

**Developing Black Student Identity**

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**Abstract**

This interdisciplinary paper examines and discusses ways to assist black students in developing their identities. Racial inequalities in education are still prevalent today in our education system, to be able to transform the education system to be tailored to all students regardless of their background or race requires multiple perspectives. This is done to facilitate a more extensive understanding of the issues in the education system regarding racial inequalities from data that is not solely contained within just one disciplinary boundary. The historical, psychological, and academic disciplines offer individualized viewpoints on the topic, allowing for multiple viewpoints on providing more relevant approaches to assisting Black students in developing their identity.

*Keywords:* Racial Inequalities, Black Students, Identity, Education

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Students of color have been misrepresented in the curriculum throughout the education system for centuries. They face adversaries in society about their identities and then are failed by the education system when it comes to educating them on their history and their cultural identity. The practices we have used in the past to help aid black students in developing their identity and creating an environment in schools that are inclusive for all students of color have seemed not to work. Interdisciplinarity provides alternative perspectives that may help better understand Black students and their struggles in education that aid the difficulty of them developing their identities. Many people have looked for solutions by looking at it from an academic discipline point of view when in fact historically the men and women who look like them who have made significant contributions have been left out of the textbooks and curriculum. Then comes the psychological disciplinary perspective, which can help us better understand what issues are also causing a block in allowing black students to develop their identities.

Academically, black students have been given the short end of the stick when it comes to understanding their history and who they are culturally. African American women and men have contributed a great deal to history yet black students are left in the dark about what their people did for their culture. A way to combat this issue academically would be to first create an environment for students that promotes instruction where students can critically analyze and relate to course content while using their cultural context (Johnson, 2022). This concept is called Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, and it allows educators to display their cultural awareness and competence regarding their students' beliefs and cultures. The goal of this concept is to build

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connections between home and the school community. This perspective shows that there are concepts that can be used to allow minority students to learn to make connections with school material and their communities.

Historically, for years the curriculum was designed to present to students a white, male-dominated history which includes much of their contributions to the development of society. Not only do these history books amplify the contributions of white people in history they also downplay and overlook the racism that this country faced. Having this bias in history textbooks perpetuates ignorance about racism and its legacy in the US today (2021). Black students not being able to see their history in textbooks at its full extent or even get the chance to learn about the incredible contributions their people made to this society. The lack of representation does not allow students to learn about their people or have a clear understanding of the history they come from. Using history to help black students develop their identities by using resources to help students have these difficult conversations and teaching students there is more to their history than oppression and domination of their culture (2021). Educators being self-aware and recognizing the issue while wanting to make a change will allow black students to connect with their community. This perspective shows how the lack of representation in the history curriculum can be harmful to the development of black identity and that the change to showcase all history and represent everyone is extremely crucial.

Psychologically, Black students have expressed for years their dismay with their educational experiences. They are unable to connect with their identities and their curriculum because it does not connect to their “black experience” (Jackson, 1976). As educators, the first step is realizing how the current educational process does not relate to the “Black experience.”. We must stop and ask: What is the black experience? How does it affect how black students

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connect with their identities? Black experience is everything black culture, the good the bad the racism, and the ugly. It is how society views black individuals in this society. Psychologically this can be damaging to black students' mental state and can cause individuals to struggle with attaining a positive black identity. According to Bailey W. Jackson III, there are four stages to black identity development. Stage 1 is passive acceptance; this describes the black people who unconsciously support individuals and institutional and cultural racism. Stage 2 is Active Resistance, which describes the black people who reject the perceived manifestations of white racism. Stage 3 is redirection which describes the black person who seeks to define her/her blackness in a positive light. Stage 4 is internalization, which describes the black person who seeks to integrate the positive mindset of stage three into other parts of their black identity (Jackson, 1976). These stages describe the way black individuals view themselves, their environments, and how they define needs and set goals. Assisting black students in developing their identity can be deeper than surface-level things such as curriculum it can be psychological in the way that they think and perceive themselves and other things. The key is to find ways to alter the way black students see themselves or their community to help create a space for positive imagining of their community and self. The psychological aspect serves as a guide and framework for understanding the psychological battles black students may go through when struggling to develop their identity.

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In conclusion, Students of color have been misrepresented in the curriculum throughout the education system for centuries. They face adversaries in society about their identities and then are failed by the education system when it comes to educating them on their history and their cultural identity. Applying an interdisciplinary lens to teaching and learning can help aid in developing Black Students' identities. Exploring different disciplines such as historical, psychological, and academic can allow a different perspective that allows for a better understanding of what can be done and what can be done better when it comes to giving black students the tools, they need to develop a sense of identity and a place of belonging in this society.

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