A Paradigm Shift?
Just Because the Lion is Talking Doesn't Mean that He isn't Still Telling the Hunter's Story: African American Male Theory and the Problematics of Both Deficit and Nondeficit Models

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In this theoretical article, we provide a more in-depth discussion of African American Male Theory (AAMT), which is driven by the growing body of literature that challenges deficit narratives and posits that nondeficit frameworks, practices, and thinking represent a paradigm shift from the pervasive deficit model. These recent conceptual pushes, although a move in the right direction, are still deficient, and we argue that both deficit and nondeficit models, as currently positioned, are problematic. Based on our argument, we offer the following four recommendations for scholars: (a) define success when writing about successful African American boys and men; (b) refrain from using reactionary and deficit words, such as counter; (c) couple Critical Race Theory (CRT) with other frameworks; and (d) create frameworks and theories to communicate the position and trajectory of African American boys and men in the world.

A presentation of African American Male Theory (AAMT) was first published in the *Journal of African American Males in Education* in 2013. Since then, the authors have received numerous inquiries from graduate students and scholars, made several national presentations, and been in countless conversations about AAMT. This follow-up piece is, in part, fueled by

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these interactions, and we provide examples from our dialogues to deepen understanding of the particular concepts of the theory. This work is also driven by the recent literature that challenges deficit narratives and posits that nondeficit frameworks, practices, and thinking represent a paradigm shift from the pervasive deficit model. These recent conceptual pushes, although a move in the right direction, are still deficient. Further, many scholars double down on this deficiency when they couple what is being positioned as nondeficit frameworks with Critical Race Theory (CRT), which, in many ways, is a deficit approach, independent of any other perspectives causing a quagmire rather than a paradigm shift.

Both the aforementioned aim to provide examples from our conversations concerning AAMT and our drive to push scholars to reexamine how nondeficit and deficit discourses are being situated in the body of literature coalesce and center on tenet number four of the theory: African American boys and men are resilient and resistant. Before we discuss this tenet in detail, however, we will provide a review of all six tenets of AAMT.[1]

African American Male Theory (AAMT) Tenets

1. The individual and collective experiences, behaviors, outcomes, events, phenomena, and trajectory of African American boys' and men's lives are best analyzed using an ecological systems approach.

Building upon the ancient and current African worldview as well as Bronfenbrenner's (1986, 1989, 2005) work, AAMT suggests that African American boys and men exist in a symbiotic and bidirectional relationship with other beings, matter, concepts, and phenomena.

Thus, AAMT provides a conceptual framework that can be used to describe and analyze the interrelated structures, systems, and processes that occur in these dynamic and multidimensional environments that influence the development, experiences, outcomes, and trajectory of African American boys and men (Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997; Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003). Given that the environmental factors that affect African American boys and men are numerous and differentiated, AAMT uses multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches.

Bronfenbrenner's (1986, 1989, 2005) model of interconnected environmental systems includes the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem captures the individual's biology, personality, beliefs, perceptions, and intellectual gifts and his or her interactions with familial, peer group, neighborhood, and school environments. The mesosystem consists of the links between the various environments of the microsystem and is the space in which microsystems engage one another.

Exosystems are external environmental settings and community factors, such as a parent's place of employment, that affect an individual, even if that person is not a direct participant. The macrosystem involves larger cultures or systems, which can be physical, emotional, and ideological that may affect individual development and can include regional and

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[1] See Bush and Bush (2013b) for the historical context, rationale, and usage of AAMT.

national culture, including political and economic systems. The chronosystem involves the pattern and arrangement of the environmental events and transitions and the sociohistorical context in which they occur, for example, the increase in career opportunities for women over the last few decades (Santrock, 2008).

Although AAMT incorporates all five of Bronfenbrenner's (1986, 1989, 2005) interconnected environmental systems, the theory divides the microsystem into two categories: the inner microsystem, which captures a person's biology, personality, perceptions, and beliefs, and the outer microsystem, which involves the familial, peer group, neighborhood, and school environments and their impact on the individual. In addition, AAMT expands the mesosystem to include the links between the environments of the inner microsystem and outer microsystem as well as an additional system, known in AAMT as the *subsystem* (Figure 1).

Figure 1. African American Male Ecological Systems Model for African American Male Theory
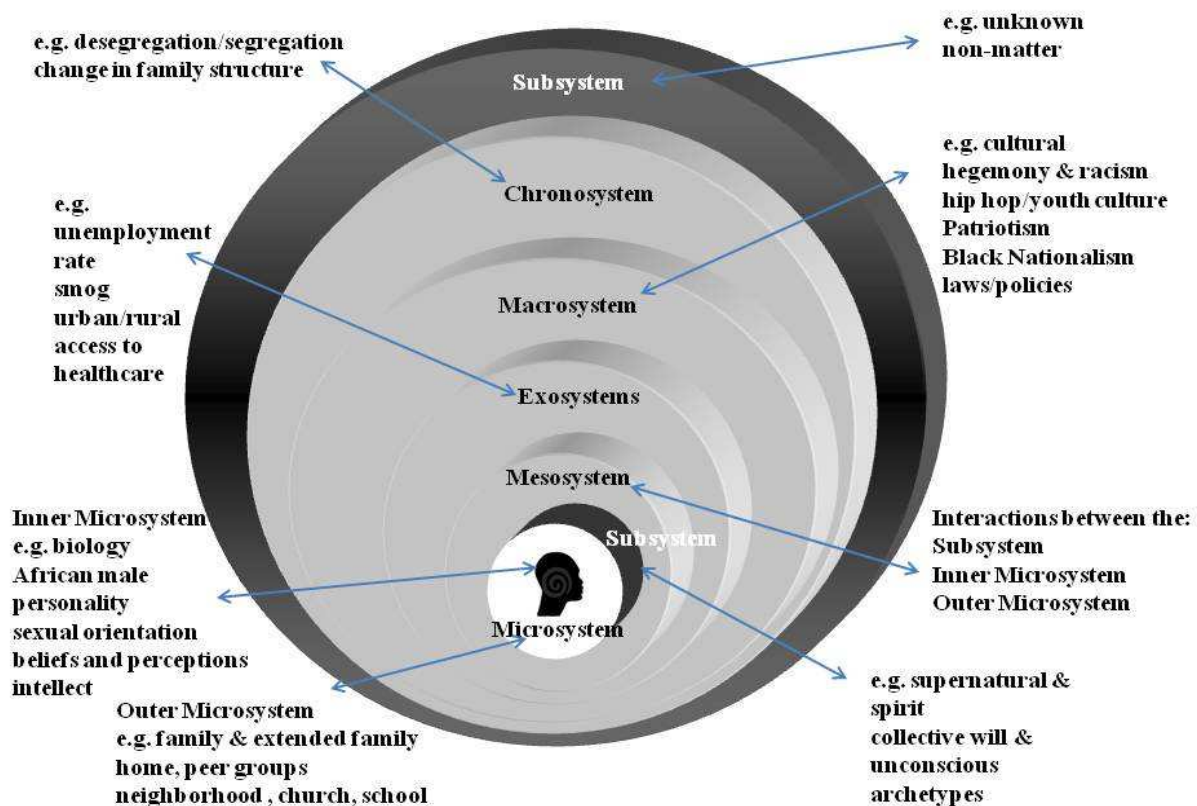
The subsystem provides a space for scholars to consider the influence of the supernatural and spirit (Cajete, 1994; Somé, 1994), collective will, collective unconscious, and archetypes (Jung, 1968; Taub-Bynum, 1984). The concept of the subsystem also provides scholars with an opportunity to consider what physicists describe as multidimensional levels of reality that exist in parallel spaces (Kaku, 2005) and how they affect the individual-male level of the microsystem and serve as an undercurrent of the other systems in the model.

With this in mind, our aim is to ensure that AAMT is elastic and robust enough to accommodate the work of physical and social scientists who research such phenomena. We also note that spirituality and related concepts are important to a significant number of African American boys and men (Baker-Fletcher, 1996; Watts, 1993). Notably, the concept of the endosystem allows for an examination for spiritual phenomena via the perspectives of this population.

2. There is something unique about being male and of African descent.

Whether stemming from nature, nurture, or a combination thereof, there is something unique about being male and of African descent. Although AAMT also affirms the uniqueness of other populations and groups and is interested in what makes African American males similar to other populations, AAMT is specifically concerned with examining and discovering what is distinctive about this population as a group and with understanding individual distinctions within the group. Distinctions are necessary across areas and disciplines, is needed for scholars to create specialized programs, pedagogies, and curricula in education; to determine specific medical and psychological treatment in biological and psychological research; and to account for the contributions of African American men in terms of the progress of humanity

3. There is a continuity and continuation of African culture, consciousness, and biology that influence the experiences of African American boys and men.

AAMT asserts that the study of African American men and boys must be anchored in an understanding of Africa (Franklin, 1994; Harris & Ferguson, 2010; White & Cones, 1999) because African culture and consciousness have a persistent impact on African American boys and men (Fortes, 1967; Herskovits, 1959; Hill, 1997; Kenyatta, 1983; McAdoo, 1988; Nobles, 1980; Sudarkasa, 1980). The study of these relationships requires multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches, and their implications can be seen in both the social sciences and humanities.

Research on African American boys and men that does not take into account the impact of African culture and consciousness among African Americans in the United States runs the significant risk of producing incomplete or inaccurate findings. Much work needs to be done in this area of understanding, as most research on African American boys and men does not attempt to empirically examine or even theorize about the ramifications of such cultural, biological, and spiritual links.

4. African American boys and men are resilient and resistant.

AAMT posits that African American boys and men are born with an innate desire for self-determination and with an unlimited capacity for morality and intelligence. AAMT embraces resilience theory and opposes deficit paradigms, thinking, and practice. From this viewpoint, it is apparent that social and educational challenges that face this group stem from socially constructed systems rather than any innate biological or cultural deficiencies.

Resilience theory, introduced by ecologist Holling (1973), meshes well with AAMT, as it incorporates aspects of systems theory and ecological theory. Resilience theory is concerned with the ability, capacity, and powers that people or systems exhibit that allow them to rise above adversity (Holling, 1973; McCubbin, Thompson, Thompson, & Futrell, 1998; Montenegro, 2010). AAMT is particularly interested in discovering and illuminating the resiliency present in the inner microsystem (e.g., biology, personality, sexual orientation, beliefs, perceptions, intellect), outer microsystem (e.g., family, extended family, home, peer groups, neighborhood, church), subsystem (e.g., supernatural, spirit, collective will, unconscious, archetypes), and mesosystem (e.g., interactions between the subsystem, inner microsystem, and outer microsystem; Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Murray Nettles, Mucherah, & Jones, 2000; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).

In addition, AAMT connects resistance with resiliency and focuses on ways in which African American boys, men, and systems can reject White mainstream cultural hegemony and oppression. AAMT does not, however, completely align with leading resistance or cultural oppositional theorists, such as John Ogbu and Signithia Fordham (Fordham, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, 1991), and we are more interested in how the theory has been nuanced by others. For example, Ogbu (1991) suggested that some African Americans reject education because it is perceived as supporting their oppression. In this regard, Bush (1997) challenged Ogbu (1991) by arguing that Ogbu has confounded the terms *education* and *schooling*. Bush views schooling as the process used to maintain and continue asymmetrical power relations but defined education as "the process that should make people more capable of manifesting who they are as defined by their cultural and community norms" (p. 99). Thus, he contended that what Ogbu (1991) found was a rejection of schooling by African Americans rather than of education, as African Americans have always thirsted and fought for education, even in the face of tremendous adversity and minimal resources (Anderson, 1988; Bush, 1997; Bush, Bush, & Causey-Bush, 2006).

Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001) also have re-conceptualized Ogbu's theory in a manner that is of interest to AAMT. They asserted that Ogbu focuses on self-defeating resistance, while they view some opposition as having transformative qualities, as in the case of individuals who view society as being unjust and engage in resistant actions as a means of fostering social and political change.

AAMT considers all forms of resistance and opposition demonstrated by African American boys and men as a strength, although some manifestations may be counterproductive to what is viewed as "success" or "productivity" in White mainstream society. In keeping with

the tenets of AAMT, we aim to explore how resistant behaviors may arise from attempts to maintain a continuity and continuation of African culture, consciousness, and biology.

5. Race and racism, coupled with classism and sexism, have a profound impact on every aspect of the lives of African American boys and men.

Like CRT, AAMT views racism as an omnipresent force in society. AAMT is particularly interested in how racism has an impact on the lives of African American boys and men. Moreover, AAMT is interested in understanding how being male and of a certain class may gain some African American boys and men privilege in some spaces, and, thereby, scholars of AAMT seek to be in dialogue with such perspectives (Abdulla, 2012; Cannon, 1988; Collins, 1990; hooks, 2000; Pellerin, 2012).

6. The focus and purpose of study and programs that concern African American boys and men should be the pursuit of social justice.

The intent of AAMT is to undermine oppression through explicitly investigating, exposing, and correcting those practices, policies, programs, systems, concepts, and institutions that promote its continuation (Young, 1990). Nevertheless, AAMT is not a reactionary theory. The aim is not to respond to cultural hegemony and racism but, rather, to explicitly account for it, as AAMT draws upon the historical and current culture, consciousness, and community to determine what is and strive to achieve social justice for African American boys and men.

The Move Away from Deficit Frameworks

All six tenets of AAMT provide the necessary space and tools to fully examine and perhaps explain the outcomes, behavior, and experiences of African American boys and men. Different from other theoretical and conceptual frameworks, AAMT accounts for spiritual matters and provides a directive for what is considered *success*. Both of these aspects of AAMT are paramount to the following discussion of the fourth tenet of AAMT and the nondeficit models for which scholars are calling.

Many scholars view deficit approaches as appearing early in literature that examined the societal challenges faced by African American men (Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Hare, 1971; Moynihan, 1965; Staples, 1978). We, however, refer to the academic field of study of Black manhood and masculinity, which is no more than 50 years old, rather than to a larger and pervasive deficit narrative that positioned Africans as inferior as a means to justify enslavement, colonization, and the like.

By the mid-1980s, scholars began to systematically compile and report statistics on life outcomes for African American males in comparison to other racial and gender groups, with a focus on homicide, incarceration, life expectancy, and infant mortality rates. These statistics indicated that African American males had higher rates of these factors but that they also greatly outdistanced their counterparts. During this period, the work of Gibbs (1984, 1988), Kunjufu (1984, 1985), and Madhubuti (1990) fundamentally changed the approach to the study of African

American boys and men through their ushering in what is known as the *endangered species* discourse in both scholarly and mainstream literature to characterize the circumstances to which these statistics allude. In fact, almost all the subsequent academic and popular literature as well as educational and social programming related to African American boys and men are inextricably linked to their work. Consequently, both scholarly and other writers were expected to advance the *endangered species* discussion and to report data on the status of African American males. From the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, scholars worked feverishly to compile these growing statistics into four categories of issues: (a) demographic; (b) psychological, social, and health; (c) political and economic; and (d) educational (Gordon, Gordon, & Nembhard, 1994).

Although *endangered species* research continued, some scholars started to focus on *successful* African American boys and men, particularly in the literature in the field of education (Bonner, 2010; Byfield, 2008; Grantham, 2004; Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998; Whiting, 2009). More recently, some have rightfully challenged scholars to look more closely at the mountain of data that depicts African American boys and men at the bottom of important indicators, suggesting that some of these data are misleading at best and, in some cases, altogether false (Morton, 2012). Finally, a cadre of scholars have outright called for an end to such negative approaches to researching, theorizing, and writing about African American boys and men and have tended to stigmatize and label the approach as a deficit model. They have done so in such important work as *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem? Black Male Students, Schools, and Learning in Enhancing the Knowledge Base to Disrupt Deficit Frameworks* (Howard, 2013), *(Re)defining the Narrative: High-Achieving Nontraditional Black Male Undergraduates at a Historically Black College and University* (Goings, 2016), and *An Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework for Research on Students of Color in STEM* (Harper, 2010).

This growing call to move from deficit to nondeficit frameworks (Brown, 2011; Brown & Donnor, 2011; Goings, 2015; Haddix, 2009; Harper, 2010; Howard & Flennaugh, 2011) is being described as a paradigm shift. Howard (2013) provides an understanding of what underlies the call for this shift:

> Therefore, conceptual and theoretical frames that are centered on a discourse of them being endangered, extinct, or at-risk when discussing Black males lend themselves to identifying problems with them, without any institutional or structural critique. This shift calls for researchers to dismiss deficit-laden frames and to move toward a more asset-based approach, which recognizes the strengths, promise, and potential of students and can lead to opening up research approaches that delve into a more comprehensive, nuanced, complex, and authentic account of them. What is essential for social scientists concerned with Black male achievement and experiences in schools to do is to engage in a paradigm shift of how Black males are viewed, studied, and understood. (pp. 62–63)

Essential to this paradigm shift is the notion that African American boys and men need to be in control of their own narratives. Scholars utilize the work of hooks (1990) to underscore this

point, as she warns against the precarious predicament of having others, White scholars in particular, provide voice to and an analysis of the experiences of African American boys and men. To illuminate this point, Howard (2013) and Goings (2015) draw upon the following two African proverbs, respectively: "Do not let the lion tell the giraffe's story" and, "Until the lion tells his side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."

The Lion and the Hunter

We support the move away from deficit-laden frames to frames that enable individuals to tell their own story. We contend, however, that this move is not so much a paradigm shift as a change in position within the same model or prescribed box. The telling of more positive stories is refreshing and necessary, but a paradigm shift requires a different lens by and a box within which to examine and understand both so-called deficit-laden and nondeficit frames. It is difficult to hear the authentic voice of the lion if he is using the hunter's frameworks for analysis, definitions, and parameters for success and ontological perspectives about what is to be a lion. With this in mind, we created the following proverb that we will utilize to portray the distinction between the existing position of the body of literature and the point we are advancing in this present work. Further, the proverb, "Just because the lion is talking doesn't mean that he isn't still telling the hunter's story," will be used to frame the rest of our discussion.

The fourth tenet of AAMT asserts that all forms of resistance and opposition demonstrated by African American boys and men are strengths. Moreover, AAMT calls into question the very notion of resistance and opposition by arguing that a significant amount of what we label as such is a natural or a collective way of being, which White systems and institutions are in opposition to and resist (Bush, Bush, & Causey-Bush, 2004). To fully explicate these points, we need to dig deeper into oppositional theory and "acting White," using the robust utility of AAMT, which allows one to draw upon spiritual matters to analyze and explain phenomena.

There is a long history of resolute critiques of the hegemonic origin and structure of the *educational* system in the United States. The system is characterized as oppressive (Freire, 1996), deculturizing (Spring, 2016), and mis-educating (Woodson, 1990/1933), among myriad related pejorative assessments (Giroux, 1983a, 1983b; Hill, 1987; McLaren, 2005). Despite these critiques, we have no answer to the question of whether the educational system produces Black people who are essentially White in terms of consciousness and behavior as the body of empirical literature is nonextinct on the matter. Instead, scholars focus on relating the persistent educational and social disparities of African American children, boys in particular, to whether they are perceived as "acting White" for being academically successful (Stinson, 2010). To this end, the dialectical notion that African American students are isolated and mocked systematically by their peers for being academically successful is not clearly established in the literature (Toldson & Owens, 2010).

We have established here that there is a salient difference between education and schooling and that many who are connected to the acting-White discourse have confounded the

two. There is no sustained record of humanity rejecting education as we have defined it. Nevertheless, schooling – the process that leaves one oppressed, deculturized, mis-educated, and perhaps in the case of African Americans, White, is always contested terrain in one form or another.

W. E. B. DuBois (2001), in *The Education of Black People: Ten Critiques, 1906–1960*, directly addresses this notion of Black people's becoming White as a consequence of such systems as schooling. This perspective is imperative to understanding the broader and deeper view of resistance, ontology, and "acting White" and to theorizing about the outcomes and behaviors of African American boys and men. DuBois, in a speech to Black teachers in the early 1960s, stated:

> Are we to assume that we will simply adopt the ideals of Americans and become what they are or want to be and that we will have in this process no ideals of our own? That would mean that we would cease to be Negroes as such and become white in action if not completely in color. We would take on the culture of white Americans, doing as they do and thinking as they think. Manifestly this would not be satisfactory. Physically it would mean that we would be integrated with Americans losing first of all, the physical evidence of color and hair and racial type. We would lose our memory of Negro history and of those racial peculiarities which have long been associated with the Negro. (pp. 193–194)

DuBois' work is profound and informative for our position. Yet, it still does not shed light on the spiritual dynamics of African American boys and men situated in White hegemonic systems, such as schools. This is an issue not often raised in the social science literature, and there are limited theoretical frameworks that encourage scholars to engage such matters, even though, in most empirical studies in which the voice of the participants are central, African American boys and men point to spirituality as a significant factor in their *success* and sustainability (Barnes, 2011; Bonner, 2010; Harmon, 2002; Hunter & Davis, 1992; Watts, 1993). Thus, we turn to the work of Dr. Malidoma Somé, a renowned African traditional priest and healer, to assist in the illumination of spiritual matters as we remind readers of our call to scholars across the disciplines to continue to construct a theory "that can articulate the position and trajectory of African American boys and men in the world, drawing on and accounting for pre- and post-enslavement experiences while capturing *spiritual,* biological, psychological, and social dimensions, educational development, and station" (Bush & Bush, 2013a, p. 10).

Somé (1994), in his autobiographic work, O*f Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic, and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman*, tells the story of his being kidnapped from a traditional African community in Burkina Faso at the age of 5 by a French Jesuit missionary. He was forced to attend seminary school until he escaped at the age of 20 and returned to live with his family. He had a challenging time with adjusting to life back among the Dagara people because it was apparent to everyone in his traditional community that the schooling process had inculcated in him a foreign spirit. This is seen in the following quotes, the last of which is a conversation between Malidoma and his father:

> As an educated man I had returned, not as a villager who had worked for a white man, but as a white man. (p. 167)
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> Knowing what you know is not common. It means that you have received the white man's Boar. His spirit lives in you. In a way you are not home yet. It's as if the real you is somewhere else, still trying to find the route home. The you sitting here in front of me is like the priest who came here fifteen years ago and took you away from us. Your soul is in his hands. (p. 176)
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> "So why am I of such great concern?"
>
> "I have already explained that. You carry something in you, something very subtle, something that comes from your contact with the whites—and now you want to be here where you once belong. You cannot live here as you are without turning this place into what you are." (p. 176)

Although scholars may debate the notion that the European schooling process infuses a White spirit into Black people, much of the world, from antiquity to present, understands that the educational process is a spiritual and sacred endeavor. The secular schooling system, for the most part, is a very recent and limited phenomenon worldwide. Education has been mostly under the jurisdiction and care of religious intuitions, such as temples, mosque, and churches, and has been administered by spiritual leaders and attendants, such as shamans, priests, imams, monks, nuns, Sunday school teachers, and the like.

Thus, it is the AAMT's subsystem level, which encompasses matters of the supernatural and spirit, collective will, collective unconscious, and archetypes, that provides fuel for and insight into all forms of resistance and opposition demonstrated by African American boys and men as strengths as well as the basis to examine and understand both so-called deficit-laden and nondeficit frames. Here, the lion and the hunter metaphor is useful for elucidating this perspective.

Think of the lion in the hunter's classroom and in his society in general. How would you think about what is success for the lion? What outcomes would you hope to see, particularly if you wanted the lion to remain a lion and to be free? How would we view indicators such as dropout vs. college-going rates for lions, then? What kind of behaviors would you see, or hope to see, in regard to concepts such as "self-defeating resistance" (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001) or even what we called *maladaptive behaviors*? (Bush & Bush, 2013a, 2013b). Finally, what theoretical frameworks would best articulate what is going on with him, for him to continue to be a lion, for him to be free, and what to do with his freedom?

Building on DuBois (2001) and Somé (1994), we see schooling and other apparatuses of the system of White supremacy (Welsing, 1974) not only as a mechanism and activity to instill White cultural values and norms but also as a spiritual process. Thus, at the subsystem level, African American boys attempt both to fight to continue to be African in their spirits and to push back against the inculcation of a White spirit. This dynamic manifests in behaviors such as sagging pants, hats turned backwards, braided hair, tattoos, and the like. In addition, we view

attempts to maintain an African spirit, supported by the outer microsystem (family, peers, and neighborhood)[2] and subsystem, manifested in the names of these boys, such as Davonte, DeAndre, Deante, Cavasia, Tay, Kareem, Jamal, and Shaquille. In general, society ridicules such names and despises the above behaviors. It needs to be understood, however, that, subconsciously, boys are expressing: "I don't want your white spirit in me and I will do whatever it takes to maintain myself to continue to be . . . a lion. Who I am and my story are not counter to anything or anyone; it is just who I am."

From this emerging perspective, which we contend is a paradigm shift, the deficit and nondeficit binary discourses are problematized, and the tools that the hunter uses, and some lions borrow, for analysis, measurement, definition, and theory development are less significant and, in some cases, impotent, as they are part of the same prescribed model that is controlled by the hunter. Consider outcomes such as high dropout and incarceration rates: Are these deficit indictors or are they the means that scholars use to interpret and frame them as foreign, polluted, or deficient? The authors argue with the latter. It is important to bear in mind that *just because the lion is talking doesn't mean that he isn't still telling the hunter's story*. If the lion were truly telling his story without fetters, then he would probably write praise poems[3] to the lions that were most disruptive to the inculcation process in classrooms and in society, those who dropped out, and perhaps even those who were jailed.

We are not suggesting that Black scholars praise the African American boys and men who drop out of school and go to jail and frown on those who matriculate to college. We are, however, proposing that we look at both differently. These outcomes must be problematized and explained from our own theoretical perspectives and paradigms. With theory in mind, CRT, the most commonly used theory by scholars to explain and frame the lives of African American boys and men (Bush & Bush, 2013b), is deficient and, in a sense, a deficit-minded approach. CRT is ahistorical and gives far too much credit to oppressors and racism for outcomes. It tells only a narrow and tragic story of what happened to African Americans, including enslavement, colonization, and imperialism, and it is not equipped to tell the larger narrative of who we are and the agency that we bring to the world stage.

Recommendations for Scholars

Based on our discussion, we present four recommendations for scholars that are rooted in AAMT:

1. Define success. It is no longer acceptable to write about *successful* African American boys and men without some problematized context and without making an attempt to define

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[2] In future papers, the authors will explore the utility of the microsystem as a vehicle to maintain African spirit and ways, particularly in inner cities, where we see compound-type living arrangements on "reservations" (i.e., housing projects) and the continuation of African linguistic systems.

[3] Africans have a long and rich history of praise poetry; see Finnegan (2012).

success. As best as we can extrapolate from the body of literature, which is silent on the matter, success means that African American boys and men make it to and graduate from college. Making it to college is a starting point. We argue that what scholars consider successful must be *rooted in our history, culture, community, and political realities worldwide. The authors define success as freedom.*

2. Refrain from using reactionary and deficit words, such as *counter or other*. A trend, particularly among those who employ CRT, is to use words such as *counternarrative, counter-storytelling*, and *other* to describe phenomenon of often-historically excluded groups that depart from or whose perspectives run perpendicular to mainstream beliefs or discourse. This practice inadvertently links the origin and location of the narratives of African American boys and men to oppression and oppressors. The story of the Africans worldwide, including African American boys and men, is not counter to any story; it just is.

3. Couple CRT with other frameworks. Using critical race theory solely to understand African American boys and men, particularly in how it has been used in social science research and epistemology, albeit mostly unintentionally, is like giving a mechanical juicer credit for producing and creating the oranges, the orange trees, and the juice. It would be nonsensical to many, in this metaphor, for one to study the juicer and expect to know much about the orange or the juice. It may be the case that studying the juice provides a significant amount of information; however, analyzing the juice as if its origins began with an encounter with a juicer is negligent because the juice was already in the orange and thus the juicer is a factor in the production of the juice rather than the reason for its creation or existence.

4. Create frameworks and theories. African Americans must be self-determined and self-defining and take over their own narratives. We offer AAMT as a model in that direction, and we call upon scholars across disciplines to develop theories that can communicate the position and trajectory of African American boys and men in the world, drawing on and accounting for pre- and post-enslavement experiences while capturing spiritual, biological, psychological, and social dimensions as well as educational development and station.

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