periods and all the TAs and him would help us.

Bob highlights two noteworthy components of the Life Skills class in his statement. First is that Mr. Graham's practice of allowing students to complete some of their work from other classes was valued. Other participants in the study noted how this work time on Wednesdays became helpful during their first year at Wolverine High School, since they were able to have structured work time and assistance from Mr. Graham and his teaching assistants. Also noteworthy is Bob's identification of Mr. Graham as a motivator to "stay in school" and to take his studies more seriously. Given Bob's negative experience with some of his teachers, the significance of Mr. Graham's motivation for academic success should not be understated.

Another finding that emerged from the interviews was the developing social critique students articulated that was connected to lessons in the Life Skills class. For example, Smith notes:

> I learned that no matter what you do, no matter what you do to try to change the stereotype there will still be people that think [negatively] of you and it made me learn that when I go out, I have to realize that no matter what I do people will still think of me in this way, as a stereotypical African American male. No matter what happens, you can't change that because of the past. So that changed my perspective in that I need to, I shouldn't be ignorant. I should know that not everyone likes me and people will always have this feeling of me.

All participants in the study highlighted how the Life Skills class caused them to look at their experiences in school and in the world differently. Students discussed how new information about social inequities and historical movements helped them more easily identify systems of oppression, while also providing scripts and strategies to respond to injustices.

As a result of this shared experience, participants noted a sense of community with their peers. Devon notes:

> When your peers are able to help you academically, cause academics aren't everything so though you may be academically stronger than someone else, they can help you with like learning more socially, like being more aware of your surroundings, being exposed to things you wouldn't otherwise be exposed to. I'll keep it real, I didn't really kick it with a lot of Black people during like my elementary, middle school years. I knew them, but like I never really kicked it with them so being in that class now you were able to see all of people and you're able to know them and kick it with them kind of like help them out through things too, in the same way they can help you out with things.

While a sense of community was articulated by all participants in the study, students also acknowledged that not all students in the Life Skills class bought into its lessons, noting that some of their peers failed to "listen to Mr. Graham," ending up in trouble or leaving Wolverine High School prematurely.

Conclusion

Interviews with four Black male students at Wolverine High School about their experiences in Mr. Graham's Life Skills class as they transitioned into high school offer important lessons for educational researchers and practitioners. First, Life Skills students were able to find important sources of support in Mr. Graham that were used to supplement weak relationships with other adults at Wolverine High School. The fact that Mr. Graham's identity

and curriculum aligned with the racial identity and experiences of freshman students seems to be a key contributor to students' high assessment of their experiences in the course. However, the ethic of care demonstrated by Mr. Graham seems to be a more significant factor in students' comments, as opposed to the curriculum or his racial identity. In this way, findings from this study reinforce the work of scholars like Duncan-Andrade (2009) who delineates for educators working with marginalized student populations the difference between good hope, or what he refers to as *critical hope*, and bad hope, or *false hope*. Additionally, findings from this study also support efforts to create spaces for boys of color, who have qualitatively different schooling experiences (as seen in this study), but need access to thoughtful and critical curriculum that affords students opportunities to build relationships with teachers and peers, and heal from harmful classrooms – what Dumas (2014) calls sites of "black suffering." While additional questions about the effectiveness of interventions like the one described in this study remain, scholars should seek out opportunities to investigate similar types of spaces, hopefully tapping into a larger number of students' voices to shed light on important efforts to improve the quality of transition for Black boys moving from middle school into high school.

References

Chung, H., Elias, M., & Schneider, K. (1998). Patterns of individual adjustment changes during middle school transition. *Journal of School Psychology*, *36*(1), 83-101.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Clark, C. (1995). *Flights of fancy, leaps of faith: Children's myths in contemporary America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Cook-Sather, A. (2002). Authorizing students' perspectives: Toward trust, dialogue, and change in education. *Educational Researcher*, *31*(4), 3-14.

Davies, B. (1982). *Life in the classroom and playground: The accounts of primary school children*. Boston, MA: Routledge.

Delgado, R. (1999). *When equality end: Stories about race and resistance*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical Race Theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Delpit, L. (2010). *"Multiplication is for White people": Raising expectations for other people's children*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Dumas, M. J. (2014). 'Losing an arm': schooling as a site of black suffering. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *17*(1), 1-29.

Duncan-Andrade, J. (2009). Note to educators: Hope required when growing roses in concrete. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(2), 181-194.

Erath, S. A., Flanagan, K. S., & Bierman, K. L. (2008). Early adolescent school adjustment: Associations with friendship and peer victimization. *Social Development*, *17*(4), 853-870.

Evans, C., & Eder, D. (1993). "NO EXIT:" Processes of social isolation in the middle school. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *22*(2), 139-170.

Felner, R., & Adan, A. M. (1989). The school transitional environment project: An ecological intervention and evaluation. In R. Price (Ed.), *14 ounces of prevention: A casebook for practitioners* (pp. 111-122). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Finders, M. (1997). *Just girls: Hidden literacies and life in junior high*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Ginsberg, M. B., & Wlodkowski, R. J. (2000). *Creating highly motivating classrooms for all students: A schoolwide approach to powerful teaching with diverse learners.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Heshusius, L. (1995). Listening to children: "What could we possibly have in common?" From concerns with self to participatory consciousness. *Theory into Practice*, *34*(2), 117-123.

Howard, T. C. (2013). How does it feel to be a problem?: Black male students, schools, and learning in enhancing the knowledge base to disrupt deficit frameworks. *Review of Research in Education*, *37*(1), 54-86.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Fighting for our lives: Preparing teachers to teach African American students. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *51*(3), 206-214.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field l ike education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *11*(1), 7-24.

Ladson-Billings, G. & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory. *Teachers College Record*, *97*(1), 47-68.

Lindsey, T., & Mabie, B. (2012). Life skills yield stronger academic performance: A course for freshmen boys teaches them about the Black experience and each other-and leads to improved self-concepts and academic performance. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *93*(5), 33.

Matsuda, M.J. (1993). Public response to racist speech: Considering the victim's story. In M.J. Matsuda, C.R. Lawrence III, R. Delgado, & K.Williams Crenshaw. (Eds.) *Words that wound: Critical race theory, assaultive speech, and the first amendment*. (pp. 17-52). Westview Press: San Francisco.

Mitra, D. L. (2004). The significance of students: Can increasing "student voice" in schools lead to gains in youth development? *Teachers College Record*, *106*(4), 651-688.

Mitra, D. L. & Gross, S. J. (2009). Increasing student voice in high school reform: Building partnerships, improving outcomes. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *37*(4), 522-543.

Nieto, S. (2002). *Language, culture, and teaching: Critical perspectives for a new century*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Oldfather, P., & Dahl, K. (1994). Toward a social constructivist reconceptualization of intrinsic motivation for literacy learning. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, *26*(2), 139158.

Pellegrini, A. D., & Van Ryzin, M. J. (2011). Part of the problem and part of the solution: The role of peers in bullying, dominance, and victimization during the transition from primary school to secondary school. In D. L. Espelage & S. M. Swearer (Eds.), *Bullying in North American schools* (2nd ed., pp. 91–100). New York, NY: Routledge.

Reyes, O., Gillock, K., & Kobus, K. (1994). A longitudinal study of school adjustment in urban, minority adolescents: Effects of a high school transition program. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *22*(3), 341-369.

Roderick, M. (2005). What's happening to the boys? Early high school experiences and school outcomes among African American male adolescents in Chicago. In O. S. Fashola (Ed.), *Educating African American Males: Voices from the field* (pp. 151–227). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Rodríguez, L. & Brown, T. (2009). From voice to agency: Guiding principles for participatory action research with youth. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 123, 19-34.

Rubin, B. & Silva, E. (2003). *Critical voices in school reform: Students living through change*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Seidman, E., Allen, L., Aber, J. L., Mitchell, C., & Feinman, J. (1994). The impact of school

transitions in early adolescence on the self- system and perceived social context of poor urban youth. *Child development, 65*(2), 507-522.

Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review, 15*(2), 4-14.

Simmons, R. G., & Blyth, D. A. (1987). *Moving into adolescence: The impact of pubertal change and school context*. New York: A. de Gruyter.

Simmons, R. G., Black, A., & Zhou, Y. (1991). African-american versus white children and the transition into junior high school. *American Journal of Education, 99*(4), 481-520.

Solórzano, D. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping, and teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 24*, 5-19.

Solórzano, D. (1998). Critical race theory, racial and gender microaggressions, and the experiences of Chicana and Chicano scholars. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*, 121-136.

Solórzano, D. G., & Bernal, D. D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban Education*, *36*(3), 308-342.

Solórzano, D. & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for educational research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23-44.

Terry, C. L. (2010). Prisons, pipelines, and the President: Developing critical math literacy through participatory action research. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, *1*(2), 73-104.

Terry, C. L., Flennaugh, T. K., Blackmon, S. & Howard, T. C. (2014). 'Does the negro still need separate schools?': Single-sex educational settings as critical race counterspace. *Urban Education, 49*(6), 666-697.

Venzant Chambers, T. T., & McCready, L. T. (2011). "Making space" for ourselves: African American student responses to their marginalization. *Urban Education, 46*(6), 1352-1378.

Willens, M. (2013, November 1). Ninth Grade: The Most Important Year in High School. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from http://www.theatlantic.com.

Yonezawa, S., & Jones, M. (2009). Student voices: Generating reform from the inside out. *Theory Into Practice, 48*(3), 205-212.