

Schooling for Resilience: Improving the Life Trajectory of Black and Latino Boys

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Connecting the dots of research and practice!

Greetings
and
Expectations

$$r+v=6$$

$$v=3 \quad r=?$$



My Story

- 1.5 generation immigrant; first language is Spanish
- Arrived in US at age 9
- Father joined US military; naturalized citizens
- Attended 3 elementary, 2 middle, and 2 high schools.
- Ph.D. in Social Foundations and Educational Policy (U. of Michigan)...what does that mean?!
- Policies are built on social understandings what is perceived “best” for a community!
- Worked as program director in community schools; evaluator of OST programs; policy consultant on disproportionality, etc.

Two Strands of My Research and Practice Work

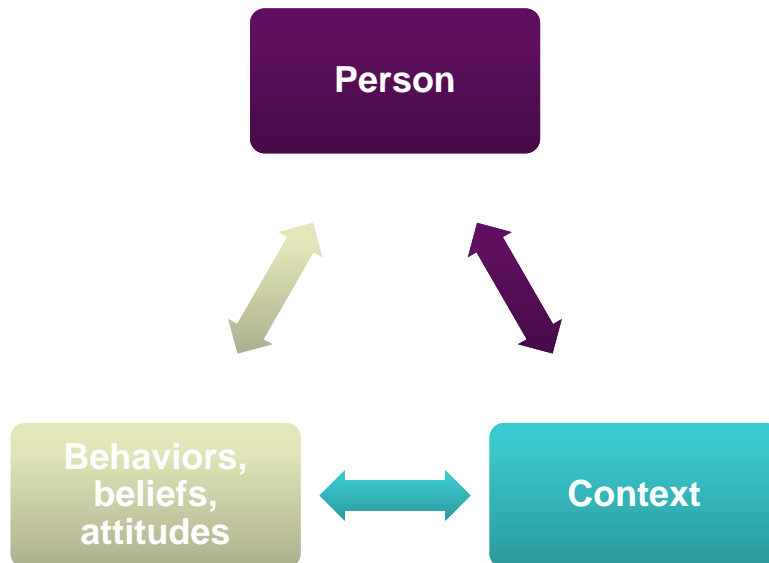
System Gaps and Reform

- Goal: Equity driven leadership

System Supports of Resilience Development

- Goal: Protective practices

- The theory **foundation** of my research and practice is....context (i.e., environment, surroundings, relationships, etc.) shapes understandings of behaviors, actions, and possible selves.



**VULNERABILITY RESEARCH
PROVIDES CONCEPTUAL
ANCHOR FOR
UNDERSTANDING
INTERACTION BETWEEN
PERSON AND CONTEXT**

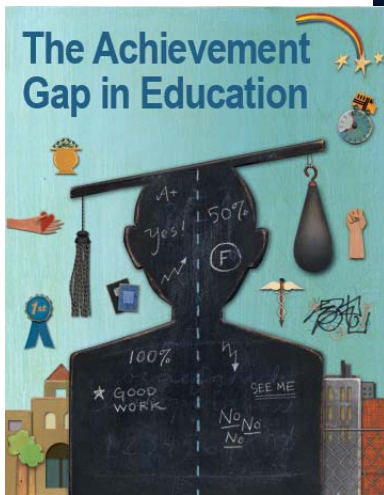
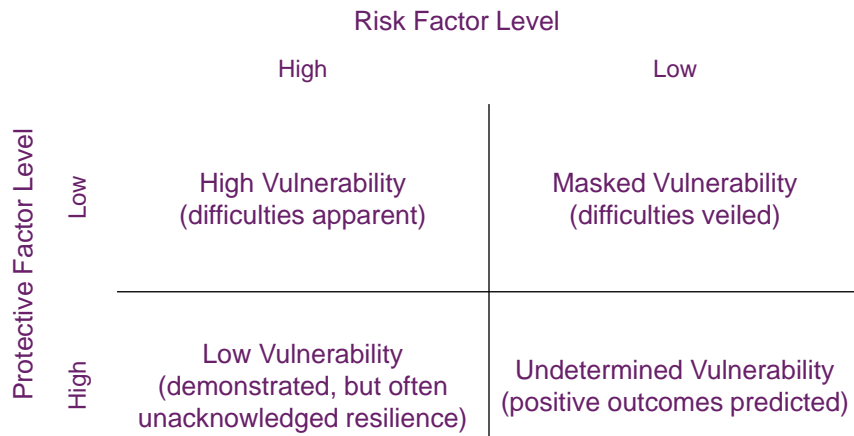
**Differential Vulnerability in Context – Margaret Beale
Spencer (Child and Developmental Psychologist)**

- All humans are vulnerable (i.e., chronically exposed to risk and protective factors)
- Varying levels of vulnerability are possible
- Schools, OST programs, community centers, etc. can both be protective factors and exacerbate risk factors
- We need to ensure that schools are protective factors for all students



From: Spencer, 2006; Spencer, Harpalani, Cassidy et al., 2006

Dual Axis Model of Vulnerability Assumptions



social w
in school

Other Theories on Person and Context Interaction

Non-Cognitive Skills

- Attention to resilience, grit, and perseverance (CCSR, 2012; MDRC, 2006; Tough, 2012) is absent of the adversity experienced by marginalized populations.

Trauma

- “shifting away from what’s wrong with you to what happened to you” (Bloom, 1988); programming should focus on **function** of behavior

Relational Development

- Child development is influenced by an interaction between nature and nurture; of greatest importance is social and emotional development and resulting relationships (National Research Council, 2000; Shonkoff, et.al., 2012)
- Relational engagement shapes notions of behavioral engagement which leads to academic success (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2006)

Person and Context Interaction: Detrimental Effect

Stereotype Threats

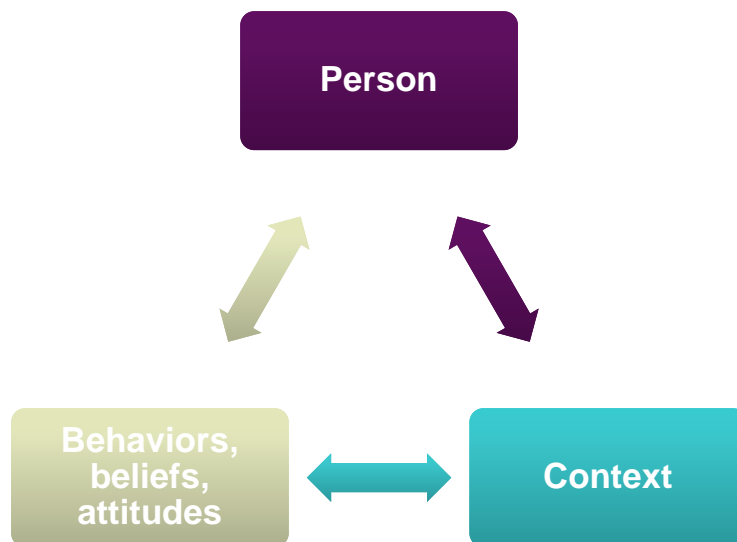
- Societal perceptions and individual experiences of discrimination and stereotype shape interactions in school environments (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Sue, 2010)

Pathology-based Context

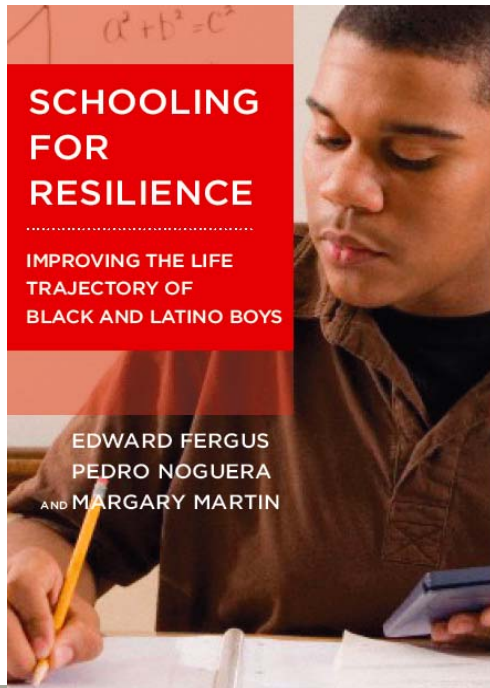
- Color-blind and deficit thinking ideology reduces academic expectations and increases office discipline and special education referrals (Fergus, forthcoming).
- Microaggressions in college environments challenge intelligence and effect student engagement (Suarez-Orozco, et.al., 2015)

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND CONTEXTS THAT ARE PAYING ATTENTION TO THE INTERACTION BETWEEN PERSON AND CONTEXT?

How do we understand contexts that are paying attention to the interaction between person and context?



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WHAT WAS OUR LEARNING OBJECTIVE?

WHAT ARE SCHOOLS DOING WHEN THEY “UNDERSTAND” THE VULNERABILITY OF THE POPULATION THEY SERVE?

Data Collected (2006-2010)

- Conducted interviews and focus groups with 95 administrators and teachers
- Conducted focus groups with 70 boys and interviews with 86 boys
- Conducted at least 3 site visits to each school per year (fall, winter, spring); Each site visit lasting 4 to 5 days
- Conducted over 400 hours of structured classroom observations in English, Math, Social Studies, and Science classes
- Administered student surveys each year – year one: 405 participants (48% response rate); Year two: 1038 (73% response rate); Year three: 1056 (65% response rate)

Year 1 Theory of Change framed what to investigate and how to investigate...

We also established a baseline of student school climate variables (measuring context)

Climate Theory of Change

Teacher Pedagogy (Instruction)

- Culturally responsive or "relevant" instruction
- Understanding of research on boys' learning and development
- Differentiated instruction (that addresses multiple learning styles) emphasis on "basic" skills (e.g., math, reading)
- Demystify knowing how to do school
- Cultivate higher critical thinking skills and interest in content

Teacher Pedagogy (Relational)

- Cultivate adult-support relationships with mentors and role-modeling
- Reinforce positive Black and/or Latino male (also "Boys of Color") identity
- Increase understanding of self, history, and community
- Encourage development of positive network of peers
- Provide greater awareness of educational and career options

School Climate Strategies

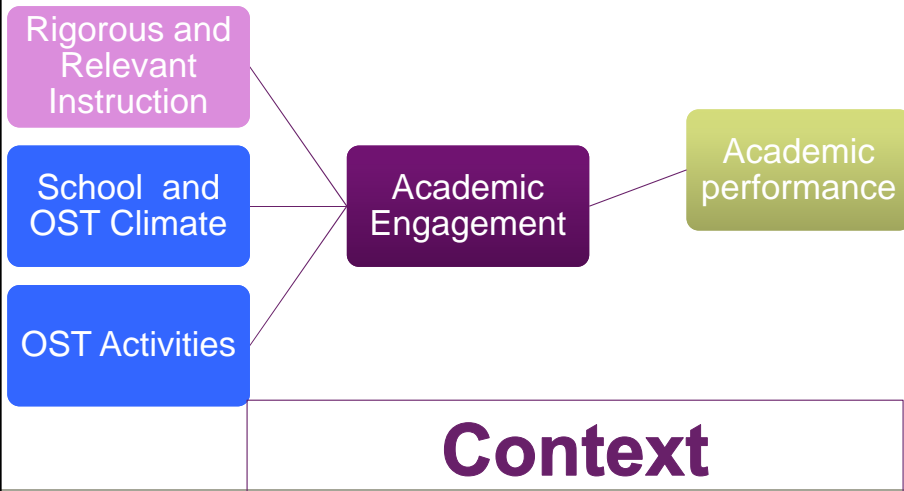
- Positive, nurturing community; leadership, "brotherhood" philosophy
- Social/emotional programming (e.g., Pack Groups, Advisory, Rites of Passage, Community Meetings, Mentoring)
- Discipline and order (e.g., uniforms, punishment rooms)
- College and career exploration opportunities
- College preparation programming(e.g., AVID, financial aid classes)

Long term outcomes

- Enroll and persist in college
- Develop career options
- Develop leadership capacity

BUILDING RESILIENCE SKILLS AND ATTITUDES AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR

Person-Context Resilience Skills and Attitudes Achievement Model



DESCRIBING THE CONTEXT

Driving Missions

- **The mission of the schools focus on college preparation, character development, and overall mobility in society.** Some schools consider building the college preparedness of students as critical while others consider building the social/soft skills (i.e., speaking, sense of identity and history) of students as critical to helping them exist “out in the world.”
- **The mission and purpose of the schools are framed around the administrator’s interpretation of what Black and Latino boys need and the challenges they are facing.** Also framing the purpose of the school, but more tangentially, is the inability of public schools to address the needs and challenges of Black and Latino males.

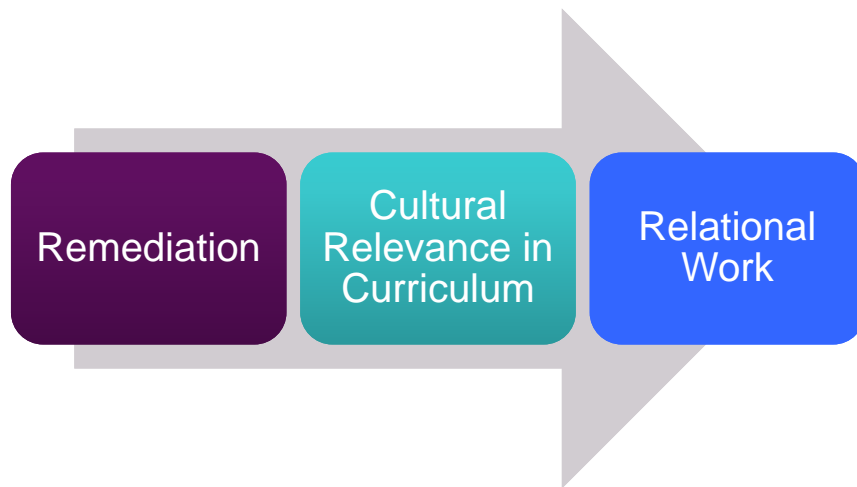
Building administrator

- **“We spend a lot of time thinking about what does it mean for our boys to be successful.** If it was just getting up and going to school everyday, that wouldn’t be hard to do. Right? **We understand that there are some environmental factors that play a big role in how our students come to school – their state of mind, their mood, etc.** We also know that when they leave school each day their feelings will affect whether or not they have the ability to complete homework. That in turn will affect how they experience the next day of school. If a student is unprepared, he’ll be put on the spot, and he’s probably going to have a bad day if he gets punished for not completing his work. “

Building administrator

- **Our boys just don’t get the same opportunities to receive help with their academic growth.** Many of our boys have to get their other siblings to school in the morning so they consistently arrive late. They have to go to work to support themselves and their families so they can’t do things like sports and theater. **Some of them haven’t been allowed to be kids at all.** You look at White kids, they’re allowed to do activities, and they’re allowed to do a lot of things. If there’s a younger sibling, they’re not responsible for them, there’s a babysitter or their parents handle it. **So I think that if we’re going to help these boys we’ve got to understand what they face.** We want to allow them to do the things that are necessary for their development – arts, music, sports, etc. – the things that middle-class White kids get to do.

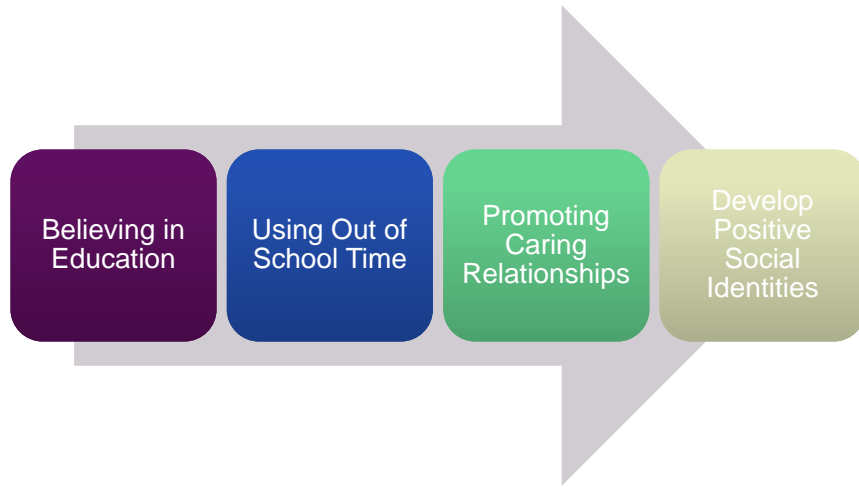
Instructional Model



Cultural Relevance - teacher

- “I do this because I think its part of what it takes to really connect with my students. **Given the group that we’re teaching, we’re working with African American males many of whom have been turned off to school, so just even doing things like readings must include their culture.** To me, incorporating the cultural component of Afro-Latinos and Cuba and the Dominican Republic makes so that they are more conscious of what’s going on in the world around them. I had an interest in Latin American literature and politics while I was in college. I feel that I have brought a lot more of that into my classroom. **This might not be what is typically covered in the Spanish 1 classroom but I make sure its covered in mine.**”

School Climate Model




Percentage Agreement on Academic Educational Beliefs Scale

	Disagree	Agree
Education is the key to success in the future.	8.2%	91.8%
If everyone in America gets a good education, we can end poverty.	25.1%	74.9%
Achievement and effort in school lead to job success later on.	12.0%	88.0%
The way for poor people to become middle class is for them to get a good education.	19.1%	79.9%
School success is not necessarily a clear path to a better life.	45.4%	54.6%
Getting a good education is a practical road to success for a person like me.	13.2%	86.8%
Young people like me have a chance of making it if we do well in school.	10.6%	89.4%
Education really pays off in the future for a young person like me.	9.9%	90.1%

Belief in Education – Student

- “One thing that helps us in getting ready to go to college is making us dress in uniforms.** I think this is helping us go to college because now we understand how to dress for success. Mr. Brown is in ties all the time. He tells us that if you want people to take you seriously, you have to put on a tie and jacket when you’re taking care of serious business. I’m glad that we have teachers who break things down for us like that. If I go to college, I would be the first one in my family to graduate. **So I don’t have anyone at home telling me how to do all of this. I’m lucky to have a principal like Mr. Brown who really explains how to be successful.”**

Student Who Reported Agreement to Questions about Caring Relationships with Adults

	Disagree	Agree
There is at least one adult in school I can always count on.	19%	81%
I feel that there is no one in school who can help me.	86%	14%
If I have a problem at school there is someone I can count on.	21%	79%
Teachers do not care about my future.	84%	16%
 There is someone at school who makes me feel like a successful student.	19%	81%
School is a lonely place where no one cares about me.	88%	12%

Building Caring Relationships – building administrator

- “I would just tell them [students] to leave their cell phones on because the socio-emotional piece will come at the time when you expect it... I sometimes get calls 7:30 on a Sunday morning or 10:00 pm on a Tuesday night from students who are distressed about something. It’s not easy to be so accessible because I have a personal life and a family of my own, but we understood when we came here that this job would require more from us. **Being accessible is a critical part of building strong relationships.**”

Stereotype Threat Scale (Steele and Aronson, 1995)

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Ethnicity is related to academic performance.	49%	29%	21%
Members of my ethnic group have trouble performing well in school.	45%	34%	21%
Prejudice has had a big effect on members of my ethnic group.	41%	33%	25%
Prejudice has strongly affected my life.	47%	31%	21%
Prejudice has negatively affected my school experiences.	54%	29%	16%
Teachers often expect lower performance from members of my ethnic group.	61%	26%	13%
Some people think I have less ability because of my ethnicity.	54%	26%	20%
In academic situations I often feel that others look down on me because of my ethnicity.	57%	27%	16%
My ethnicity does not affect other people's perceptions of my academic abilities.	38%	31%	31%
Some academic tasks are more difficult for people of my ethnicity.	50%	32%	18%

Students Perspective on Identity Climate

- **“I like the fact that I don’t have to hide my personality.**
I can state my opinions without being called any names or anything like that. This is an environment where people want to learn.” (10th grader)
- “People have different views of us because **they don’t see us for what we see in ourselves.** Other people might think we’re something that we really aren’t. Like when Black boys walk down the street with their pants down they think that’s a bad kid. He don’t come from a good home, from like a good family. That’s what people might think. But that’s their opinion. It may not be true at all” (7th grader)

OST Program Components

Interest based programs

Enrichment activities such as Boys Scouts, sports, book clubs, etc.

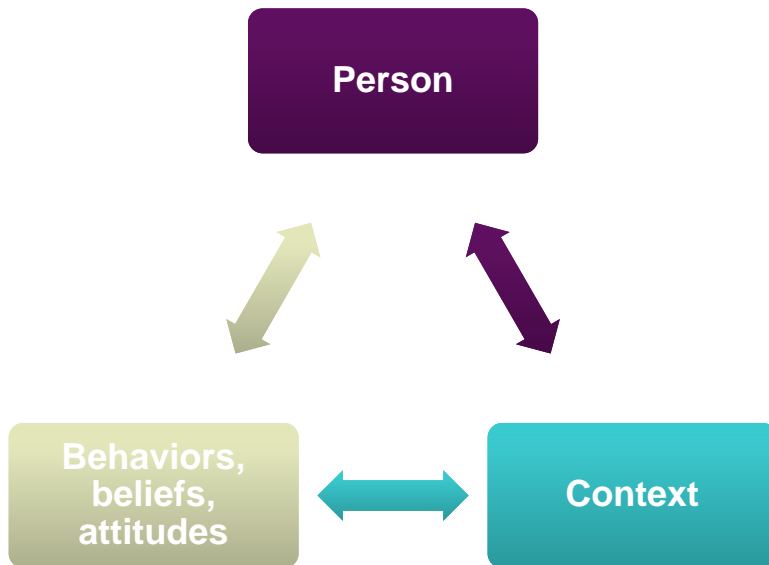
Other adults

Mentoring opportunities with community, higher education, CBOs, etc.

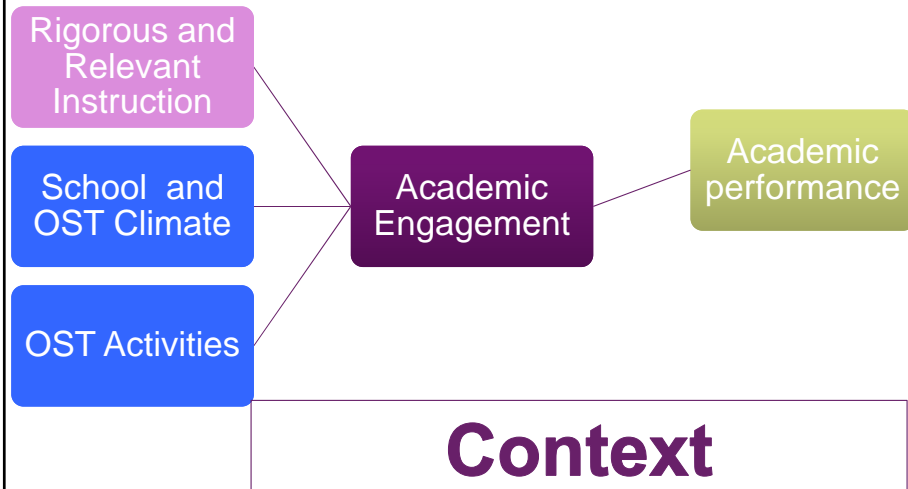
Remediation

Homework help programs with school day staff

HOW DID THESE PRACTICE COMPONENTS RELATE TO STUDENT RESILIENT SKILLS AND ATTITUDES?



Person-Context Resilience Skills and Attitudes Achievement Model



Academic Engagement (Suarez-Orozco, 2001)

- Three dimensions
 - **Cognitive engagement:** This scale measures the degree to which students are interested and intellectually engaged in what they are learning (e.g., “I enjoy learning new things”).
 - **Relational engagement:** This scale measures the degree to which students felt that they had a supportive relationship with an adult or a peer that helped them feel connected to school (e.g. “There is at least one adult in school I can always count on.”).
 - **Behavioral engagement:** This scale measures whether the students were completing the tasks necessary to be successful in school, including attending and participating in class and completing homework and course assignments.

SCHOOL AND OST CLIMATE

- Five dimensions
 - **Sense of fair treatment:** This scale measures the extent to which students are treated fairly by school adults, both generally (The punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are) or by group (e.g. Teachers treat students from different backgrounds in the same way).
 - **Sense of cultural cohesion:** This scale measures the extent to which students feel the school respects culture and difference.
 - **Sense of belonging:** This scale measures the extent to which students feel like they belong in their school (e.g. I fit in with the students at this school.)
 - **Sense of safety:** This scale measures student perceptions of safety at school and community.
 - **Sense of peer academic supports:** This scale measures the extent to which students have friends who support the student to do well in school.

Rigorous and Culturally Relevant Instruction

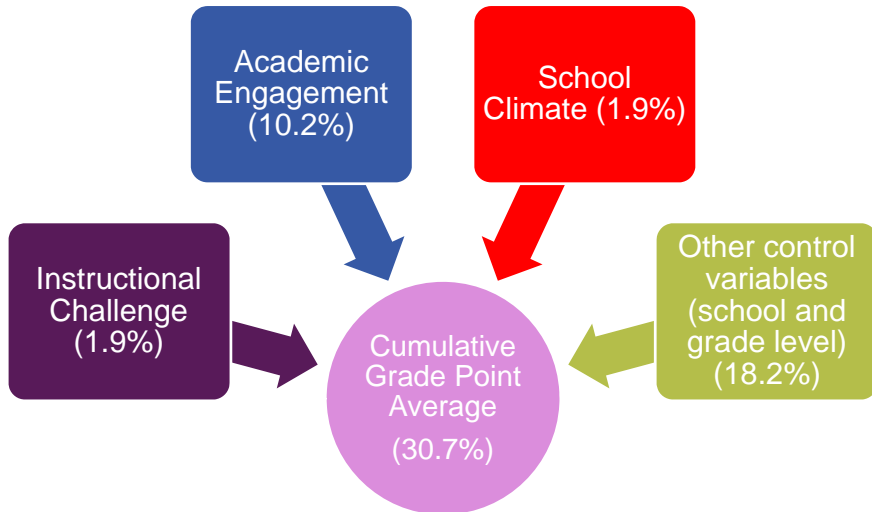
- Three dimensions
 - **Teacher expectations:** This scale measures the extent to which students report teachers have high expectations of their students.
 - **Academic Challenge:** This scale measures the extent to which students report instruction as academically challenging (e.g., In this class, how often do you find the work difficult?).
 - **Multicultural perspective taking:** This scale measures how often students participate in discussions that enhance a multicultural perspective (e.g., How often have you had serious conversations with students from different backgrounds from your own.)

OST Activity Participation

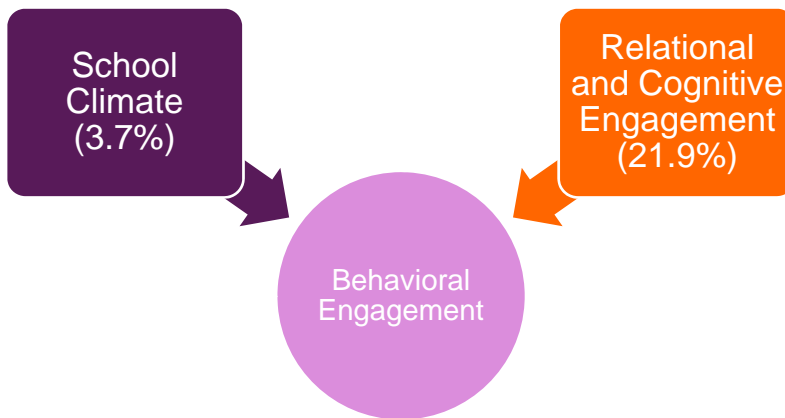
- OST Activity Participation
 - This scale measures the frequency students participate in 10 dimensions of OST activities “in-school”, “out of school”, or both. Activity dimensions included: athletics and recreational activities, tutorial and academic enrichment, performing and visual arts programs, community service, related leadership activities, as well as mentoring and internship programs.

DRUM-ROLL...

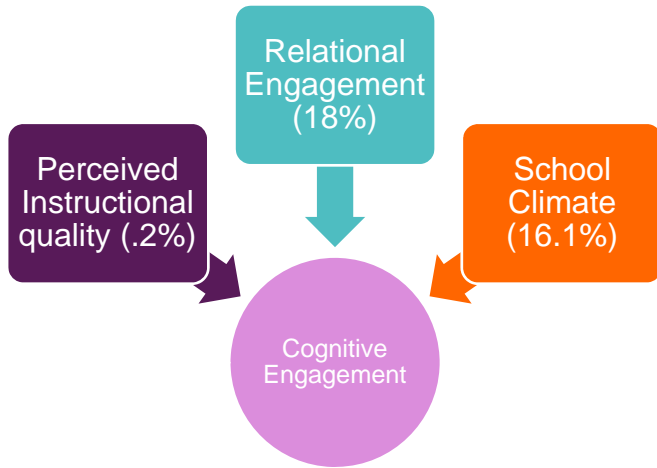
The factors that mattered most...(Fergus, Noguera and Martin, 2014)



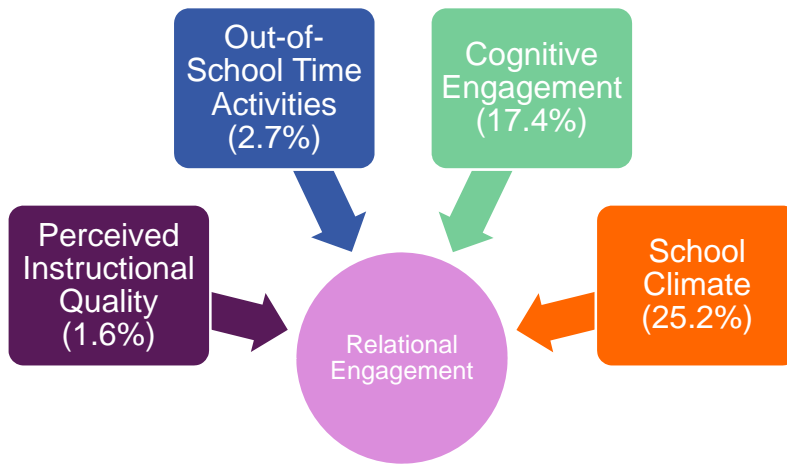
What contributes to behavioral engagement...



What contributes to cognitive engagement



What contributes to relational engagement...



Conclusion

- We found that academic engagement, school climate, and out-of-school activities were key contributors to the academic performance of boys of color in single-sex schools. Among these factors, *academic engagement was the single most important contributor to academic performance.*
- **These findings suggest that the environments these single-sex schools are creating that involve the interaction of social and academic supports is mirrored in what is contributing to student achievement.**
- **Furthermore, these findings begin to suggest that the instructional components of school are mediated by the wellness of the school climate and positive social interaction boys of color feel in these single-sex schools.**

What happens when populations living in vulnerable conditions enter systems with intentional affirmation and protective development?

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Thank you!

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School Demographics

	Thomas Jefferson	Westward	Salem	North Star	Washington	Kennedy	Bethune
Grades Served	9-12	6-12	9-12	9-12	4-8	5-8	6-8
Selective or Non-Selective (Public, Private, or Charter)	Non-Selective (Charter)	Non-Selective (Public)	Non-Selective (Public)	Screened / Non-Selective (Public)	Selective (Private)	Non-Selective (Charter)	Non-Selective (Public)
Enrollment	565	116	253	449	116	252	283
Black/African American (%)	99.8	96	54	57	51	90	99.8
Latino (%)	0	3	42	30	33	10	0
White (%)	0.2	0	2	1	0	0	0
Not Reported (%)	0	0	0	10	0	0	0
Percent Special Ed (%)	15.2	26	26.4	21.7	0	7	18
Percent ELL (%)	0.2	1.7	8	11	0	0	0
Percent Qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch (%)	84.1	59	79.2	71.1	95	89	96
Percent Proficient on State ELA Exam (%)	24.6	19.6	NA	NA	NA	NA	73.3
Percent Proficient on State Math Exam (%)	NA	11	24.5	51.5	71.2	NA	67.6

Academic Engagement Planning Worksheet

	Definition	Program Actions (Universal): <i>Explain, Model, Reinforce, Support, and Acknowledge</i>	Activity Actions (Tiered): <i>Explain, Model, Reinforce, Support, and Acknowledge</i>
Behavioral Engagement	Student learning actions practitioners describe as representative of readiness to learn. For example, attending class, raising hand, submitting classroom assignments, showing effort, not disrupting class, etc.		
Cognitive Engagement	Student interest in learning and content. For example, listening when topics are of interest, enjoying new challenges and learning new content, curiosity in topics, enjoy practitioners teaching new and difficult topics, etc.		
Relational Engagement	Students feeling they have supportive school-based relationships. For example, having at least one adult to talk with, feeling respected by adults, feeling connected with adults, feeling adults care about future, etc.		