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Racial-Coping Among African American Students in Academia

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Racial-Coping Among African American Students in Academia

UNLV | CENTER FOR ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT & OUTREACH

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The Connection Between Racial Coping and Academics

African American students have generally fallen behind in their academic pursuits when compared to their non-black peers. While unacceptable, this continues to happen each year without effective intervention. Unfortunately, this issue is pervasive and complex, requiring additional research to find an effective solution. One factor that may contribute to this phenomenon is coping. Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (1984) illustrates how coping responses yield direct outcomes. In an academic setting, coping may have a significant correlation with academic achievement among African American students when faced with race-related stressors. These racial-stressors combined with a school environment may yield maladaptive coping that would have an impact on student performance. It is important that this achievement gap is addressed to promote accomplishment in all student bodies.

The Stages of Coping

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*. New York: Springer Pub.

Stressor	Primary Appraisal	Secondary Appraisal
• First the stressor occurs. A stressor is an environmental challenge faced by the individual that challenges their psychological or physiological welfare.	• This stage recognizes the danger or threat brought on by the stressor.	• This stage recognizes the capacity of the individual to minimize the threat of the stressor effectively based on the assets afforded to them

The Ways of Coping

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*. New York: Springer Pub.

Problem-Focused Coping	Emotion-Focused Coping
• This stage recognizes the danger or threat brought on by the stressor.	• This stage recognizes the danger or threat brought on by the stressor.

African American Student Achievement Over Time
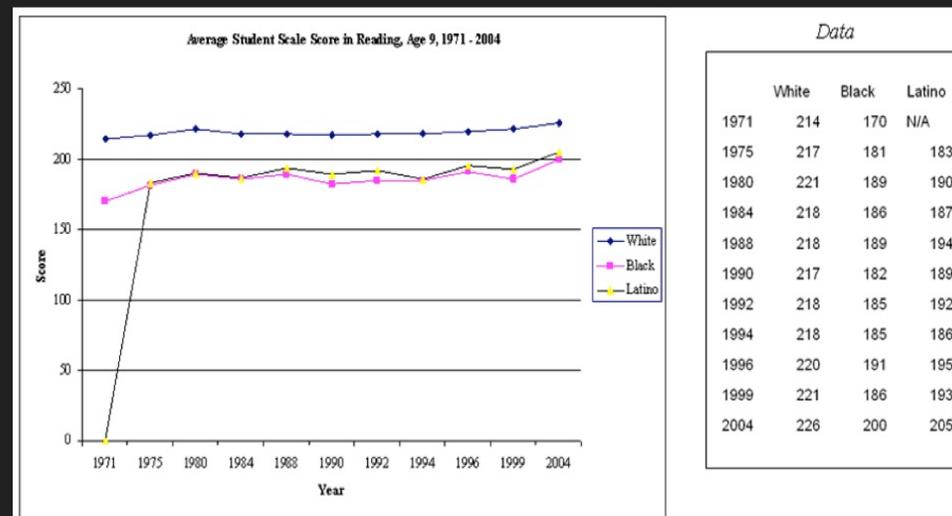
Span, C. M., & Rivers, I. D. (n.d.). Reassessing the Achievement Gap: An Intergenerational Comparison of African American Student Achievement before and after Compensatory Education and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. *Teachers College Record*. doi:10.4135/9781412963978.n305

Factors Limiting Academic Success

○ Steele (1997) conceptualized the pressure to act on racial stereotypes when observed or evaluated directly, designating it as Stereotype Threat.

○ Research completed by Time and Gotlieb (2013) suggested that individuals may face "multiple minority stereotype threat" if they belong to populations that face more than two stigmatizations, such as socioeconomic status, racial minority groups, etc.

○ Stigmatized racial groups of students demonstrate a statistically significant negative correlation with low college grade point average supporting theories of stereotype threat (Brown, R. P., & Lee, M. N., 2005).

○ There is evidence that "multiple minority stereotype threat" was present in stigmatized groups, causing members to experience significantly larger stereotype threat effects towards their success in mathematics and memory efficacy than those with less than three of the measured aspects of identity (Time & Gotlieb, 2013).

○ A meta-analysis by Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) found teachers maintained high expectations for Asian American and White students and lower expectations regarding African American and Latino students.

Race-Related Coping

○ Black students may be affected by social influences that mold their coping responses differently than their non-black peers.

○ It is not uncommon for groups being stigmatized to begin to adapt to existing stereotypes (positive or negative) without much coercion by the majority group imposing them (Steele, et al., 2002, Brown & Lee, 2005).

○ Stereotype Threat. This phenomenon may be more likely when faced with a very challenging situation (i.e. an exam, an oral presentation, etc.) (Brown & Lee, 2005; Steele, 1997).

○ Racial-stressors may illicit various types of responses from minorities. Research has shown inconsistent results, probably a result of the complexity of coping as a whole.

Discussion of Future Research

○ Solely acquiring statistical data surrounding African American student performance contributes little improvement towards the Achievement Gap.

○ Scenarios that require coping are complex and vary between individuals.

○ Rather than focusing the greater part of coping research towards quantifying data, qualitative data may yield more valuable information on this topic.

○ Research directed solely towards African American adolescents is lacking in all areas.

○ Additional research regarding the effectiveness of racial-coping techniques is greatly needed as well.

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○ Tenenbaum, H. R., & Ruck, M. D. (2007). Are teachers' expectations different for racial minority than for European American students? A meta-analysis. Journal of Educational Psychology, 99(2), 253-273.