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## **An Exploration of Practical Means by Which Post-Secondary Achievement Can Be Elevated for Low-Socioeconomic Black Males**

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An Exploration of Practical Means by Which Post-Secondary Achievement Can Be Elevated for  
Low-Socioeconomic Black Males

Dissertation Manuscript  
Submitted to Lynn University  
Ross College of Education  
In Partial Fulfillment of  
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Doctor of Education

by

Dwayne J. L. Crutchley

Boca Raton, Florida  
October 2017

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that contribute to the postsecondary achievement gap between low-socioeconomic income Black males (LBM) and White males. The two principal factors that emerge from the literature are categorized by this author as internal and external barriers LBM' encounter. Internal barriers are those encountered in school, identified as 1) the curriculum, 2) the teacher and 3) the role guidance counselors play. External barriers those encountered outside of school are identified in 1) low-income families, 2) community and 3) deficit perceptions. There is sufficient documentation about the factors associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement. However, there is insufficient literature regarding new strategies specifically designed to address the persistent achievement gap between LBM and their White male counterparts (WMC). Thus, the motivation for this study is to 1) identify and interpret public domain historical data to validate the achievement gap between the two groups; 2) Explore the barriers to postsecondary achievement for LBM' and 3) mitigate the persistent postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups using a developed curriculum the author calls a synchronized curriculum through a qualitative approach using a historical design, with the hope of improving their opportunities for long-term economic sustainability and changing the deficit perception of LBM.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to M'Caule and Milan Crutchley who have been so cooperative throughout the entire doctorate program, family and friends. A special thanks and gratitude to Violet Crutchley whose advice I heeded, and words of encouragement brought me here and to Samuel Crutchley who gave his support, Simone, niece Brianna and nephew Matthew, thanks.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Thanks to the committee members who shared their expertise and time throughout this process. Special thanks to Dr. Joe Melita, committee chairman for his guidance, constructive critiques and encouragement. Also, gratitude to Dr. Phyllis Superfisky for her patience and time and Dr. James Guthrie for his critical advice. Finally, Amy Filiatreau, Alison Leonard and Lynn University staff are acknowledged and thanked for their assistance in conducting this research.

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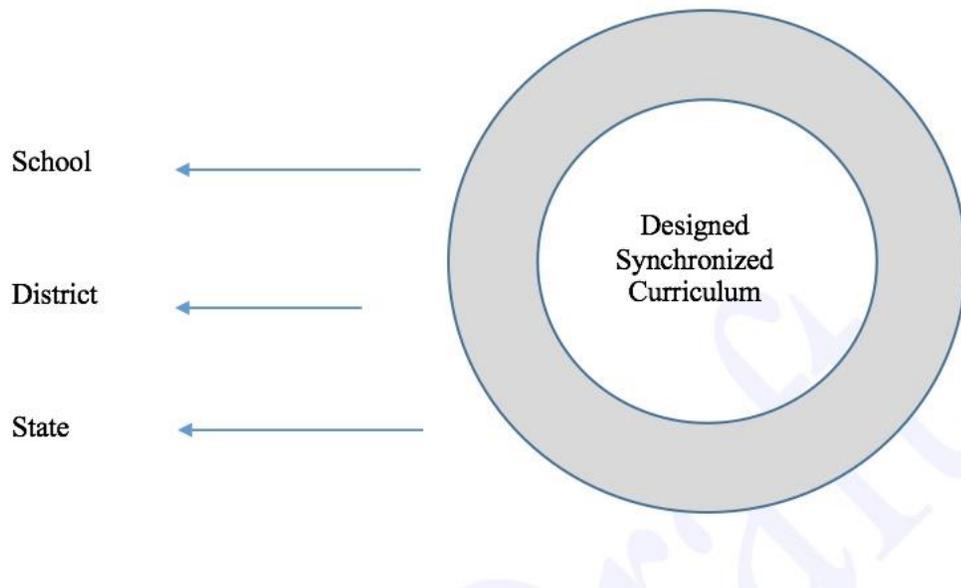
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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to create a product to close the disparity in the postsecondary achievement between low-socioeconomic Black male (LBM) and White male (WM) high school students in Broward County Public School District (BCPSD), Florida, by designing a curriculum model the author calls a ‘synchronized curriculum’ to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups.

### Designed Synchronized Curriculum



*Figure 1.* Designed Synchronized Curriculum

A review of the data suggests that despite numerous attempts to close the achievement gap between LBM and WM, research continually demonstrates that the former group is still unable to be on par with the majority group. Federal programs such as Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services (TRIO) designed to assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds and similar programs within states and local school districts such as Positive

Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and Mentoring Tomorrow's Leaders (MTL) in BCPSD see only marginal improvements among LBM.

The researcher asserts that such attempts have failed greatly in diminishing the achievement gap because of a vital missing component which, for this research shall be called a synchronized curriculum. On face value, the core school curriculum and such intervention programs appear unified in their objective of closing the achievement gap, but after careful analysis, both structures are competing and operating in silos as opposed to being synchronized. Also, within both structures internal and external factors that mitigate against postsecondary achievement for LBM is not adequately addressed. Using a synchronized curriculum will not only diminish the silo effect but will simultaneously synchronize core curriculum components along with internal and external factors for LBM to succeed in postsecondary achievement.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework to be used in accomplishing this goal lies in the model used in Singapore, Finland and Ireland to simultaneously accomplish postsecondary achievement among low-income students and national sustainable economic growth. The model hinges on the Human Capital Theory (HCT). As noted by Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008), "the belief that an investment in human capital through education as an engine leads to the sustainable economic growth of countries" (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008, p. 157).

Tomlinson and McTighe (2006) state that curriculum design should play a pivotal role in addressing the core needs of students for accomplishment and autonomy. Dewey (1938) asserts (as cited in Williams, 2002) that the curriculum must connect with more than one of the student's experiences. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Super's Career Development Theory (CDT) support the application of a synchronized curriculum. Experiential connections and

college/career readiness programs are an integral part of the synchronized curriculum. Bandura (1977) noted that any positive experiences strengthen self-efficacy. While Super (as cited in Bacanli, 2006) asserted that self-concept determines career choice, both theories apply to a diminishing postsecondary achievement between LBM and WM in Broward County.

Yusef and Nabeshima (2012) posit because of the use of this model the ‘tiny band of nations’ “grew rapidly for well over a decade by adopting an approach that derived the maximum mileage from adequate investment in physical assets and by harnessing the potential of human capital and technologies” (p. 15). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) emphasized the harnessing of human capital is not only the potential for student achievement and educational sustainability but also economic growth. While human capital is paramount to the development of sustainable educational systems and economies, it is the synchronization of the educational curriculum responsive to local and global market conditions that propelled the success of the tiny band of nations. A key component of Singapore’s transformation from a developing nation to a developed one was recognizing the importance of maximizing human capital to compensate for limited resources and the intimate link between education and economic productivity (Lee & Fredriksen, 2008). The curriculum was strategic and deliberate in educating and equipping students, particularly low-income students with highly competitive technological skill sets to compete in a global market system.

Despite the use of this model in smaller nations, a similar tailored model can be applied to the United States achieving equal success. The intimate link between education and economic productivity is not unique to Singapore. During the early periods of industrialization in the United States the vocational school’s primary role was to equip students with the necessary skills to be absorbed by industries. It is the concept of a strategic curriculum tailored for a specific

clientele utilizing human capital that is fundamental for individual and national sustainability. This concept has been previously employed in the United States and can benefit LBM. LBM will gain benefits from a similar model used in Singapore to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap and achieve comparable socioeconomic sustainability, by way of a synchronized curriculum.

The synchronized curriculum will be strategic and responsive to LBM conditions utilizing human capital in equipping such students with the necessary skills, exposure and support to improve in postsecondary achievement. For LBM, their collective experiences and responses to the current educational structure have primarily been negative as demonstrated by the achievement gap between the two groups and has been described as “the consistent monolithic treatment of this group has only furthered their underachievement.” (Wood, 2013, p. 47-61). Therefore, while this research brings to light the collective internal and external barriers affecting LBM students’ postsecondary achievement, it also recognizes the collective and individual diverse social and academic experiences between LBM and their WMC.

### **Internal and External Barriers**

Internal and external barriers are fundamental in addressing the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and their WMC. Internal and external barriers engrained in the United States’ socio-economic and political system directly or indirectly marginalize groups such as Hispanics and Blacks. Beckford (1972), Hochschild (2003) and Beach (2007) argue that there are inequalities in society and the educational systems against some minorities, such as LBM. The Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) 2012 noted for the success of Black males in academic/postsecondary achievement to occur there must be “the pursuit of a multilayered approach to reforms at the district, school and individual levels” (p.20).

For this research, the term internal barriers refer to barriers within schools that hinder LBM academic/postsecondary achievement. Internal barriers are those identified in the three areas of a school: the curriculum, teacher and the role of guidance counselors. (Figure 2)

### Using Internal and External Factors to Design the Synchronized Curriculum

#### Internal Barriers Collected Data

Curriculum

Teacher

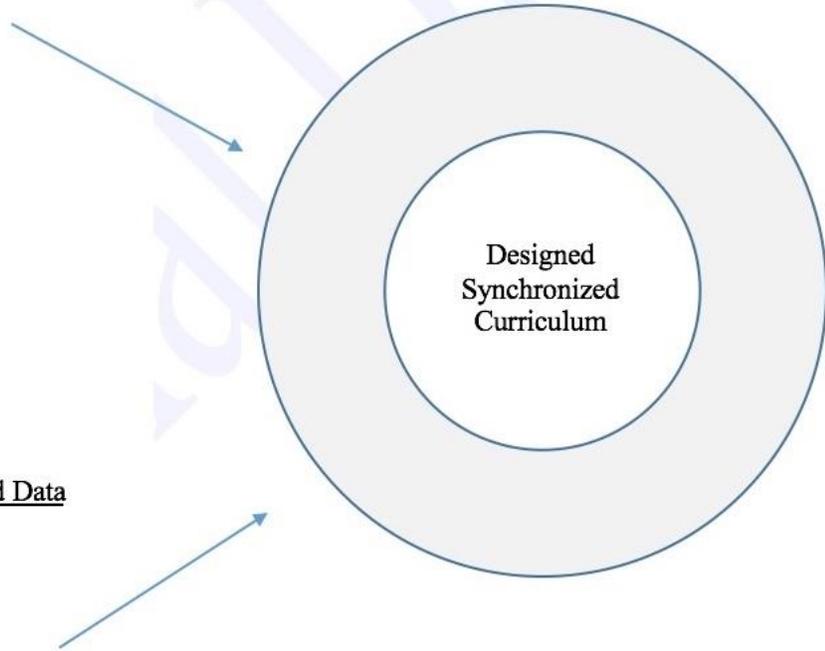
Guidance Counselors

#### External Barriers Collected Data

Family

Community

Deficit Perceptions



*Figure 2.* Internal and External Barriers

These three areas are critical as they represent the major contact points for LBM students. They are also the most impactful to outcomes for LBM students. The current curriculum is not adequately responsive to LBM conditions. Schools with a high demographic of LBM reflect disproportionate number of teachers capable of positive contact, especially those with a significantly high White demographic faculty disproportionate to LBM students (ASHE, 2014).

Also, guidance counselors are inadequate in addressing academic achievement of students particularly LBM, they are ineffective in making deliberate academic contact, health,

psychological and family inquiries and disseminating fundamental accessory information for the target group which is necessary for postsecondary achievement (Lee, 2004).

For this study external barriers refer to barriers outside of school that impede LBM academic/postsecondary achievement. External barriers are in the following categories: family, community and deficit perceptions. These three areas are critical in supporting and building academic/postsecondary achievement efficacy for LBM. Currently, there is a need for an effective program for LBM parent(s) to improve their postsecondary achievement. As research has demonstrated there is a correlation between parentage educational level and student achievement (Lareau, 2003). Also, within LBM communities there is a need for experiential programs that facilitate deliberate contact with positive, successful Black male role models, motivate postsecondary achievement and reverse internal and external deficit perceptions about LBM. Racial discrimination, prejudices and biases as Warren et al., (2016), Paige and Witty (2009) and others suggest are the causes to deficit perceptions and barriers to LBM academic/postsecondary achievement. Harper (2012) asserts for LBM to succeed in postsecondary achievement there must be participation from multiple stakeholders. The use of a synchronized curriculum to synchronize absent internal and external factors occurring in a synchronized manner will ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and WM high school students in BCPSD.

### **Implications**

The implication of this research will be mitigating the high school postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and their WMC. Closing this gap will lead to economic sustainability for LBM (Trusty, 2000). There would be a proportionate college/career representation of LBM.

This research will contribute to a growing body of knowledge of the several positive trade-offs that will occur, such as reduction in the income gap between LBM and their WMC and a positive impact on the national and the local gross domestic product (GDP). In BCPSD because of using a synchronized curriculum, there will be decreased dropout rates, reduction in behavioral and disciplinary issues and a rise in high motivation for postsecondary achievement.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to the US Census Bureau (2015), Blacks (24.1%) compared to Whites (9.1%) were living in poverty in the United States (n.d.). In 2014, the percentage of 5- to 17-year-olds in families living in poverty in Florida was higher than the national average (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). In Broward County, Black Americans (21.8%) lived below the poverty level compared to Whites (11.3%) (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Lareau (2003) and Walpole (2008) have shown how low-socioeconomic conditions and social class fundamentally debilitate academic and future success for children of the working class. Also, Synder and Shafer (1996) (as cited in Lee, 2004) have demonstrated that the earning gap between those who have successfully executed postsecondary planning and those who have not has widened significantly from the 1970s to the 1990s and persists currently. Furthermore, as revealed by the research of National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2015), there are still differences in postsecondary achievement. Students from families with a low-income (such as LBM') are less likely than those from families with a higher income (such as WM) to attain postsecondary achievement. The NCES noted, postsecondary education/achievement is a fundamental step for obtaining beneficial long-term occupational and economic outcomes.

Though it is not known if a synchronized curriculum will decrease dropout rate, reduce behavior and disciplinary issues among LBM' in high school, nationally there are still significant

gaps in the educational achievement between students from low-income families and high-income families (Whitehouse Report, 2014). Paige and Witty (2009), report if racial equality is America's goal, reducing the Black-White test score gap would probably do more to promote this goal than any other strategy that commands a broad political support. This is both necessary and sufficient for not only substantially reducing racial inequality but to improve educational attainment and earnings among LBM'. Improvements in educational achievement and earnings would reduce overrepresentation of LBM' in crime, poor health and low-income family structure (Paige & Witty, 2009).

The focus of this research is to diminish the large gaps in postsecondary achievement between LBM students and their WMC in the BCPSD through a synchronized curriculum that coordinates internal and external factors necessary for LBM success in academic/postsecondary achievement. This researcher contends that at least 50% of BCPSD LBM high school completers should accomplish postsecondary achievement. According to the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) strategic planning mandate, students who have graduated from high school must be prepared to join and compete for jobs locally and in the global workforce (FLDOE Strategic Plan, 2012). Olson (1997) asserts there is an interdependence between education and work as the workforce eventually absorbs both high school and college students.

Despite zealous attempts by Florida's school districts, the FLDOE strategic mandate is still not accomplished. The data reflects that postsecondary achievement and unemployment rates among LBM students are still disproportionate compared to their WMC. Black males are called thugs, dangerous and perceived to have no possibility of academic success much less postsecondary achievement because of their low-income status (Warren, Douglas, & Howard, 2016). Furthermore, because of the perception of Black males compounded by the challenges

they face, there are societal imbalances of perception of race, readiness and ability to achieve academically compared with those of their WMC from higher income brackets (Bonner II & King, 2014). A snapshot of the achievement gap between LBM and WM demonstrates the impact of these perceptions and barriers. The national graduation rate for the 2013-2014 school year in the United States was Blacks (73%) compared to Whites (87%) and Asians (89%) (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

Table 1

*District Graduation Rates 2011-2016*

<u>Year</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>	<u>2012-2013</u>	<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>	<u>2015-2016</u>
White Male	80.5%	80.4%	80.2%	82.7%	83.4%
Black Male	60.9%	59.9%	57.0%	61.7%	62.9%

Florida’s graduation rate for the 2015-2016 school year was Black (72.3%) compared to Whites (85.1%) and Asians (91.9%). In the same year, Black males (67%) graduated compared to their WMC (82%) (Edstats, 2015-2016).

Broward County’s graduation rate for the 2015-2016 school year was Black (70.6%) compared to White (86.1%). Of that, Black (62.9%) males graduated compared to White (83.4%) males (Table 1). A comparison of both low-income groups in the county mirrored similar trends of Black males (69.9%) compared to White male graduates (77.7%) (Edstats, 2015-2016).

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2016), the national postsecondary achievement rate for the year 2013 for Blacks (57%) compared to Whites (67%) and Asians (81%) (Table 2).

Table 2

*RQ 1-National Black/White Postsecondary Achievement Gap*

<u>Year</u>	<u>2013</u>
Black	57%
White	67%
Asians	81%

The rate for White high school completers’ postsecondary achievement has consistently been higher than Black school completers every year since 1990. Similarly, data for the year 2015 from the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Black males (21.6%) had no postsecondary plans and were unemployed. This is comparatively higher than their WMC (9.5%) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Since education and postsecondary achievement are the principal means for occupational status, social mobility and wealth for low-income students (Lee, 2004), it is important LBM receive this opportunity. There is a contention that a synchronized curriculum implemented in BCPSD high schools will greatly close the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and their WMC to create pathways to economic sustainability for LBM.

**Synchronized Curriculum Design**

Tanner and Tanner (1980) defined curriculum as a planned guided experience with intended learning outcomes, developed through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the endorsement of the school for the learners socioeconomic and political benefit. On this basis, the implementation of a synchronized curriculum will subscribe to Tanner and Tanner's (1980) definition of a curriculum using the strategy of coordinating education curriculum to match economic productivity as applied in Singapore as postulated by Yusef and

Nabeshima (2012) to address internal and external barriers hindering LBM postsecondary achievement.

The development of the synchronized curriculum stems from the research of Yusef and Nabeshima (2012) where a similar model proved successful in Singapore. The synchronized curriculum will be constructed from the research on LBM’ as a guide for school districts and schools on how to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap between high school LBM and their WMC. The content of the guide includes an Internal Package Guide, External Package Guide, Expanded Role of Guidance Counselors and Programs wherein contains guided information and recommendations on how to improve LBM’ postsecondary achievement.

### **Background**

The achievement gap between Blacks and their White peers has and is still one of the major concerns in the field of education.

Table 3

*RQ-1 National Black/White Male Postsecondary Achievement Gap*

<u>Year</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2013</u>
Black	43%	61%	57%
White	49%	70%	67%

The comprehensive Coleman report in 1966 demonstrated “the average minority pupil achieves less and is more affected by the quality of his school than the average white pupil” (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 1). Coleman not only demonstrated the inequities between the two groups in student achievement but also in areas of curriculum, school resources such as facilities

and laboratories. Paige and Witty (2009) have framed the issue of the Black-White achievement gap as a national civil rights issue for Blacks.

A paradigm shift has caused the framing of the issue as Black and White to low-income status and high-income thus removing race as a barrier to student achievement but rather demonstrating the impact of economics on student achievement since Blacks are not exclusive to student underachievement. Conversely, sufficient data demonstrates that race is still a factor in hindering academic and postsecondary achievement for Blacks and thus cannot be ignored. The problem of underachievement for low-income students inclusive of Blacks continues to persist as “large achievement gaps between the two groups still exists” (Whitehouse, 2014). However, despite the re-framing of the issue, the fact based on research and data, is that Blacks and notably Black males have continued to lag in student achievement and postsecondary achievement compared to their WMC. Thus, this research focuses on LBM.

The answer as to why this trend has persisted has been the catalyst for many theories and discourses. To comprehensively understand why this trend continues, despite marginal success in closing the achievement gap between the two groups, an understanding of the historical context of embedded inequalities within the United States is needed. These have also overlapped into the educational system and has significantly created barriers to achievement for Blacks and particularly LBM.

Beckford (1972) in his analysis of the impact of poverty in underdeveloped economies asserts, “in every society; the institutional environment is a legacy of historical forces” (Beckford, 1972, p. xvi). Therefore, the barriers and inequalities in education that affect LBM postsecondary achievement are legacies from past negative historical forces in the United States. Berg (2016) asserts that “the American educational system has a long history of perpetuating

inequality in explicit and subtle ways through the academic preparation of low-income students and standardized testing” (p. 15). Similarly, Hochschild (2003) refers to these negative historical forces as nested inequalities, which reflect an inherent system that fosters inequality. Hochschild notes that nested inequalities are ingrained components that foster inequalities and are found in different areas of the society. For instance, policies, albeit federal or state, schools, teachers, curriculum and communities consistently marginalize specific groups such as Blacks and Hispanics (Hochschild, 2003).

Because of these inequalities, Whitling (2009) noted that Black males collectively experience disproportionate amounts of school failure. Compared to Black females and their WMC, Black males have higher dropout rates, poorer achievement and lower test scores. Further, they are sorely under-represented in gifted education and over-represented in special education. Ford and Moore (2013) categorize these collective experiences as significant barriers and assert they occur within the four domains of home, school, health and nutrition, while sub-barriers are income and race. A snapshot of the data demonstrates the causality of educational inequalities on LBM’s postsecondary achievement.

For instance, Blacks (42%) make up the demographics of schools with meager resources compared to schools with adequate resources (9%) (National Center for Education Government Public Information, 2012). In BCPSD Blacks are over-represented in areas of outside school suspension (OSS) and in school suspension (ISS). Blacks (44%) received OSS in comparison to Whites (29.9%) and Asians (0.5%). In-school suspensions (ISS) consisted of Blacks (37.8%), Whites (33%) and Asians (0.7%) (Florida Department of Education Accountable Data Archive, 2016).

Similarly, incarceration rates for Black males solidify Hochschild's nested inequalities; they account for 60% of those imprisoned. Students of color face harsher punishments in school than their White peers, leading increased Black youth to incarceration. Black students' arrests are far more than their White classmates, and Black youth have higher rates of juvenile incarceration. They are more likely to be sentenced to adult prison (Kerby, 2012). Based on research, data and the literature reviewed, it is evident that academic/postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and their WMC continues to be a daunting challenge. Within the data they bare similar solution strategies to close the achievement gap between the two groups but with minimal improvement. Ford and Moore (2013) suggest a comprehensive, aggressive plan specific to urban Black males that address their social, educational and cultural/familial needs. The authors call for social justice philosophy or an approach which ensures a culturally equal and equitable education. Butler-Barnes, Williams and Chavous (2012) recommend the use of an achievement motivation framework by linking educational utility beliefs and academic performance. This makes LBM perceive the value of education in achieving their goals. Harper (2012) contends that there must be multiple stakeholder participation for low-income Black American postsecondary achievement. Whiting (2009) asserts a 'scholar identity model' that emphasizes the critical role of educators, particularly teachers, to build positive self-efficacy, attitude, behaviors and values among Black males to master sociocultural and educational challenges is necessary.

Despite attempts to solve the widening gap between LBM and their WMC, it is apparent that the gap still exists. Thus, the researcher maintains that the key to LBM postsecondary achievement lies in the synchronization of the components discussed (Figure 2) that would promote postsecondary achievement as other methodologies continually engage in silos. While

there is no panacea for all student achievement, the researcher asserts that the primary challenge for LBM students is to achieve economic sustainability if asserted that if poverty did not exist, there is the likelihood racism would still exist (Ford & Moore, 2013). For LBM who are likely to encounter racism, skills necessary for economic sustainability are paramount to buffer the adverse effects of racism.

The BCPSD demographics White (51.3%), Black (40.4%), Ethnically Hispanic (32.9%), Non-ethnically Hispanic (67.1%), Asian (3%), Native American or Native Alaskan (.9%), Native Hawaiian (.2%) and Multiracial (3.6%) (Table 4) (Broward County Public Schools, 2015).

Table 4

*Broward County Public Schools 2016/17 Student Racial Ethnic Distribution*

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>
White	51.3	138,954
Black	40.4	109,427
Asian	3.8	10,169
Multiracial	3.6	9,649
Ethnically Hispanic	32.9	89,073
Non-Ethnically Hispanic	61.7	182,032

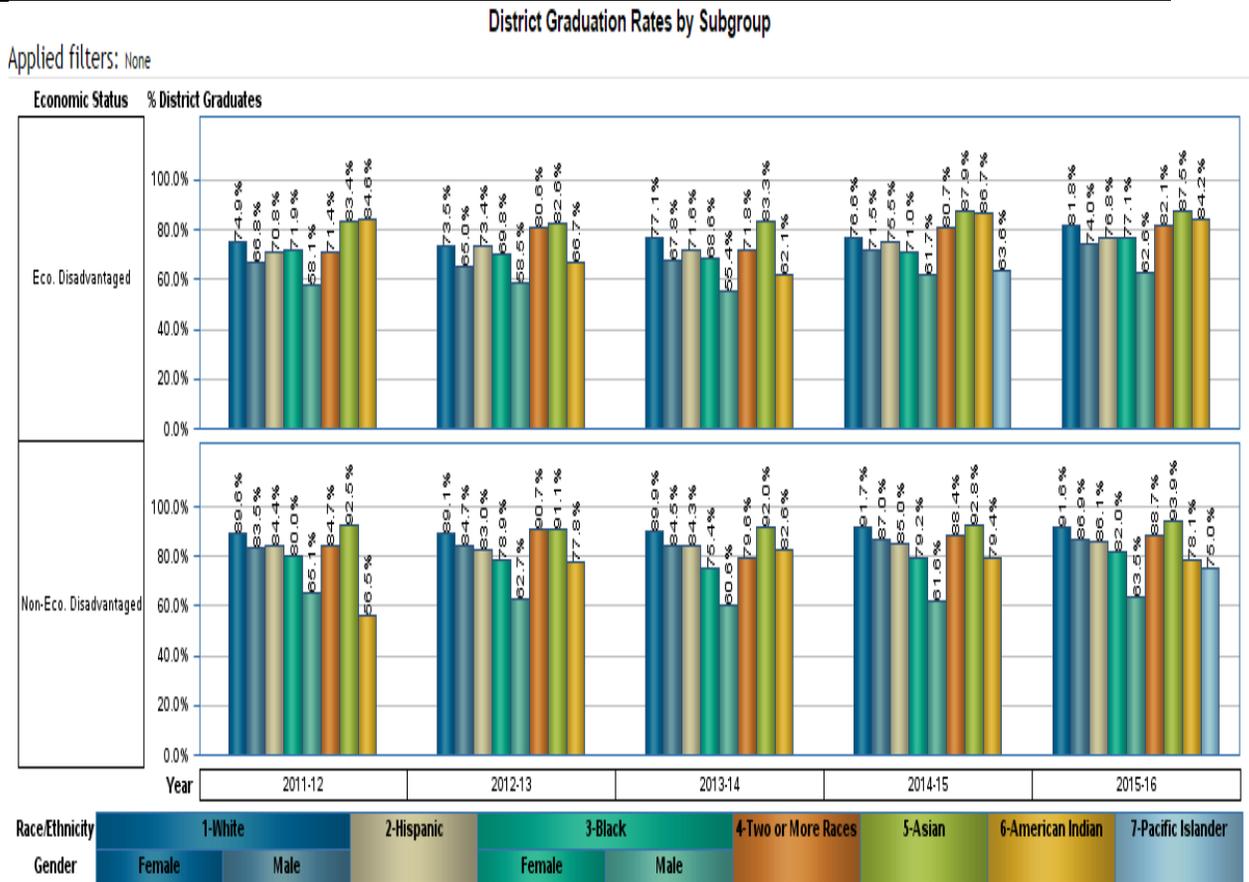
(BCPSD, 2015)

A 5-year low-income comparison between White/Black male graduation rate, demonstrated in the 2015-2016 school year WM (74.0%) compared to LBM' (62.6%) (Table5) (Edstats, 2015-2016).

Despite continuous initiatives to close the achievement gap, sufficient data demonstrates there are still significant gaps in educational and postsecondary achievement between LBM and their WMC in BCSD (Table 5).

Table 5

*District Economic Disadvantage Graduation Rates 2011-2016 (RQ1)*



Year	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
White Male	66.8%	65.0%	67.8%	71.5%	74.0%
Black Male	58.1%	58.5%	55.4%	61.7%	62.6%

Therefore, it is imperative that a comprehensive plan is brought forward to close the gap. Maybe that solution can be found in synchronized curriculum as current methodologies primarily

focus on academic interventions as opposed to addressing internal and external barriers to accomplish Florida's strategic mandate.

The implication of using a synchronized curriculum in the BCPSD is a reduction in behavioral and disciplinary issues which will lead to reduced rates of dropouts for LBM, a rise in academic and postsecondary achievement efficacy and diminishing the postsecondary achievement gap. Given the challenges LBM face, participating in a synchronized curriculum program will reduce the disparity in income inequality between the two groups leading to more significant lifetime earnings, lower unemployment and lower poverty (Whitehouse Report, 2014). The findings of this research will also be useful in initiating a curriculum reform within BCPSD and pertinent to district and state level stakeholders in postsecondary planning. The study will validate the efficient use of limited resources by harnessing human capital. The implementation of a synchronized curriculum strategic to the target group will yield positive outcomes.

### **Research Questions**

The stated research questions will guide this research.

**RQ1.** What is the current gap between LBM' and their WMC in postsecondary education?

**RQ2.** What are the internal factors associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement?

**RQ3.** What are the external factors associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement?

**RQ4.** How could internal and external factors be utilized to design an effective synchronized curriculum?

**RQ5.** What are the ways to implement a synchronized curriculum to mitigate the persistence gap between LBM' and their WMC in postsecondary achievement?

The strategy of the research is to validate the existing problem of postsecondary underachievement among LBM students as measured by key indicators, followed by demonstrating that a synchronized curriculum may be a possible solution to closing the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and their WMC.

### **Significance of the Study**

The importance of this research is primarily to close the gap between LBM and their WMC in postsecondary achievement. Also, the study validates that there is still a disparity between the two groups and emphasizes the positive and negative implications associated with a postsecondary achievement for LBM in BCPSD. While there have been numerous approaches to the problem, this research brings to light a new solution strategy to the problem that has not been present in previous attempts. The associated benefits of this research are LBM' success in postsecondary achievement, the reduction in achievement deficit between the two groups in BCPSD and the likelihood of economic sustainability for the target group and local GDP. Furthermore, the research could serve as a base model for other low-income groups that are comparatively disproportionate to the majority group in postsecondary achievement.

### **Limitations**

This research is limited to BCPSD and solely confined to LBM high school students' postsecondary underachievement. Also, this research is not a longitudinal study but rather the purpose of this research is to design a synchronized curriculum guide that can be implemented in BCPSD high schools to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and WM students.

Furthermore, per Lynn University library guides, because of the use of a historical design limitations on the ability to fulfill the aims of the research are directly related to the amount and quality of documentation available to understand the research problem. Also, historical research relies on data from the past and there is no way to manipulate it to control for contemporary contexts. Original authors bring their perspectives and biases to the interpretation of past events, and these biases are more difficult to ascertain in historic resources. Finally, due to the lack of control over external variables in using a historical design, internal validity may be weak. Because of the limitations to the entirety of historical documentation needed to address the problem fully, gaps must be acknowledged (Lynn Library Libguides, 2017).

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 of this research introduced the problem statement and described the specific problem addressed in the research as well as the conceptual design components. Chapter 2 will present a review of the literature about the research and relevant research associated with the problem addressed. Chapter 3 will present the methodology and procedures to be used for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 will contain an analysis of the data and presentation of the results. Chapter 5 will offer a summary and discussion of the researcher's findings, implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

The methodology of this research will be qualitative utilizing a historical design by using archival reporting databases to perform a comparative analysis over a given period between LBM and their WMC in student achievement and postsecondary achievement to answer Research Question 1. Also, historical data to demonstrate the internal and external barriers to LBM postsecondary achievement will be used to answer Research Questions 2 and 3. By way of designing what the author calls a synchronized curriculum which demonstrates how internal and

external factors are utilized to develop a tailored curriculum for LBM and the possible ways to implement the curriculum addresses Research Questions 4 and 5.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Black male.** The term Black male will be used to identify a person of African ancestry, per Merriam Webster dictionary “a person and especially a Black person of African ancestry” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Therefore, the term refers to Black males in the United States enrolled in BCPSD, regardless of place of birth.

**Career and Technical Education.** CTE programs provide academic and technical instruction to help our nation meet the challenges of economic development, student achievement and global competitiveness (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009).

**Career readiness.** Career readiness involves three major skill areas: core academic skills, employability skills and technical, job-specific skills (ACTE, 2013).

**Common Core State Standards.** The Common Core is a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and can do at the end of each grade. The standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career and life, regardless of where they live (Common Core Standards Initiative, n.d.).

**Curriculum.** a planned guided experience with intended learning outcomes, developed through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the endorsement of the school for the learners socioeconomic and political benefit (Tanner & Tanner, 1980).

**External barriers.** The term external barriers are barriers outside of school that impede LBM academic/postsecondary achievement (Term by author, 2017).

**Internal barriers.** The term internal barriers are defined as barriers within schools that hinder LBM academic/postsecondary achievement (Term by author, 2017).

**Postsecondary achievement.** Postsecondary achievement has traditionally meant to acquire a postsecondary education (college). Since the 21<sup>st</sup> century there have been many changes politically, economically and socially and thus postsecondary achievement has been redefined to mean not only college but also career readiness (College & Career Readiness, 2016).

Therefore, any form of post-high school preparation to achieve either is defined as accomplishing postsecondary achievement. For this research, postsecondary achievement is inclusive of both the traditional and the 21<sup>st</sup> century definition and has been expanded to indicate economic sustainability. The data presented in this study demonstrates a correlation between higher levels of postsecondary achievement and economic sustainability (Term by author, 2017).

**Socioeconomic status (income).** An economic and sociological combined total measure of individuals work experience, family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education and occupation. Examinations of socioeconomic status often reveal inequities in access to resources, plus issues related to privilege, power and control (Socioeconomic Status, n.d.).

**Synchronized curriculum.** A curriculum that unifies the core curriculum, internal and external factors in a synchronized manner to promote postsecondary achievement among LBM. The definition of synchronization means to occur at the same time or rate. Thus, the underpinning component of a synchronized curriculum is to ensure that the factors needed for LBM postsecondary achievement occur at the same time to promote the likelihood of postsecondary achievement success. The synchronized curriculum is grounded in Human Capital Theory, tenets of Social Learning Theory and Career Development Theory as means to empower

LBM with traditional and 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills taught at the same time for success in postsecondary achievement (Term by author, 2017).

**Twenty-first century skills.** The essential skills that students need to succeed as citizens and workers in the 21st century (The Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, 2010).

**White male.** A person of European ancestry, per Merriam Webster dictionary “being a member of a group or race characterized by light pigmentation of the skin of, relating to, characteristic of, or consisting of white people or their culture” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Thus, the term refers to White males in the United States enrolled in BCPSD, regardless of place of birth.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

The achievement gap between Black and White students persists at almost all levels of the educational system. For Black males the problem is more pronounced as not only do they lag in comparison to their White peers but also their female peers. Given the socioeconomic, cultural stereotypes placed on LBM, evidenced by their disproportionate representation in unemployment and incarceration rates, their condition has been labeled a civil rights issue to magnify the problem.

The achievement gap between LBM and their WMC is disconcerting. Since research and data have evidenced the correlation between higher levels of student achievement and long-term economic sustainability and quality of life, solving this problem is paramount. Therefore, this research focuses on closing the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and their WMC in BCPSD using a synchronized curriculum. Using this developed curriculum offers economic sustainability for the target group and benefits the BCPSD by reducing behavioral issues while simultaneously improving postsecondary achievement among LBM.

This chapter contains a review of the literature related to high school low-socioeconomic Black male postsecondary underachievers. It also identifies the current gap between Black males and their White peers, identifies factors associated with low-performing socioeconomic status Black males, identifies components of a synchronized curriculum and addresses how a synchronized curriculum will mitigate against the persistence gap between LBM and their WMC.

### **LBM Postsecondary Underachievement**

The Coleman report in 1966, which was one of the most comprehensive comparative reports that demonstrated the achievement gap between Blacks and their WMC foreshadowed

the ensuing problem of the achievement gap between the two groups. The conclusions of Coleman et al. (1966) reported that the average Black student achieves less compared to the average White student (Table 1), (Table 3) and (Table 5). This is not surprising given the era of the research compounded by post negative historical forces such as segregation. There is a continuation of this trend, despite various progressive policies, programs and resources to bring both groups on par.

After the Coleman report, other reports such as *A Nation at Risk* and the *Forgotten Half*, highlight the barriers to student achievement and student readiness in a competitive global market. Thus, because of those reports, school reform and student achievement were made a priority throughout the United States. Overall, Graham (2013) asserts, despite the zealotry around *A Nation at Risk*, and the *Forgotten Half* to improve student achievement, far-reaching changes have not occurred, and many of the problems identified in 1983-1988 remain unaddressed, while student achievement continues to challenge educators and administrators.

While both reports were inclusive of all students, unaddressed challenges for low-socioeconomic students, particularly Black male students, remain. For instance, there is a persistent postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and WM, the over-representation of LBM in OSS, IS, juvenile detention and incarceration. A high percentage of LBM placed in schools with meager resources compared to Whites are more likely to be negatively affected by their school experience currently persists (Coleman, 1966).

Bailey (2003) posits that for more than a decade there has been a dramatic decline in the percentage of Black males attending postsecondary institutions. To reverse this trend, some institutions (i.e., University of Georgia) have commissioned task forces and committees to investigate the causes of this decline as well as provide recommendations to address this problem

(Bailey, 2003). The reversing of this trend is not only beneficial to LBM' but to long-term economic productivity and sustainability in the United States.

Increasing access to postsecondary education for Black males remains a top priority (ASHE, 2014). Academic and postsecondary underachievement among Black males are well documented and has been the catalyst for deficit perceptions and perspectives of Black males. This has brought the issue to the national forefront and is prudent to resolve for reducing socio-economic issues affecting LBM'.

President Obama, in his remarks at a press conference on February 27, 2014, to introduce his My Brother's Keeper initiative, emphasized, "by almost every measure, the group that is facing some of the most severe challenges in the 21st century in this country are boys and young men of color." (Obama, 2014). Numerous research studies of Black male school performance document factors enabling their academic failure. There are far fewer volumes that emphasize the impact and significance of Black male cultural agency for shaping their academic trajectories (Howard, Douglas, & Warren, 2016). In understanding how, Black males' cultural agencies affect postsecondary achievement requires being cognizant of the varying cultural differences within the group. Thus,

delving into the intricacies of the Black American experience in education is part of a growing movement in scholarly literature which rejects their monolithic treatment by scholars and practitioners alike and suggests that understanding their differences is foundational to enhancing their status in postsecondary education (Wood, 2013, p. 47).

Delving into the Black male experience is critical as Lee (2004) states,

Unfortunately, current understanding of the factors that explain the achievement patterns of low-income students is limited. Presently, most research focuses on differences

between low-income and middle and high-income students; much less attention has been paid to variation among low-income students, a group of interest to educational researchers. Analyses of this low-income student within-group difference are necessary to understand why some students fail, some barely survive, and still, others thrive in this low-income high-risk environment. What makes some students succeed? (Lee, 2004, p. 5).

Conversely, Sanders (1999) purports the actions of the student, family and schools make the difference for low-income students that accomplish postsecondary achievement. While Lee's assessment is accurate, and the question is valid as to why some low-income students succeed and some fail, collectively low-income, particularly the subgroup LBM are consistently behind in student achievement and postsecondary achievement comparative to their White peers.

ASHE (2014) and Coleman et al. (1966) state that factors such as ineffective postsecondary preparatory curriculums, lack of quality teachers and inadequate school funding, create barriers to Black students' postsecondary achievement. Also, there is sufficient evidence that indicates racial discrimination and institutional or systemic racism embedded in public policy negatively affects educational outcomes and compounds the challenge of postsecondary achievement for Black males. Research and data have indicated that schools, colleges and educational institutions with a high demographic of Whites are predisposed to have low expectations, biases and prejudice about the intellectual abilities of Black males. Harper (2012), Hammond (2005) and Steele (1997) (as cited in ASHE, 2014) suggest these racial stereotype LBM encounter are barriers to postsecondary achievement.

Employing the one size fits all standardized testing, which adversely affects Black males compared to their White peers because of fear of affirming deficit perceptions, institutions

continually employ this testing methodology for access to postsecondary education nationally. Therefore, the barriers to postsecondary achievement for Black males are not only embedded in national and local systemic educational processes but also manifested through racial discrimination and predisposed stereotypes. Thus, as postulated by Warren et al. (2016) this group is “labeled unqualified, at-risk, dangerous thugs from low-income families and urban ghettos” with no chance of success because of their low-socioeconomic status (p. 64).

### **Current Gap Between Black Males and White Males**

**Student achievement.** The academic achievement gap between Whites and Blacks has narrowed over the past 30 years with Black children’s test scores gaining both absolutely and relative to Whites (Ferguson, 2001; Hedges & Nowell, 1999; & Jencks & Phillips, 1998) (as cited in Harris, 2010, p. 247). Conversely, Grissmer et al. (1998) and Hedges and Nowell (1999) (as cited in Harris, 2010), asserted “the convergence in Black-White test scores that occurred from the early 1970s to approximately 1990 has been slow” (p. 247).

Thus, among LBM this trend has persisted. Sufficient data and research still reflect a disparity between the two groups. Collectively, the literature reviewed demonstrated that an academic achievement gap between LBM and their WMC has persisted from the 1960s (Coleman et al., 1966) to the present as indicated by Ford and Moore (2013), Harper (2012), Musu-Gillette et al., (2016) and Paige and Witty (2009). For example, “a Black student is less likely to read as proficient in the fourth grade [student]” (Obama, 2014, p. 6). Thernstrom and Thernstrom (2003) (as cited in Harris, 2010) noted, “By age 17 the average Black student is four years behind the average White student. Black 12th graders score lower than White 8th graders in reading, math, United States History and geography” (p. 247).

Other gaps are evident on literacy proficiency tests, between grades four and eight. Black males were 13% and 11% lower respectively compared to Whites (40%) and Asian (47%) males in grade four and White (37%) and Asian males (44%) in grade eight (National Center for Education Government Public Information, 2012).

Strickland (1994) and Thompson (2014) concur that the implication of low literacy proficiency among LBM is that they will not be able to comprehend or evaluate written documents, communicate relevant information or support inferences about the documents read. Also, it will be difficult for such students to evaluate, analyze and make informed decisions about postsecondary literature which invariably hinders postsecondary achievement.

NCES (2016) states that the national postsecondary achievement rate for the year 2013 for Blacks (57%) was compared to Whites (67%) (Table 3). BCPSD graduation rate for the 2015-2016 school year was Black males (62.9%) compared to WM (83.4%) (Table 1). A comparison of both low-income groups in the county mirrored similar trends of Black males (69.9%) compared to their WMC (77.7%) (Edstats, 2015-2016). Only 20% of Black parents attained postsecondary education compared to 44% Whites (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

**Black economic disparity.** According to the National Center for Education Statistics Education Government Programs (2016), nationally 38% of Blacks live in poverty. US Census Bureau (2015) reports that Blacks (24.1%) compared to Whites (9.1%) live in poverty in the United States. In 2014, the percentage of 5- to 17-year-old in families living in poverty in Florida was higher than the national average (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). In BCPSD Blacks (21.8%) lived below the poverty level compared to Whites (11.3%) (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Data for the year 2015 from the 2016 Bureau of Labor Statistics

reported of Black males (21.6%) had no postsecondary plans and were unemployed compared to their White peers (9.5%) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). In Broward County Blacks (15.0%) were unemployed compared to their White (8%) peers (United States Census Bureau, 2015).

The impact of the disparity in socioeconomic status on student achievement has been efficiently demonstrated by Lareau (2003). Conversely, Isaacs (2007) (as cited in Harris, 2010) has shown that Black children from middle and upper-middle class families experience income inequality. “Only 31% of middle-class Black children have greater family earnings than their parents compared to 68% of their White counterparts” (p. 242). Harris (2010) states, “in general, Black Americans are at a disadvantage across various measures of economic well-being” (p. 245).

Caldwell and Ginther (1996), Hobbs (1990) and Tuma (1989) (as cited in Lee, 2004) have indicated there is a correlation between high-income and high student achievement and that income is the best predictor of student achievement. Synder and Shafer (1996) (as cited in Lee, 2004) have not only evidenced the correlation between student achievement and positive income earnings but also demonstrated the widening income gap between a low-income and high-income. The authors noted that the earning gap between those who had successfully executed postsecondary planning and those who had not has widened significantly from the 1970s to the 1990s. Therefore, if the socioeconomic status is the best predictor of student achievement, and high-income students are predicted to be successful, then conversely LBM students are poised to fail. For this reason, LBM students are at a higher risk since they are already disproportionately represented in low-income household compared to their White peers. This furthers the postsecondary achievement gap between these two groups and compounds the cycle of postsecondary underachievement and poverty for LBM.

## **Factors Associated with Low-Performing Income Black Males**

The literature reviewed collectively suggests the barriers to LBM are multifaceted. These barriers occur in and outside of school. Unless addressed, the continuing widening gap between the two groups will persist.

### **Systemic Barriers**

Negative historical forces and nested inequalities derived from an elitist ideology found in the American political, economic and social institutions ensures that only one group controls the dynamics for the pursuit of happiness, property and liberty while limiting these rights for other groups such as LBM. This dynamic is also identifiable in national and local systemic educational processes (Beach, 2007; Beckford, 1972; & Hochschild, 2003). These manufactured barriers are in policies, albeit federal or state, schools, teachers, curriculum and communities, that consistently marginalize specific groups such as Blacks and Hispanics and prevents academic/postsecondary achievement for LBM.

Similarly, Bell's (1992) (as cited in Lewis, James, Hancock, & Hill-Jackson, 2008) racism reality theory is applicable in explaining the White/Black achievement gap and "posits that every facet of American life, including education, is affected by an ideology of superiority and the lingering effects of slavery" (p. 128). Bell (1992) and Feagin (2006) (as cited in Lewis et al., 2008) conclude that these historical negative forces embedded in American society mitigate against academic/postsecondary achievement for Blacks. Bell (1992) suggests that the educational experience for Blacks is comparable to a critical indicator of racism that is an established pattern of a cyclical progress and regression and is a socially constructed part of American culture. It is now embedded, covert and evolved. Feagin (2006) agrees and further

postulates that all institutions in America inclusive of education had been affected by socially constructed determinants of race.

Bell (1992) and Feagin (2006) (as cited in Lewis et al., 2008) assert, to not get too excited about these rises in Black American progress, because they would produce no more than temporary ‘peaks of progress’, short-lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways to maintain white dominance. Moreover, when we happen on the valleys, reflected in the achievement of Black students, we should be reminded of the permanence and systemic nature of racism, manifested in society and all its institutions—including the institution of education. (p. 136).

Bowles and Gintis (1976) also confer that these nested inequalities are embedded in the American economic structure, thus promoting income inequality even among Blacks that have accomplished academic/postsecondary achievement as shown by (Harris, 2010).

Bowles and Gintis (1976) assert, Making U.S capitalism work involves ensuring the minimal participation in decision-making by the majority (workers); protecting a single minority (capitalist and managers) against the wills of a majority and subjecting the majority to the maximal influence of this single unrepresentative minority. The actions of the clear majority (workers) are controlled by a small minority (owners and managers) (p. 54).

Conversely, the economic actions, rewards of LBM are controlled by an elitist economic ideology, thus preventing closing the Black/White income inequality gap.

### **Being Black**

The deficit perception of LBM creates internal and external barriers to postsecondary achievement for the target group. Harper (2012) suggests these racial stereotypes LBM

encounter are a barrier to postsecondary achievement. In schools, colleges and educational institutions with a high demographic of Whites, Blacks are predisposed to have low expectations, biases and prejudices about the intellectual abilities of Black males (Jackson, 2007 and Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009) (as cited in ASHE, 2014). Kerby (2012) asserted Black students' arrests are far more than their White classmates, have higher rates of juvenile incarceration and are more likely to be sentenced to adult prison. Conversely, Paige and Witty (2009) note that closing the achievement gap is more likely to promote racial equality since student achievement facilitates pathways to be on par with Whites because as postulated by Ford and Moore (2013) racism will more than likely continue to exist.

Harper (2012) puts forward some questions that lead to possible factors hindering postsecondary achievement among the LBM families in postsecondary achievement, "How do family members nurture and sustain Black male students' interest in school and postsecondary achievement?" "What do teachers and other school agents do to assist Black male postsecondary achievement?" "What/which programs and experiences enhance Black male's postsecondary readiness?" (p. 5). These are valid questions as the data reflects that Black males compared to White peers as President Obama stated, "by almost every measure" are consistently lagging or negatively disproportionately represented.

While there are limitations in controlling economic factors, Slavin and Madden (2006) and Harper (2012) conclude that a multifaceted approach inclusive of components such as family support services, curriculum and school agents are the best opportunities to correct the imbalance. Therefore, the Black male experience as being 'Black' in and of itself presents a fundamental barrier to academic/postsecondary achievement.

## **School and Curriculum**

Dewey (1938) (as cited in Williams, 2002), Tomlinson and McTighe (2006) and Lee and Fredrikson (2008), concur that the curriculum is the center and driving force for accomplishing student achievement. Furthermore, in its design, it should address the core needs of students, which are necessary for personal economic sustainability and autonomy. Bandura (1977) and Super (as cited in Bacanli, 2006) state that the curriculum is a necessary conduit to build positive experiences for students to strengthen the self-efficacy and self-concept necessary for career choices.

Conversely, Critical Theory (CT) suggests that the Black/White achievement gap occurs because of embedded nested inequalities (Beach, 2007; Beckford, 1972; Gibson 1986; Hochschild, 2003 and Palmer & Maramba, 2011) (as cited in Palmer and Maramba, 2011). They note the reasons why students and schools fail to close the achievement gap and eradicate inequalities is because the design of the economic structures as shown by Bowles and Gintis (1976) demands and ensures those outcomes. Gibson (1988), Palmer and Maramba (2011) and Shor (1992) (as cited in Palmer & Maramba, 2011) concur that schools and the curriculum are agents with the primary function of reproducing and maintaining the status quo.

Other school agents such as guidance counselors are fundamental to LBM postsecondary achievement. Gies (1990) asserts that school agents such as guidance counselors play a significant role in assisting students accomplish postsecondary achievement. There is sufficient research to suggest this is not so. Lee (2004) asserts, “practicing school counselors and the counselor educators who prepare them have shown little concern for how school counselors address the academic achievement of students” (p. 1-2). Lee (1993) notes how students who lack self-concept motivators were inadequately prepared about career decision-making strategies.

These inefficiencies were attributed to the lack of a sound career guidance program in both the school and the school district.

Taylor-Dunlop (1995) note that students from high-socioeconomic backgrounds, usually White, were more likely to utilize their home school guidance counselor. Conversely, students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, usually minorities such as Blacks and Hispanics, who would have the most to gain, do not benefit from or do not make use of the available resources. Stead and Watson (1998) assert that most guidance/career programs developed in the United States are inherently culturally biased and have ignored the needs of minorities in the United States. These do not recognize the importance of their interaction of contextual factors. Contextual factors, such as culture, racism, prejudice, education and economic conditions are missing from guidance counselors' approaches in assisting minorities postsecondary achievement.

### **Breaking the Barriers**

Multiple theories attempt to explain the Black/White achievement gap (Darensbourg & Blake, 2013). A significant amount of the literature reviewed attributed racial discrimination as a fundamental barrier to LBM postsecondary achievements. Other barriers are poverty and exclusively their low-socioeconomic status (Magnuson, Rosenbaum, & Waldfogel, 2008) (as cited in Darensbourg & Blake, 2013). Disidentification is the process where Blacks disengage from school to maintain their urban Black identity and avoid acting White. This mitigates student achievement for Blacks. (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Osborne, 1995; 1997; Peterson-Lewis & Bratton, 2004) (as cited in Darensbourg & Blake, 2013).

Greene, Marti and McClenney (2008) and Darensbourg and Blake (2013) note that engagement is fundamental to student achievement and postsecondary achievement for Blacks.

Greene et al., (2008) find that Blacks with a high engagement attitude are more likely to accomplish postsecondary achievement than those who do not. Darensbourg and Blake (2013) conclude achievement values do not have a significant impact on engagement or achievement. Conversely, behavioral engagement has a significant impact on student achievement in math (Darensbourg and Blake, 2013). Any serious attempt to address the achievement gap between Black and White students must be from multiple perspectives and theoretical positions. There is no easy answer that can explain the existence and persistence of the Black/White achievement gap (Lewis et al., 2008).

### **Ameliorating the Gap Using a Synchronized Curriculum**

Sufficient data, research and literature reviewed demonstrate the existence of an achievement gap between LBM and their White peers (Coleman, 1966; Harris, 2010; Harper, 2012 and Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). The cause and theories for the achievement gap between LBM and their White peers, as purported by the literature reviewed, are due to one or more of the four domains: home, school, health and nutrition with sub-barriers being income and race as articulated by Ford and Moore (2013). Possible causes of the achievement gap between the two groups are built on an analysis of the achievement gap between low-income Blacks and high-income Whites (Sanders, 1999). While there is an appreciation of the scholarly works, they collectively do not necessarily present a new solution strategy to the achievement gap problem.

### **Synchronized Curriculum Not Integration**

On July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015, an investigative reporter from the New York Times, Nikole Hannah-Jones on a radio interview with Ira Glass brought to bear relevant issues on the persistent achievement gap between Blacks and their White peers. Jones personal experience as a participant/product in the school desegregation process in the United States and an investigative

case study on schools in Durham, North Carolina, caused by a comment made by Michael Brown's [Black male shot by police in Missouri Ferguson in 2014] mother was compelling. "You took my son away from me. You know how hard it was for me to get him to stay in school and graduate? You know how many black men graduate? Not many!" (Jones, 2015, expression 562).

The case study comprised of interviews, personal account and audio of the failing Normandy School District students integrating to neighboring fortunate Francis Howell School District highlighted all the barriers and challenges to Black student achievement as purported in the literature reviewed. Jones (2015) suggests, integration is a forgotten solution to the achievement gap problem between low-income Blacks and Whites and should be reconsidered and utilized as it demonstrated to be successful in Missouri.

What the statistics show is that between 1971, which is where the nation really started doing massive desegregation, and 1988, which was the peak of integration in the United States, 1988 was the peak. School integration, yes. Well, the data shows that at the start of real desegregation, the achievement gap between Black and White students was about 40 points. (Jones, 2015, expression 562).

Jones' (2015) compelling case study purports components of a synchronized curriculum, such as careful proportional placement of LBM in high resource schools. Conversely, NCES (2012) data showed Blacks (42%) make up the demographics of schools with little resources and thus creates a barrier to postsecondary achievement and furthers the complexity of the achievement gap between Blacks and Whites. The reporter's integration solution strategy presents several problems. These include transportation, financial costs and most importantly suggests that Black students' achievement is dependent on "White values and White

environment.” There is a correlation between schools with high levels of resources and positive student achievement but not that for Blacks to achieve it is dependent on White values or the White environment.

The case study was used to capture the persistent problem of Black and White achievement gap as evidenced by Michael Brown’s mother compelling statement, the relevance of this research and serves to distinguish integration from a synchronized curriculum. The distinction is necessary as integration is the combination of different elements put together in a desired manner, while synchronization is combining different elements of a system operating at the same time with a unified purpose (Forrestal, 2011). Both integration and synchronization participate in the act of combining different elements; however, the striking contrast is integration does not demand the operant to be synchronized, which is necessary for the educational curriculum for LBM' postsecondary achievement. While current methodologies may make a difference, there are gaps in the approaches to solving the problem, Band-Aids masking the need for a comprehensive curriculum reform tailored for LBM.

### **Human Capital Theory**

There is scant evidence of the human capital theory (HCT) as a possible way to diminish the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and their WMC. Most applications of HCT demonstrate the adverse causal effect in income inequalities for Blacks. Ehrenberg and Smith (1997) (as cited in Baron & Armstrong, 2007) assert

HCT conceptualizes workers as embodying a set of skills which can be rented out to employers. The knowledge and skills a worker has, which come from education, training and the training that experience brings, generate a certain stock of productive capital. The investment in HCT yields a maximum return on investment (RIO), more than investing in

physical capital as an investment using HCT provides broad, long-term economic sustainability for an individual, state and nation (p. 5).

Schultz (1961) (as cited in Baron & Armstrong, 2007) “proved that the yield on human capital investment through education and training in the United States was larger than that based on investment in physical capital” (p. 8).

The application of HCT in Singapore, Finland and Ireland brought economic success but more importantly facilitated low-income students with a path to accomplishing postsecondary achievement, harnessing human capital and an intimate link between education and economic productivity (Lee & Fredriksen, 2008). Adopting a synchronized approach that harnessed the potential of human capital derived the maximum benefit from adequate investment in physical assets and technologies (Yusef & Nabeshima, 2012) propelled the tiny band of nations to success.

LBM face numerous challenges such as low-socioeconomic conditions, academic/postsecondary underachievement, systemic barriers, internal and external barriers and deficit perceptions which are primarily based on stereotypes, prejudices, biases and racial discrimination. Paige and Witty (2009) posit closing the achievement gap may be the key to reducing most of the challenges that LBM encounter, including deficit perceptions. The closing of the academic/postsecondary achievement gap, as evidenced by research and data, correlates to the likelihood of attaining economic sustainability which inherently affords LBM equal sustainable economic opportunities like that of their WMC. This significantly reduces the challenges they encounter including mitigating predisposed deficit perceptions. The application of HCT in the tiny band of nations demonstrates the following 1) HCT can mobilize and actualize individual’s potential with minimal investment. 2) HCT can build strong self-efficacy

and self-concept. 3) HCT can enable average/low-socioeconomic individuals with competitive global economic skills. 4) HCT investment benefits the nation for economic sustainability, innovation and continuity. Schultz (1961) (as cited in Baron & Armstrong, 2007) and Yusef and Nabeshima (2012) in the United States and Singapore respectively, state that the gains on human capital investment through education and training are considerably more substantial than those based on investment in physical capital.

### **Social Learning Theory and Super Career Development Theory**

While HCT is a vital component in developing human potential, facilitating the transfer of viable skill sets, establishing individual and national economic sustainability pathways, in its application, inherently develop positive self-efficacy and pathways to careers for the participants. HCT to LBM develops both positive self-efficacy and career pathways which are vital to mitigating the postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups.

Bacanli (2006) asserts that “Self-efficacy expectations can be useful in understanding and predicting behavior” (p. 320). Bandura’s theory postulates how an individual’s self-efficacy influences positive or negative behavior depending on how high or low the self-efficacy is. LBM often experience low self-efficacy because of socioeconomic conditions and deficit perceptions. They are often encouraged to participate in programs that may build strong self-efficacy. Thus, since HCT when applied, inherently develops strong self-efficacy in its participants, it most likely would evoke high self-efficacy and positive attitudes among LBM to accomplishing postsecondary achievement. This would help ameliorate the gap and further pathways to economic sustainability.

Bandura (1997) asserted that self-efficacy is a fundamental component of career development and career choice. The correlation between higher perceived self-efficacy and

higher career options are evidence of the individual's belief of being able to accomplish a task. For example, Bandura (1977) examined the mathematical efficacy and notes the lower the mathematical efficacy, the higher the elimination of careers requiring quantitative skills. Conversely, the higher mathematical efficacy, the lower the elimination of careers requiring quantitative skills. Bandura (1977) suggests that any form of psychological procedures may alter the level and strength of self-efficacy. Individuals or groups participating in more dependable experiential sources are more likely to see more significant changes in perceived self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be attained from four experiential sources. 1) Personal performance (accomplishments/ previous success or failures), 2) vicarious experience (watching others, modeling, mentoring), 3) verbal persuasion (verbal encouragement or discouragement) and 4) physiological and emotional (factors, perceptions of stress reactions in the body). Thus, the theoretical context of the self-efficacy construct provides not only the means for understanding the development of self-efficacy beliefs but also the means for their modification through interventions, incorporating positive applications of the four sources self-efficacy information. (Bacanli, 2006, p. 321).

Super, Overstreet, Morris, Dublin and Heyde (1960) conclude that "before a behavioral act can be performed, a repertoire of appropriate behavior must be present" (as cited in Super et al., 1960, p. 10). The development of that repertoire of appropriate behavior is a byproduct of strong self-efficacy and necessary for career development. Self-concept is a fundamental component of individual career development and in defining self-concept. Super, Staishevsky, Matlin and Jordan (1963) assert that a self- concept is the individual's picture of himself, the perceived self with accrued meanings. Since a person cannot ascribe meanings to himself in a

vacuum, the concept of self is generally a picture of the self in some role, situation, position or performing some set of functions or in some web of relationships (Super et al., 1963).

Super (1957) states the adolescent years from junior high school throughout high school are for exploration. It is the process of reality testing. Furthermore, it is the developmental stage for career preparedness in which both educators and guidance counselors can assist high school students in understanding the complexities of making the transition from school to work. The exploration and establishment stages represent the best opportunities to impact career preparedness effectively. This stage represents the age-appropriate cognitive developmental stages for the formulation of career interests, the capacity to recognize skills about specific job requirements and the crystallization process whereby individuals attempt to implement the self-concept (Career Development Theories, 2003). The value of implementing a synchronized curriculum is that the curriculum would not primarily be affective as most career education/programs have been but instead, will be experiential. This is essential for LBM to make the connection between education, postsecondary achievement, career and economic sustainability.

The conditions preventing LBM postsecondary achievements in BCPSD as demonstrated by research. suggest cultural agencies that influence low-income Black American academic trajectories (Howard et al., 2016) demand a new strategic approach that is relevant to the target's group socioeconomic condition (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012). Zinser (2012) contends "a new set of skills - in fact, a new education - is needed for future citizens" (p. 64-73).

The new strategic solution must include the missing component, synchronization to address the silo effect currently experienced by the target group, LBM. They respond to a synchronized curriculum as opposed to one that occurs in silo because of their socioeconomic

conditions. LBM must be able to see the value of school and the curriculum and more importantly that they can achieve leading to higher perceived postsecondary efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The curriculum as the medium must facilitate this process (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Given the nested inequalities, internal and external barriers to postsecondary achievement for LBM students, the curriculum experience for the target group must connect to their reality (Dewey (1938) (as cited in Williams, 2002). Also, it must be relevant in meeting their core needs which is a path to long-term economic sustainability.

One of the missing links in the common core curriculum is facilitating the experiential activities that allow students to see the relevance of the curriculum, the importance of career preparedness and postsecondary achievement (Achieve, 2012). LBM, sitting in a classroom, not being able to see how such an experience will change their individual, home, and community's low-socioeconomic conditions or change the deficit perceptions attributed to them because of their economic status is debilitating and demotivating. This dynamic must change to mitigate the post-secondary achievement gap between LBM and their WMC.

One of the fundamental principles of a synchronized curriculum that makes this possible solution new is the positive synchronization of both the internal and external forces occurring at the same time over an extended period needed for closing the postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups. Super notes the exploration and establishment stages (ages 14-25) represent the best time to impact career preparedness and postsecondary achievement effectively. This stage is cognitively developmentally appropriate for the formulation of career interests and postsecondary achievement (Career Development Theories, 2003). While K-12 is the appropriate time to build postsecondary efficacy, Stone, Jones, Alfred and Pearson (2008) assert the curriculum must be relevant to students, particularly to LBM to maximize positive outcomes.

ASHE (2014), Larsen (2015) and Strauss (2013) concur that high stakes testing curriculums, like the Common Core, are ineffective in preparing students for postsecondary achievement, particularly LBM. Therefore, this researcher asserts the implementation of a synchronized curriculum responsive to LBM would be more effective in accomplishing Florida strategic mandate in BCPSD. The coordination of internal school agents and external factors occurring at the same time would do more to motivate/promote LBM student post-secondary achievement and economic sustainability.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research was to demonstrate the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and their WMC high school students in BCPSD. The secondary purpose of the research was to design a curriculum model, synchronized curriculum, to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap between high school LBM and WM in BCPSD. Lastly, the research explored the ways in which to implement the developed curriculum. The investigation focused on the current achievement gaps between the two groups, barriers associated with LBM postsecondary achievement and the need for new solution strategies to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and WM.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided this research.

**RQ1.** What is the current gap between LBM' and their WMC in postsecondary education?

**RQ2.** What are the internal factors associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement?

**RQ3.** What are the external factors associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement?

**RQ4.** How can internal and external factors be utilized to design an effective synchronized curriculum?

**RQ5.** What are the ways to implement a synchronized curriculum to mitigate the persistence gap between LBM' and their WMC in postsecondary achievement?

## **Setting**

Broward County is in southeast Florida. The BCPSD is the sixth largest school district in Florida. According to the 2016 census, the estimated population of Broward County in 2016 was 1,909,632 (Census, 2016). The BCPSD had 33 high schools with a total enrollment of 70,404 for the 2016-2017 school year. The student demographic breakdown for the district was follows: White (51.3%), Black (40.4%), Asian (3.8%), Hispanic (32.9%), Native American (0.9%), Native Hawaiian (0.2%) and multiracial (3.6%) (Table 4). The school district 2014-2015 graduation rate for Blacks (67%) was compared to Whites (85.2%) and for Asians (90.8%). The low-income graduation rate was compared (70.7%) to high-income (83.1%) (Florida Department of Education Statistics, 2010-2015).

## **Sample**

The target group selected was high school LBM representing the cognitive appropriate age group for HCT to build strong self-efficacy, self-concept and infuse positive attitudes to postsecondary achievement and pathways for career development. Super's Conception of Life Stages and Developmental Tasks Matrix demonstrated age-correlated, cognitive developmental stages of an individual's lifespan as it related to careers. Super (2003) divides an individual's life span into five stages: 1) Growth (the beginning of birth), 2) Exploration (begins at approximately age 14), 3) Establishment (age 25), 4) Maintenance (age 44) and 5) Decline (age 60 and up).

The target group for the research was high school LBM. However, because of the historical design, a sample was not applicable to the data gathered for the research. The data was extracted from the public domain such as archival historical data, documents and records already collected to assist in collective school achievement. Also, because of the design used in collecting data, there were no identifiers and anonymity of the members of the target group.

## **Data Collection Methodology**

This study was conducted using qualitative research. Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. Creswell (2003) states "this means that the researcher interprets the data. Also, it means the researcher filters the data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific sociopolitical and historical moment" (p. 182). The methods of qualitative research for data collection in this research included retrieving archival public domain data, records.

The historical design used in this study complemented the qualitative methodology for data collection (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The historical design is "an effort to reconstruct or interpret historical events through the gathering and interpretation of relevant historical documents and/or oral histories" (p. 84). The benefits of a historical design are that it is unobtrusive, and the act of the research does not affect the results of the study. Furthermore, the design is well suited for trend analysis. Because of the historical design that was used in this research, the sources can be used repetitiously in other research or used to replicate this research (Lynn Library Libguides, 2017).

The data pertaining to the five research questions were gathered by conducting an analysis and interpretation of materials such as public domain data, documents and records which had already been collected regarding the target group. These archival data were categorized into the following areas: Broward County Low-income Black/White male graduation gap, Florida State and Broward County Low-income Black/White male core subject English and math gap and national low-income Black/White male postsecondary achievement gap. Internal and external factors associated with LBM postsecondary underachievement and a synchronized curriculum to ameliorate the gap was developed.

## **Research Procedures**

The qualitative research used a historical design. The researcher met all requirements before the beginning of the study. However, because of the design used in this study, there was no participation of human subjects. Solely archival public domain data, documents and records were already collected. There were no identifiers, and the anonymity of the target group remains.

The materials needed for this research process were public domain archival reporting databases, documents, records and historical data to fulfill the aims of the research. The entire timeline to complete this research was approximately five weeks. In Week One analysis and interpretation of public domain archival reporting databases occurred to answer Research Question 1. In Week Two, further collection, analysis and interpretation of public domain data, documents and records already documented occurred to answer Research Questions 2 and 3. Weeks 3 and 4 were used to compile, categorize, label, evaluate, finalize and report data. Week 5 was used to design a synchronized curriculum guide and ways to implement it to answer Research Questions 4 and 5. An outlining research process was used (Appendix A).

## **Data Analysis**

To establish that a postsecondary achievement gap existed between LBM and their WMC' archival data, documents and records including public domain reporting databases, such as Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Center for Education Statistics, Males of Color and the United States Census Bureau were collected. This data was used to analyze and interpret the BCPSD graduation achievement gap, Florida/Broward County core subject areas of language arts and math achievement. In addition, the national postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and their WMC was used to answer Research Question 1.

To determine what internal and external factors were associated with LBM postsecondary underachievement, archival material such as public domain historical data, public documents and public records already collected about the target group were utilized to answer Research Questions 2 and 3. To achieve the aims of Research Questions 2 and 3, available public archival data, documents and records were analyzed and interpreted for levels of deficit perceptions among LBM, the role of guidance counselors in facilitating LBM postsecondary achievement and alternatives to the current curriculum experiences and outcomes for LBM.

To determine the design of the tailored curriculum for LBM, analysis, evaluation and categorization of the internal and external factors associated with LBM informed the design of a step-by-step procedural guide of a synchronized curriculum based on the research addressed in Research Questions 4 and 5.

### **Instrumentation**

The instruments used to collect data were available archival public domain data, documents, records and historical data already collected and documented, such as archival data reporting databases, to analyze and interpret the achievement gap between LBM and their WMC. Qualitative historical data about the target group was examined, evaluated and categorized to identify internal and external factors associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement. The validity of the instruments came from Leedy and Ormrod (2016) and Lynn Library Libguides (2017) suggesting the historical design methods had several purposes to reconstruct and to interpret events. Finally, based on the research a designed synchronized curriculum guide for districts and schools to diminish the postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups was the outcome.

## CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### Introduction

The purpose of this research was to demonstrate the disparity in postsecondary achievement between LBM and their WMC high school students in BCPSD. A second purpose was to explore the barriers to postsecondary achievement for LBMs and mitigate the persistent postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups using a synchronized curriculum. This chapter focuses on the development of the synchronized curriculum by comparing and analyzing statistical and qualitative data. A qualitative study was completed incorporating a historical design. The research first addressed the achievement gap between LBM and WM nationally, locally in the state of Florida and specifically in BCPSD. The achievement gap between the two groups has persisted for decades. The causes for the persistent lag of LBM that emerged from the literature and data reviewed suggest internal and external barriers prevent LBM from postsecondary success. Addressing these barriers have a profound and lasting effect in elevating postsecondary achievement and long-term socioeconomic stability for the targeted group (Bailey, 2003; CGCS, 2012; Ford & Moore, 2013; Harper, 2012; Paige & Witty, 2009; & Whitehouse Report, 2014). The data, which was both statistical and qualitative was collected over a five-week period. For Research Question 1, statistical reporting databases were used to compare quantitative data over a five-year period between the two groups in graduation rate (Table 1) (Table 5), a one-year period in core subject areas (Figure 4) (Table 9) and a nine-year period in postsecondary achievement (Table 3).

The secondary purpose of the research examined the data on barriers to postsecondary achievement for LBM. Internal and external barriers collectively hinder postsecondary

achievement for the target group. Identifying these barriers and developing a strategy on how best to mitigate against them is paramount in elevating postsecondary achievement for LBM.

The internal barriers for this research referred to barriers within schools that hinder LBM postsecondary achievement. Internal barriers found in three areas of a school were the curriculum, teacher and role of guidance counselors (Figure 2). These three areas are critical as they represent the major contact points for LBM students. They are also the most impactful outcomes for LBM students. For this study, external barriers refer to barriers outside of school that impede LBM academic postsecondary achievement. External barriers are found in family, community and deficit perceptions (Figure 2). These areas are critical in supporting and building academic postsecondary achievement efficacy for LBM.

Research and data about LBM have revealed that the internal and external needs of the target group must be addressed to accomplish the ‘whole’ child. The meeting of these needs must occur in a synchronized manner to accomplish academic and postsecondary achievement (Berg, 2016; Darensbourg & Blake, 2013; Hochschild, 2003; Lareau, 2003; Lee, 1993; & Stead & Watson, 1998). Research Questions 2 and 3, both statistical and quantitative historical data, were used to demonstrate the barriers to postsecondary achievement for LBM.

Consequently, this research focused on how internal and external factors were utilized through the conceptual framework to design an effective tailored curriculum, facilitate the development of positive self-efficacy, success in elevating postsecondary achievement and create pathways for long-term economic sustainability for LBM. Based on the data and research, a synchronized curriculum was designed to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups addressed in Research Questions 4 and 5.

## Summary and Discussion of Statistical and Qualitative Findings

The following research questions guide this study.

**RQ1.** What is the current gap between LBM’ and their WMC in postsecondary education?

There was an average 20.96% gap between LBM and their WMC in the graduation rate over a five-year period (2011-2016) in BCPSD (Table 1). There was a 29% gap between LBM and their WMC in English/Language Arts in Florida for the 2015-2016 school year. However, there was a 31% gap between LBM and their WMC in English/Language Arts in BCPSD for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 6

*RQ1-State /County Core Subject Area English Language Arts Gap 2015-2016*

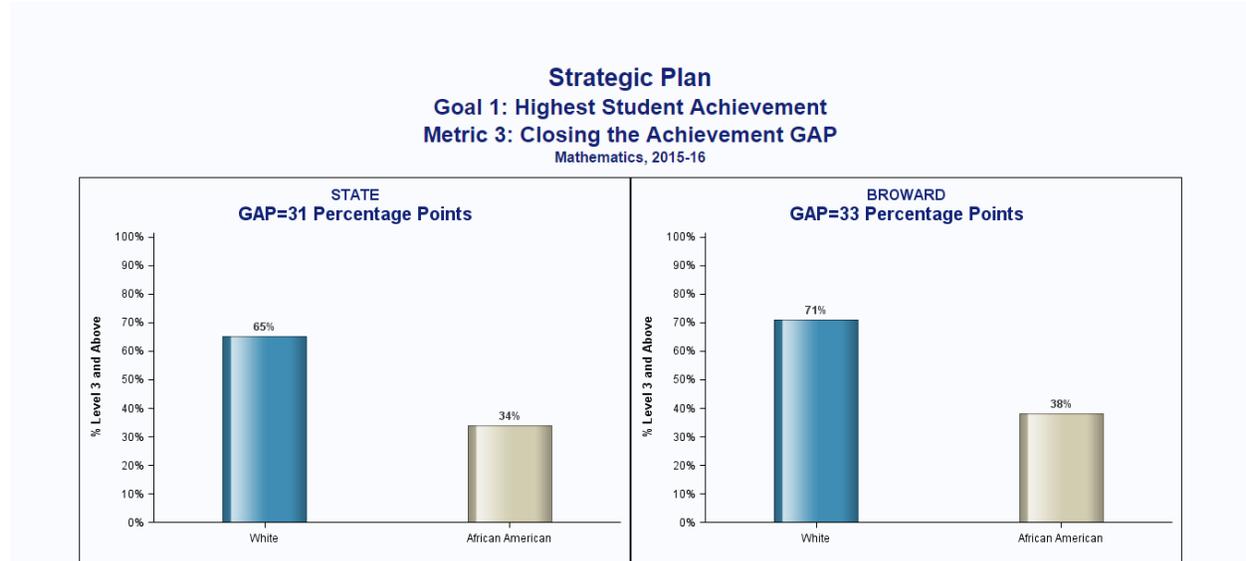
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State Black/White achievement gap	29%
County Black/White achievement gap	31%

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There was a 31% gap between LBM and their WMC in mathematics in Florida for the 2015-2016 period but a 33% gap between LBM and their WMC in mathematics in BCPSD for the 2015-2016 school year.

## State and District Mathematics Achievement Gap



*Figure 3. State and District Mathematics Achievement Gap*

In 2013, nationally the postsecondary achievement gap between Blacks and their White peers was Blacks (57%) compared to Whites (67%). In 2006, nationally the postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups reported Black males (61%) compared to White males (70%). In 2004, nationally the postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups reported Black males (43%) compared to White males (49%) (Table 3).

**RQ2.** What are the internal factors associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement?

There were internal barriers associated with LBM postsecondary underachievement. The internal barriers for this research refer to barriers within schools that hinder LBM postsecondary academic achievement. The internal barriers found in schools were the curriculum, teacher and the role of guidance counselors (Figure 2).

**RQ3.** What are the external factors associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement? External barriers associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement existed. The external barriers for this research refer to barriers outside of school that impede LBM' academic postsecondary achievement. External barriers are family, community and deficit perceptions (Figure 2).

**RQ4.** How could internal and external factors be utilized to design an effective synchronized curriculum? Research and data about LBM have revealed that the internal and external needs of the target group must be addressed to accomplish the whole child. Meeting these needs must occur in a synchronized manner to accomplish academic and postsecondary achievement. Therefore, the developed synchronized curriculum is designed to address these needs and mitigate the postsecondary gap between the two groups (Figure 1).

**RQ5.** What are the ways to implement a synchronized curriculum to mitigate the persistence gap between LBM' and their WMC in postsecondary achievement?

The synchronized curriculum was implemented based on the conceptual framework which utilizes Human Capital Theory, Social Learning Theory and Career Development Theory as mirrored in Singapore. The developed curriculum is best suited to be embedded in the school curriculum and through school agents such as teachers and guidance counselors. The design of the synchronized curriculum is tailored specifically to address the internal and external needs of LBM, and thus facilitate the School Within a School concept, whereby it enables the building of postsecondary efficacy and pathways to career development (Figure 1).

## **Demographic Data of Target Group**

The research focused on LBM in BCPSD high schools. According to the US Census Bureau (2015), Blacks compared (24.1%) to Whites (9.1%) who lived in poverty in the United States. In 2014, the percentage of 5- to 17-year-olds in families living in poverty in Florida was higher than the national (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). In Broward County, Blacks (21.8%) were living below the poverty level compared to Whites (11.3%) (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Because a historical design methodology was used a sample was not applicable.

## **Design**

The research is qualitative, utilizing a historical design. Collection of statistical and qualitative information occurred using statistical reporting databases, online archival data warehouses and libraries in finding historical data about the study. The research questions were designed to identify current achievement gaps between LBM and their WMC, to ascertain if an achievement gap genuinely existed and what the barriers were to LBM postsecondary achievement. The internal and external factors collectively were the basis of this research. Based on research, internal and external factors form the barriers to LBM postsecondary achievement and were key indicators on how to ameliorate the gap. Collectively these barriers were the catalyst for the development of a synchronized curriculum tailored for LBM success in postsecondary achievement. Also, they critically informed how a developed synchronized curriculum could be implemented to ameliorate the achievement gap between the two groups.

Statistical reporting databases were compared and analyzed to determine the validity of an achievement gap between the two groups in the following categories: 1) national, state and local graduation rates. District graduation rates were compared and analyzed over a five-year

period 2011 – 2016 (Table 1), 2) core subject areas English language (Table 6) and mathematics (Figure 3) over a one-year period 2015-2016 and 3) national postsecondary achievement over a nine-year period 2004, 2006, and 2013 (Table 3).

The next step in the study was to determine the critical barriers to LBM' postsecondary achievement using internal and external barriers. Qualitative and statistical historical data were compiled, categorized, analyzed and evaluated. While there were numerous barriers to postsecondary achievement for LBM, after evaluating the data the principal barriers were internal and external. Internal barriers were identified as those barriers occurring in a school setting in the critical areas of curriculum of ELA and mathematics, teachers and guidance counselors. External barriers were those barriers occurring outside the school setting including family, community and deficit perceptions. The final stage of the research was analyzing the researched data to develop a tailored curriculum based on the conceptual framework known as a synchronized curriculum. If implemented in BCPSD high schools, the internal and external needs of LBM to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap was addressed.

### **Instrumentation**

Both statistical and qualitative data were utilized to collect different types of data. The instruments included statistical reporting databases such as Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Center for Education Statistics, Males of Color and the United States Census Bureau. Physical or online archival data warehouses and libraries were utilized to collect data. The validity of the instruments (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016) and Lynn Library Libguides (2017) were used for the historical design methods. They had several purposes in reconstructing and interpreting events. Finally, based on the researched data, a developed

synchronized curriculum guide for districts and schools to diminish the postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups was the outcome of this research.

**Research Findings**

A five-year graduation rate comparison was made. The national graduation rate for the 2013-2014 school year in the United States was Blacks (73%) compared to Whites (87%) and Asians (89%) (National Center for Education Statistics Website, n.d). Florida’s graduation rate for the 2015-2016 school year was Blacks (72.3%) compared to Whites (85.1%) and Asians (91.9%). In the same year, Black males (67%) graduated compared to WM (82%) (Edstats, 2015-2016). Broward County’s graduation rate for the 2015-2016 school year was 70.6% Blacks compared to White (86.1%). Of that, Black males (62.9%) graduated compared to WM (83.4%) (Table 1). The economic disadvantage graduation rate for the same year for both LBM and their WMC in the county was Black males (62.6%) compared White (74.0%) (Table 5) (Edstats, 2015-2016). The five-year 2011-2016 BCPSD graduation rate comparison is as follows:

Table 7

*District Graduation Rates 2011-2016*

<u>Year</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>	<u>2012-2013</u>	<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>	<u>2015-2016</u>
White Male	80.5%	80.4%	80.2%	82.7%	83.4%
Black Male	60.9%	59.9%	57.0%	61.7%	62.9%

**Internal Barriers**

**Curriculum.** The validity of categorizing curriculum as one of the critical internal barriers to LBM postsecondary achievement emerges from the analyzed data. The Coleman report in 1966 asserted "the average minority pupil achieves less and is more affected by the

quality of his school than the average white pupil" (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 1). Currently, the curriculum continues to persist as one of the critical barriers to LBM postsecondary achievement. Sufficient evidence suggests the curriculum is vital to students' achievement and more importantly to LBM success. Fundamentally, for LBM, the curriculum must be relevant to their reality and address their core needs. A study in Singapore demonstrated that a strategic, tailored curriculum not only transformed a nation's economy from developing to developed but also elevated postsecondary achievement among low-income students facilitating pathways for long-term socio-economic sustainability.

Current curriculum models such as the Common Core Curriculum have proven to be ineffective in preparing students, particularly LBMs, for postsecondary achievement. Sufficient data have demonstrated that there is a missing link in the Common Core Curriculum model that does not facilitate career preparedness and postsecondary achievement. Nested inequalities, which exist in schools that perpetuate the status quo, compound the issue. As demonstrated by the analysis of graduation rates, the core subject areas of ELA and mathematics and postsecondary achievement gap, it is evident that a curriculum reform for LBMs must occur to elevate their postsecondary achievement (Achieve, 2012; ASHE, 2014 Dewey, 1938 (as cited in Williams, 2002); Edstats website, 2015-2016; Hochschild, 2003; Larsen, 2015; Lee and Fredriksen, 2008; Palmer and Maramba, 2011; Gibson, 1988; Shor, 1992 (as cited in Palmer & Maramba, 2011); Strauss, 2013; Tanner & Tanner, 1980; & Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

**Teacher.** Based on the data reviewed, teacher contact with LBMs was also another critical internal barrier. Harper (2012) asked a fundamental question of teachers in contact with the target group, "What do teachers and other school agents do to assist Black male postsecondary achievement?" Sufficient evidence has demonstrated the lack of quality teachers

in contact with LBM has existed since 42% of Blacks make up the demographics of schools with little resources. Such schools statistically are unable to retain highly-qualified effective teachers to promote positive self-efficacy or to engage the target group (Coleman et al., 1996; Harper, 2012; & Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Research and data have indicated that schools, colleges and educational institutions with a high demographic White population are predisposed to have low expectations, biases and prejudices about the intellectual abilities of Black males.

The Scholar Identity model emphasized the critical role of educators, particularly teachers, in building positive self-efficacy, attitude and values among Black males were necessary to overcome academic and socio-cultural challenges. The concept that Blacks can only succeed by integrating them in high resource schools that are predominantly White is rejected. An alternative solution by way of a developed synchronized curriculum facilitates the deliberate placement of LBMs in classes with highly-qualified, positive contact teachers. Based on research, such educators can motivate postsecondary achievement among LBMs (ASHE, 2014; Coleman et al., 1966; Hochschild, 2003; & Whitling, 2009).

**Guidance counselors.** School agents such as guidance counselors are pivotal to enhancing LBM postsecondary success. Through counseling, internal and external barriers can be addressed. Their role is essential in class placement and academic guidance in and outside school services such as health and nutrition. However, based on the data reviewed, training of counselors has shown little or no concern for how significant their roles are to the academic achievement, self-concept motivators and strategic career decision abilities (Lee, 1993, 2004). Most guidance/career programs developed in the United States are inherently culturally biased and not responsive to the needs of minorities ignoring the importance of their interaction of contextual factors such as racism, prejudices, education and economic conditions.

Comparatively, students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (Whites) are more likely to utilize and benefit from guidance programs than those from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (Blacks). A synchronized curriculum guidance program through counselors would be tailored to acknowledge the contextual factors of LBMs. This would promote academic and postsecondary achievement (Gies 1990; Lee, 1993, 2004; Stead & Watson 1998; & Taylor-Dunlop, 1995).

### **External Barriers**

**Family.** Adequate documentation demonstrates the benefits of a nuclear family to positive student achievement. Sufficient data have demonstrated the correlation between students from a high-socioeconomic background and high student achievement. Students from a household with a high percentage of parent postsecondary achievement are more likely to be academically successful than those who are not. For LBMs, fragmented families and low-income conditions further compound the challenge for academic and postsecondary achievement. The statistical data demonstrated in 2015 nationally Blacks (24.1%) lived in poverty compared to Whites (9.1%). In 2014 the percentage of 5- to 17-year-olds in families living in poverty in Florida was higher than the national average. In Broward County for the 2015 year, Blacks (21.8%) lived below the poverty level compared to Whites (11.3%). In 2012, only 20% of Black parents attained a postsecondary education compared to 44% of White parents. Harper (2012) posted the fundamental question, "How do family members nurture and sustain Black male students' interest in school and postsecondary achievement?" The findings are that family support for LBMs is fundamental to their academic success. With a synchronized curriculum, LBM students' families will receive support to elevate postsecondary achievement among the target group (Harper, 2012; Harris, 2010; Lareau, 2003; National Center for Education Statistics,

2012; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014; Sanders, 1999; Slavin & Madden, 2006; US Census Bureau, 2015; & Walpole, 2008).

**Community.** There is sufficient documented evidence which demonstrates that students from high-socioeconomic communities excel in student achievement compared to those from low-socioeconomic communities (Lareau, 2003; Synder & Shafer, 1996 (as cited in Lee, 2004); & Whitehouse Report, 2014). For LBMs, the challenge of excelling in student achievement is compounded by their low-economic status and communities in which they live. This addresses the issues within their environments that are fundamental to improving student achievement. Jones (2015) highlights this point when it was suggested integrating low-income Black students. However, it is not integration that was the solution as suggested by Jones (2015) but rather the need to sufficiently support low-income communities with the necessary resources for low-income students to excel in student achievement. A synchronized curriculum can be used adequately to mitigate the negative consequences produced from low-income households using human capital as demonstrated in Singapore.

**Deficit perception.** The disparity that exists between Blacks and Whites because of racism, stereotypes and embedded prejudices by the latter to the former is unlikely to be solved. The phenomenon is complex and relates to an individual's socialization and choice. It is reinforced by nested inequalities (Hochschild, 2003). For LBMs, a deficit perception remains a barrier to student achievement. While racism, prejudices, stereotypes and biases are likely to continue as asserted (Ford & Moore, 2013) for LBMs, it is necessary for opportunities to economic sustainability to buffer the adverse effects of racism. Paige and Witty (2009) note that closing the achievement gap may be the key to reducing most of the challenges and deficit perceptions of LBMs. Elevating the academic/postsecondary achievement gap for LBMs, as

evidenced by research and data, correlates to the likelihood of the target group attaining comparable, equal economic sustainability like that of WM. This would help in significantly mitigating predisposed deficit perceptions.

### **Synchronized Curriculum Design**

An outline and procedural steps in implementing the synchronized curriculum (see Appendix: B)

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the research was to examine whether an achievement gap between LBM and WM exists. Secondly, the research examined internal and external factors that contribute to the postsecondary achievement gap between LBMs and WM. Finally, a developed curriculum based on a synchronized curriculum was designed to ameliorate the achievement gap between the two groups by addressing internal and external factors.

Research Question 1 determined if an achievement gap between the two groups existed using statistical reporting databases for a five-year period between the two groups in graduation rate (Table 1), a one-year period in core subject areas (Table 6, Figure 3) and a nine-year period in postsecondary achievement (Table 3). Based on the analysis, a difference in the achievement gap between LBMs and their WMC was found that an achievement gap between the two groups persists.

Research Questions 2 and 3 examined the principal factors that hinder LBM postsecondary achievement. The two principal factors that emerged from the literature and data reviewed were internal and external barriers. Internal barriers are those encountered in school, identified in the curriculum, the teacher and the role of guidance counselors in elevating LBM achievement. External barriers are those encountered outside of school, identified in low-income

families, community and deficit perceptions. These two primary factors collectively form the barriers to LBM academic/postsecondary achievement. Identification of the two primary factors and a research-based synchronized curriculum could be used to counter these barriers and ameliorate the achievement gap between the two groups. Research Questions 4 and 5 utilized the two principal barriers to LBM postsecondary achievement to develop a synchronized curriculum to mitigate the achievement gap between the two groups. Ways in which to implement the synchronized curriculum (Figure 1) (Appendix: B).

This study was conducted to validate the existence of a persistent achievement gap between the two groups, identify the factors associated with LBM postsecondary underachievement and develop a new solution strategy, a synchronized curriculum, to elevate LBM postsecondary achievement.

## **CHAPTER V: RESULTS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This research included five chapters with the outcome being a developed curriculum referred as a synchronized curriculum to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM' and their WMC in BCPSD. The overall organization of the study included Chapter 1, which primarily introduced the problem statement and described the specific problem addressed in the research as well as the conceptual design components. Chapter 2 presented a review of the literature of the research and relevant data associated with the problem addressed in this study. Chapter 3 presented the overall methodology, design, procedures for data collection and an analysis of a synchronized curriculum. Chapter 4 consisted of an analysis of the data and presentation of the results. Finally, Chapter 5 will offer a summary and discussion of the research findings, conclusion, implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

### **Summary of the Study**

The achievement gap between Blacks and Whites has persisted for decades (Berg, 2016; CGCS, 2012; & Coleman et al., 1966). The achievement gap between LBM and their WMC has socioeconomic implications (Bailey, 2003; Harper, 2012; Obama, 2014; & Paige & Witty, 2009). This research was an effort to introduce a new solution strategy to ameliorate the achievement gap between LBMs and their WMC using a synchronized curriculum (Achieve, 2012; CGCS, 2012; Harper, 2012; Stone, Jones, Corine, & Pearson, 2008). The data collected answered the following research questions that guided this study.

**RQ1.** What is the current gap between LBM' and their WMC in postsecondary education?

**RQ2.** What are the internal factors associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement?

**RQ3.** What are the external factors associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement?

**RQ4.** How could internal and external factors be utilized to design an effective synchronized curriculum?

**RQ5.** What are the ways to implement a synchronized curriculum to mitigate the persistence gap between LBM' and their WMC in postsecondary achievement?

### **Data Collected**

The data collected for Research Question 1 examined public domain statistical reporting databases comparing graduation rates for a five-year period between the two groups: a comparative analysis for a one-year period in the core subject areas of ELA and mathematics and a nine-year period comparative analysis in postsecondary achievement to ascertain the existence of an achievement gap between the two groups. Research Questions 2 and 3 primarily examined data and literature to find the principal factors associated with LBM academic/postsecondary underachievement. Research Questions 4 and 5 utilized the two principal barriers that emerged from the data and literature reviewed to LBM postsecondary underachievement to develop a synchronized curriculum to mitigate the achievement gap between the two groups.

### **Review of the Literature**

A comprehensive literature review about high school LBM postsecondary underachievement was conducted. The review was categorized in four areas to reflect the research questions. The categories were 1) Low- income Black Males' postsecondary underachievement, 2) current gaps between low-socioeconomic Black males and their White counterparts, 3) factors associated with low-performing Black males and 4) ameliorating the gap using a synchronized curriculum. The categories facilitated identifying the current gap between

Black males and their White counterparts. The identifying factors were associated with LBMs and the components relevant to the development of a synchronized curriculum that could address how to mitigate the persistence gap between LBMs and their WMC.

An analysis of the literature reviewed the causes of the achievement gap between the two groups. Sanders (1999) analyzed the achievement gap between low-income (particularly Blacks) and high-income students (particularly Whites). While there is an appreciation of the scholarly works, they collectively did not necessarily present a new solution strategy to the achievement gap problem.

### **Discussion of Results**

The findings of this research validate the existence of a persistent achievement gap between LBM and their WMC. These are the factors associated with LBM academic/postsecondary underachievement. A possible new solution strategy using a developed synchronized curriculum to elevate postsecondary achievement among LBMs in BCPSD.

### **Statistical Findings**

There is an average 20.96% gap between Black males and their WMC in graduation rates over a five-year period (2011-2016) (Table 1) in BCPSD. The calculation to arrive at this percentage gap difference is total five-year White male (TWm) percentage graduation rate – total five-year Black male (TBm) percentage graduation rate sum divided by the five-year period, (TWm – TBm = sum/5=% gap). There is a 29% gap between Blacks and their WMC in ELA in Florida for the 2015-2016 school year. There is a 31% gap between Blacks and their WMC in ELA in BCPSD for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 8

*English Language Arts Academic Achievement Gap 2015-2016 Comparison*

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State Black/White achievement gap	29%
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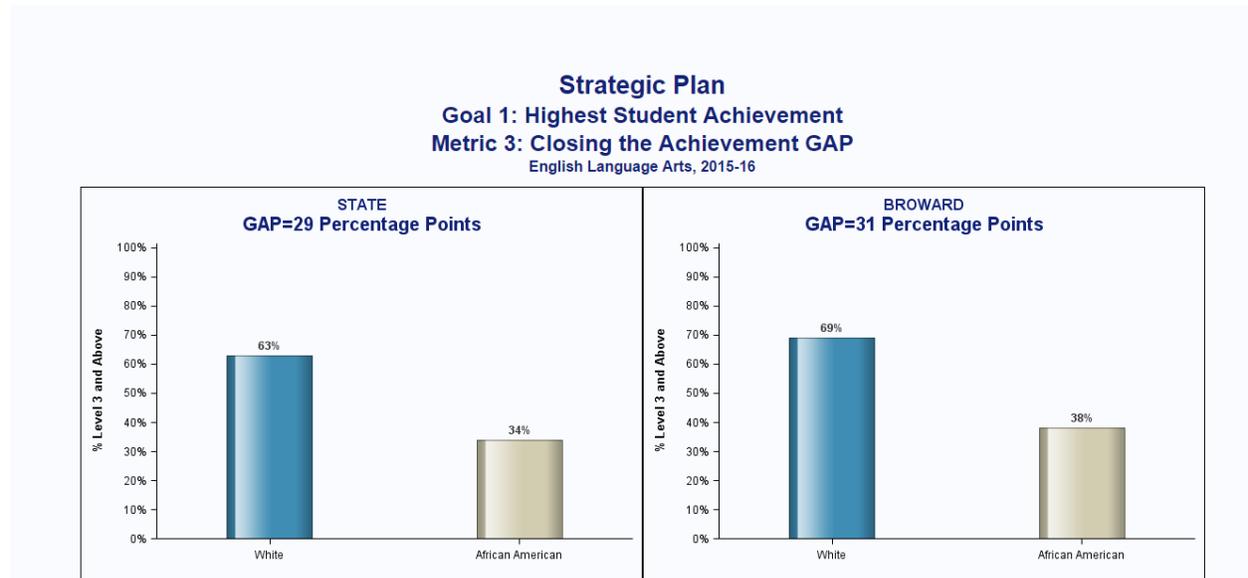


Figure 4. Strategic Plan ELA

There is a 31% gap between Blacks and their WC in mathematics in Florida for the 2015-2016 school year. There is a 33% gap between Blacks and their WC in mathematics in BCPSD for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 9

*Math Academic Achievement Gap 2015- 2016 Comparison*

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State Black/White achievement gap	31%
County Black/White achievement gap	33%

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In 2004, nationally the postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups reported Black males (43%) compared to White males (49%). In 2006, nationally the postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups reported Black males (61%) compared to White males (70%). A percentage difference in the achievement gap between LBMs and WMCs was shown. In 2013, nationally the postsecondary achievement gap between Blacks and their White peers was Blacks (57%) compared to Whites (67%).

Table 10

*National Postsecondary Achievement Over a Nine-year Period  
2004, 2006 and 2013 (RQ1)*

<u>Year</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2013</u>
Black	43%	61%	57%
White	49%	70%	67%

### **Literature Review Findings**

Two principal factors that emerged from the literature and data review were internal and external barriers (Figure 2). Internal barriers are those encountered in school as the curriculum, the teacher and the role of guidance counselors in elevating LBM' achievement. External barriers are those encountered outside of school, identified in low-income families, communities and deficit perceptions. These two primary factors collectively form the barriers to LBM' academic/postsecondary achievement. Based on the results, a developed synchronized curriculum needs to be implemented to counter these barriers and ameliorate the achievement gap between the two groups.

## **Curriculum Findings**

Based on the data and literature reviewed, the factors associated with LBMs academic/postsecondary underachievement are known as internal and external barriers. These two principal factors are critical to addressing the persistent achievement gap. The synchronized curriculum is an effort to ameliorate the achievement gap between the two groups and elevate LBM postsecondary achievement.

The synchronized curriculum is an evidence-based curriculum developed to ameliorate the persistent gap between LBM' and their WMC. The components of the developed curriculum include the two principal factors, internal and external, necessary for LBM postsecondary achievement. Based on the research, silos exist in the current curriculum and do not meet the core needs necessary for LBM success in postsecondary achievement. The current curriculum program is ineffective in elevating LBM postsecondary achievement. The programs and activities occur primarily internally at schools and interact in a silo manner. Inconsistencies are created with the missing external treatment and synchronization necessary for LBM success. Conversely, the developed curriculum synchronizes both principal factors to ensure consistency and the elimination of gaps and the silo effect for LBM postsecondary achievement. The developed curriculum considers external factors to ensure the development of the whole student. The developed curriculum ensures that both internal and external factors operate in a synchronized manner. The developed curriculum calls for the reform of critical areas in schools and contributes value-added, external programs to support LBM achievement. A synchronized curriculum that is evidenced-based, designed to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups is needed.

## Conclusions

The premise of the research was that there is an achievement gap between LBM' and their WMC. Research Question 1 sought to address if this gap existed. The research and analysis of the data demonstrated an average percentage difference in the achievement gap between LBM' and their WMC (Edstats, 2015-2016; Florida Department of Education, 2015-2016; & National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). These are found in four areas: 1) graduation rate, 2) ELA and mathematics and 3) postsecondary achievement. An achievement gap between the two groups exists.

While it is sufficiently evident that there is an achievement gap between the two groups, the more significant challenge is understanding why this problem has persisted for decades (Coleman et al., 1966; Musu-Gillette et al., 2016; & Whitehouse Report, 2014). Research Questions 2 and 3 addressed the factors associated with LBM academic/postsecondary underachievement. The persistence of the gap can be attributed to LBM socioeconomic status, deficit perceptions and embedded nested inequalities (Hochschild, 2003). An immediate elevation of household income for LBMs is not feasible but identifying and countering other critical factors associated with their academic/postsecondary underachievement through curriculum reform in and outside of schools are. Identifying and countering these barriers can simultaneously elevate achievement and provide long-term socioeconomic sustainability (Lee & Fredriksen, 2008). The findings from factors associated with LBM academic/postsecondary underachievement revealed two principal barriers, internal and external (CGCS, 2012). These two principal factors emerged from the literature and data reviewed. Internal barriers are those encountered in school in the areas of the curriculum, the teacher and the role of guidance counselors in elevating LBM achievement. External barriers are those encountered outside of

school and consist of Black males from low-income families, communities and deficit perceptions. The two principle barriers are fundamental to understanding how to counter these barriers and improve postsecondary achievement among LBM'. These barriers were feasible to address as opposed to their immediate socioeconomic conditions such as household income.

The existence of an achievement gap between LBM' and their WMC, knowing the collective barriers to LBM postsecondary underachievement, are fundamental in addressing Research Questions 4 and 5. This knowledge was instrumental in developing a synchronized curriculum. The developed curriculum can elevate academic/postsecondary achievement and provide long-term socioeconomic sustainable pathways (Lee & Fredriksen, 2008; Yusuf & Nabeshima, 2012) through human capital (Ehrenberg & Smith, 1997) (as cited in Baron & Armstrong, 2007) and Schultz, (1961) (as cited in Baron & Armstrong, 2007) while building positive postsecondary efficacy and career development as postulated by Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Super's Career Development Theory.

### **Implications**

The persistent achievement gap between LBM' and their WMC has been well documented (Coleman et al., 1966; Edstats, 2015-2016; Harper, 2012; Jones, 2015; Musu-Gillette et al., 2016; & Obama, 2014). The documentation of the negative implications for LBM academic/postsecondary underachievement has also been documented by Berg (2016), CGCS (2012), Paige and Witty (2009), Synder and Shafer (1996) (as cited in Lee (2004); Trusty (2000) and whitehouse.gov (2014). The fundamental implication of this research was an effort to mitigate high school postsecondary achievement gap between LBM' and their WMC using a synchronized curriculum. This creates an opportunity for economic sustainability and proportionate college/career representation for LBM'.

The findings of this research will be useful in initiating curriculum reform within the BCPSD and pertinent to district and state level stakeholders in postsecondary planning. The study validated the efficient use of limited resources by harnessing human capital. The implementation of a synchronized curriculum strategic to the target groups' needs will not only yield positive outcomes but (Whitehouse Report, 2014) accomplish the need to reduce the disparity in income inequality between the two groups. This disparity has an impact on significant lifetime earnings, lower unemployment and lower poverty for the target group. The research could serve as a base model for other low-income groups that are comparatively disproportionate to the majority group in postsecondary achievement. The implication for the BCPSD is the reduction in behavioral and disciplinary issues, reduced dropout rates and high academic/postsecondary achievement for LBM'.

Based on the data and literature reviewed, internal areas of a school are the curriculum, teacher and the role of guidance counselors. These three areas are critical as they represent the major contact points for LBM'. These are also more impactful to outcomes for LBM students. A synchronized curriculum will help in these critical areas and must be reformed to elevate LBM postsecondary achievement. Dewey (1938) (as cited in Williams, 2002) and Tomlinson and McTighe (2006) have suggested that curriculum design should play a pivotal role in addressing the core needs of students and connect with their reality for accomplishment and autonomy. CGCS (2012), Harper (2012) and Whiting (2009) have suggested the role of teachers is vital in elevating LBM academic/postsecondary achievement. A synchronized curriculum for LBM' can be used by educators who can have a positive contact with members of the target group. This will improve academic/postsecondary success. Guidance counselors are pivotal to academic/postsecondary achievement of students (Gies, 1990). Their roles must be reformed to

assist in elevating LBM' in their ineffectiveness (Lee, 1993, 2004; Stead & Watson, 1998; & Taylor-Dunlop, 1995) that hinders elevating LBM achievement. Therefore, by way of a synchronized curriculum, the role of the guidance counselor towards elevating LBMs must be consistent and deliberate in doing the following 1) deliberate academic/health contact, 2) deliberate proportional placement of LBMs in high-achieving classes, 3) deliberate placement of LBMs with qualified positive contact teachers and 4) deliberate family contact and dissemination of accessory information.

For external barriers the three critical areas encountered outside of school are 1) low-income families, 2) community and 3) deficit perceptions. These three areas must be addressed for LBM success. Harper (2012) asked the fundamental question, "How do family members nurture and sustain Black male students' interest in school and postsecondary achievement?" Harris (2010), Lareau, (2003), National Center for Education Statistics (2012), National Center for Educational Statistics (2014), Sanders (1999), Slavin and Madden (2006), US Census Bureau (2015) and Walpole (2008) have sufficiently demonstrated the importance of low-income family support to the academic/postsecondary achievement of LBM'. Research has demonstrated there is a correlation between parent(s)' educational level and student achievement. The use of a synchronized curriculum through the reformed role of guidance counselors and LBM families' needs will be assessed, informed and supported by available human capital and resources to elevate their academic/postsecondary achievement. The need for an effective program for LBM parent(s) to improve their postsecondary achievement is necessary. Similarly, the communities in which the target group resides are also an extension of the immediate family. Therefore, these communities must be supported in similar ways for success to materialize. Community outreach liaisons such as colleges, career and police partnerships, experiential programs that facilitate

deliberate contact with positive, successful Black male role models and motivate postsecondary achievement are necessary. These positive actions will reverse internal and external deficit perceptions about LBMs such as racial discrimination, prejudices and biases (Paige & Witty, 2009; & Warren et al., 2016). The developed synchronized curriculum attempts to accomplish synchronizing internal and external factors necessary for LBM success in academic/postsecondary achievement.

### **Recommendations**

The scholarly works reported on LBM underachievement do not collectively present a new solution to the achievement gap problem. The strategies employed are at best small attempts to solve a persistent problem. Thus, silo approaches to the problem have only yielded minimal incremental improvements. This research was an effort to bring a new solution strategy using a synchronized curriculum to counter the critical barriers to LBM academic/postsecondary achievement. There are three areas worthy of future research and could assist further in elevating LBM academic/postsecondary achievement: 1) patterns of low-income Black girls' achievement, 2) patterns of LBM achievement and 3) understanding cultural differences and attitudes toward education within LBM sub-group. Lee (2004) states that

a current understanding of the factors that explain the achievement patterns of low-income students is limited. Presently, most research focuses on differences between low-income and middle and high-income students. Much less attention has been paid to variation among low-income students, a group of interest to educational researchers. Analyses of low-income students within-group differences are necessary to understand why some students fail, some barely survive and still, others thrive in this low-income high-risk environment to determine what makes some students succeed.

The rationale for future research in these three areas is a lack of insufficient data available about how or what strategies low-income Black girls employ collectively to consistently maintain academic/postsecondary achievement success compared to LBM'. Another possible area for research would be to determine what are the strategies a small percentage of LBMs employ to accomplish academic/postsecondary achievement. There is a need to understand varying cultural differences and attitudes towards education within the LBM sub-group to inform educational stakeholders on best strategies to mitigate the Black/White achievement gap (Wood, 2013).

### **Summary**

The Black/White achievement gap has persisted for decades. Despite marginal improvements in closing the achievement gap, it continues to persist. For LBM', the persistent gap has profound negative socioeconomic consequences. While there is motivation to close the overall achievement gap between the two groups, it is imperative that attention is given to LBM', given the short and long-term adverse socioeconomic consequences of academic/postsecondary underachievement. LBM underachievement not only lags when compared to their WMC but also pales when compared to their Black female peers. This study sought to inform about a possible new solution to ameliorate the academic/postsecondary achievement gap between LBMs and WMCs.

The study examined three areas. 1) Identifying and interpreting historical data that validated an academic/postsecondary achievement gap exists between LBMs and their WMC in high school graduation rates, core subject areas ELA and mathematics. 2) explored the barriers to postsecondary achievement for LBM' and 3) a new solution strategy to mitigate the persistent postsecondary achievement gap between the two groups by way of a synchronized curriculum.

This research aimed to facilitate long-term socioeconomic sustainability for LBM' and changing the deficit perceptions of them. It is intended that the BCPSD curriculum personnel be given these findings as another available tool to close the achievement gap between the two groups.

This research study demonstrated that for LBM' to succeed in academic/postsecondary achievement there is a need for a comprehensive curriculum reform that is specifically tailored to counter the two primary barriers that emerged from the data/literature, internal and external barriers LBM' encounter. The development of a synchronized curriculum is intended to close the achievement gap through critical internal contact points within schools such as the curriculum, teacher and the guidance counselor. In addition, critical external contact points outside of school such as family, community and changing deficit perceptions by way of support/mentoring programs should be used. This study demonstrated that the elimination of a silo approach to a synchronized technique is the best solution for LBM academic/postsecondary achievement. This research will not only be the catalyst for curriculum reform for LBM', but also could be a model for similar groups in countering academic/postsecondary underachievement.

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## Appendix A: Research Process Outline

- Goals**
1. To demonstrate the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and WMC in BCPSD.
  2. To identify internal and external factors associated with LBM' postsecondary underachievement.
  3. To design a curriculum, model the author called a synchronized curriculum to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap between LBM and WMC in BCPSD.

- Objectives**
1. To implement a synchronized curriculum BCPSD.
  2. To improve postsecondary achievement among LBMs.

**Materials** All available public domain archival historical data/research, documents and records that have already been collected needing no prior approval.

**Research Design & Sampling Procedure** Historical design  
 Since the study will be utilizing a historical design, a sample group is not applicable.

**Reflection**

The results from the available historical data will be compared, analyzed and findings reported.

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<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Materials</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
Week-1	Analyze & interpret archival historical data	Computer/research/ public domain archival historical reporting databases, documents and records	Analyze data in student achievement over a given period.	
Week-2	Analyze & interpret collection of historical data	Computer/research/ public domain archival historical reporting databases, documents and records	Collect and analyze historical data for internal & external factors	
Week-3	Compile & categorize data	Labels, spreadsheet, computer	Compile, categorize, label, evaluate, finalize and report data	Evaluate what the

Week-4	Compile & categorize data	Labels, spreadsheet, computer	Finalize and report qualitative data	data is saying
Week-5	Design synchronized curriculum	All data/ manual components/program	Construct the final categories of guide internal & external packages	
Week-6				

## **Appendix B: Synchronized Curriculum Design**

The following is an outline and procedural steps in implementing the synchronized curriculum.

### **Synchronized Curriculum Guide**

**Purpose.** The product is an intended guide to district/school personnel, decisions and practices on the implementation of a synchronized curriculum.

**Objective.** The intended objective is to ameliorate the postsecondary achievement gap between LBMs and their WMC in school districts.

**Scope.** This guide is for all LBMs in BCPSD.

### **Internal Package Guide**

Identifying LBMs in high school populations who qualify for free and reduced lunch, identifying internal curriculum needs to be based on school data of LBM, identifying qualifying positive contact teachers to service target group

### **External Package Guide**

1. Family assessment needs of LBMs
2. Community outreach liaison (College/Career/Police)
3. Deficit perception assessment levels and treatment

### **Guidance Counselors Role Guide**

1. Deliberate academic/health contact
2. Deliberate proportional placement of LBMs in high-achieving classes
3. Deliberate placing of LBMs with qualified positive contact teachers
4. Deliberate family contact and dissemination of accessory information

### **Programs**

1. Black experiential programs for LBMs to build academic/postsecondary efficacy

## 2. Black parent(s) postsecondary achievement opportunities