

Unpacking Race-Related Trauma for Black Boys: Implications for School Administrators and School Resource Officers

Larry J. Walker, EdD
University of Central Florida

Ramon B. Goings, EdD
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Dawn Henderson, PhD
Village of Wisdom, Durham, North Carolina

ABSTRACT

Black boys in K-12 schools in the United States (US) are more likely to be suspended, expelled, and have an encounter with law enforcement leading to arrest in comparison to other racial/gender groups. Far too often, educators and pundits blame Black boys for the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates instead of critiquing systems that prevent Black boys from thriving. Additionally, there is a need for more research that examines how Black boys experience race-related trauma in schools. This must include investigating encounters with school administrators and law enforcement—two groups that have a profound impact on disciplinary and life outcomes of Black boys. Further, because there is a gap in the research, we must provide actionable strategies for school administrators and law enforcement to ensure they support Black boys. For this reason, this conceptual article will unpack Henderson et al.'s (2019) framework for race-related trauma and explore how this framework can be used to understand the educational experiences and realities of Black boys. Lastly, we conclude with recommendations for administrators and school resource officers on how to reimagine policies and actions that impact the lives of Black boys.

Keywords: Black boys, school administrators, K-12, racism, trauma, school resource officers

In the United States there is an image that portrays Black boys as defiant, deviant, and disruptive (Goings, 2015). One such negative consequence of the portrayal of Black boys is that teachers in many cases do not see them as academicians and as a result their actions are often seen as disruptive to the classroom. This perspective becomes more evident when reviewing national suspension data that show Black boys are the most suspended and expelled race/gender group in schools (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights Database, 2018). Furthermore, many of these encounters with school discipline led Black boys to have encounters with law enforcement (Otuyelu et al., 2016).

These negative experiences for Black boys within schools have economic and social mobility impact. For example, in a study examining the economic impact of school suspensions and expulsions Williams et al. (under review) found that Black boys missed the most instruction each year due to suspension and despite only accounting for 3% of the entire sample of students, Black boys not attending school accounted for 19% (\$8,907) and 16% (\$8,917) of total finances lost in 2015 and 2017 respectively. When looking at the social mobility of Black boys, Davison et al. (2021) found that Black men who experienced suspension during their K-12 experience were more likely to have contact with the criminal justice system. Collectively, what happens in schools not only has an immediate impact but can shape the futures of Black boys.

Interestingly despite all that we know about what happens in schools with Black boys and their encounters with school discipline there is an undertone that these issues happen because of Black boys. In many ways schools have subscribed to deficit thinking which, “holds that poor schooling performance is rooted in students’ alleged cognitive and motivational deficits, while institutional structures and inequitable schooling arrangements that exclude students from learning are held exculpatory” (Valencia, 1997, p. 9). Often Black boys are blamed for actions that lead to suspensions versus analyzing and acknowledging how their presence is perceived differently than their counterparts by teachers, administrators, and school law enforcement and how systems and policies (i.e., zero tolerance) may lead to negative consequences for Black boys.

Furthermore, we argue that for many Black boys in schools they are not just experiencing deficit thinking from the school-based staff but are experiencing race-related trauma. For the purposes of this conceptual article, we define race-related trauma as, “an adverse interaction, either continuously or daily, with institutional, symbolic, and individual acts of racism” (Henderson et al., 2019). When we begin to explore how race-related trauma impacts the experiences of Black boys in schools there are two groups in particular that do not get enough attention for creating a culture where race-related trauma flourishes—school based administrators and law enforcement (within and out of school).

Thus, this conceptual article explores the role administrators and law enforcement play in the race-related trauma that Black boys experience. In the sections that follow we first unpack the experiences of Black boys and race-related trauma. We then turn our attention to exploring school-based administrators and law enforcement's impact on race-related trauma and why they need to utilize frameworks that unpack Black boys' unique experiences. Next, we share a race-related trauma framework created by the Henderson and colleagues (2019) that should be used by school administrators and school resource officers to understand the lived realities of Black boys in school. Lastly, we conclude the article with recommendations for both school administrators and school resource officers

on how they can support the academic trajectory of Black boys in schools and mitigate the race-related trauma that happens in the school building.

EXPERIENCES OF BLACK BOYS & RACE-RELATED TRAUMA

In 2011 then attorney general Eric Holder and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan held a press conference and shared a new supportive school discipline initiative (Department of Justice, 2011). The plan was in response to the disproportionate rate minoritized students were expelled or suspended from school. Additionally, the press conference was also a not-so-subtle warning to state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) that both departments could use enforcement efforts if the trend continued. While neither Holder or Duncan explicitly mentioned Black boys, at that time and now they outpace other groups in out of school time for disciplinary infractions. For example, a study by Smith and Harper (2015) determined that black boys “were 65% of Black students suspended from K-12 public schools in the 13 southern states” (p. 1).

The disparate impact of out of school days has devastating long-term implications including increasing dropout rates among other issues (Toldson et al., 2015). Losen and Martinez (2020) found that “Black boys lost 132 days per 100 students enrolled” the highest rate among groups (p. vi). Overall, the statistics illuminate that Black males are unfairly targeted and punished for a variety of infractions. Further, these issues create distrust and accumulate over time causing students to miss vital in class instruction (Walker, 2021).

The challenges that Black boys face are rooted in stereotypes and misconceptions. A study found that parents misjudged black students age based on whether they were angry (Cooke & Halberstadt, 2021). The findings suggested that black children are seen as being older than their actual age. This contributes to avoidable confrontations and punishments that impede the progress of black males.

IMPACT OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ON BLACK BOYS

Historically school administrators support teachers, develop substantive relationships with the community, and meet student needs. They play a critical role ensuring the school is a safe space. However, research suggests that the relationship between school administrators and Black boys is often strained (Heilbrun et al., 2015).

Over the last few years researchers have begun to determine why and to what extent racism influences administrators’ decision making. School leaders have considerable power that can lead students to be expelled or drop out of school (Sorensen, 2019). According to DeMatthews et al. (2017),

Principals are partly responsible for the racial discipline gap because, although they are tasked with maintaining positive and safe learning environments that meet the needs of all students, they often do so by adhering to policies and broader cultural norms that place Black and Latina/o students at risk for school failure and exclusion. (p. 520)

The author's description suggests that the lived experiences of Black students are misunderstood. In the aforementioned study the researchers interviewed administrators regarding race and school disciplinary policies. A comment describing Black parents and students by a White male principal highlights why racism is a problem in PreK-12 settings, "They don't raise their children or share the same values as most White people. It's just the reality, look at how they live, how they behave" (DeMatthews et al., 2017, p. 530). The principal's insistence that Black parents do not have the same values as White parents is problematic. He continued to utilize a deficit lens to describe students "They don't value education so when you ask me why there are more Black kids getting suspended, I say ask their parents" (DeMatthews et al., 2017, p. 530). It is notable that the administrator did not mention that his views have an impact on how students are treated inside the school. This lack of awareness is detrimental to the well-being of Black boys at their school.

Regrettably, Black males have to navigate schools led by principals with racial animus. How can educators expect them to thrive if leaders, teachers, and members of the school based staff do not believe in their potential? Further, school districts have to ensure school leaders that have racist views are not responsible for deciding the future of Black students. Moreover, the actions of school administrators in some instances lead Black male students to have encounters with law enforcement, which we discuss in the next section.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS AND BLACK BOYS

Exploring the interactions between School Resource Officers (SROs) and Black males is important. Over the last few years various incidents have highlighted why school districts, parents, and policymakers must reconceptualize the role of SROs. For example, "In October 2015, a video of a police officer slamming a young Black girl to the ground in a South Carolina high school classroom as a method of discipline went viral" (Kohli, 2017, p. 183). The violence depicted in the video mirrors other reported and unreported events that occur far too frequently (Edje, 2021).

Fisher et al. (2022) examined how SROs view threats in a suburban-White district and an urban-diverse district. While the SROs contended that race was not a factor in how they interacted with students, they utilized other descriptors. The researchers determined, "we find that SROs often discuss student disadvantage, explicitly discussing class rather than race, or by discussing cultural deficits, such as the "poor upbringing" or unique cultural codes that match "disrespect" with violence" (Fisher et al., p. 7). SROs attempted to substitute deficit language relating to socioeconomic status while avoiding race. However, it speaks to how anti-Blackness permeates PreK-12 schools.

Frequently, Black males find themselves targeted by the school-based staff. This leads to unnecessary and dangerous encounters with SROs. Love (2016) describes these types of interactions as "spirit murder." The term is defined as the following "Spirit murdering within a school context is the denial of inclusion, protection, safety, nurturance, and acceptance because of fixed, yet fluid and moldable, structures of racism" (p. 2). Considering school settings can be places centered in violence and trauma for Black boys researchers have to use frameworks that deconstruct their challenges. Thus far we have noted that SROs and school administrators have enormous power that can determine Black male's future. In the next section we discuss a framework that can help address the barriers.

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING RACE-RELATED TRAUMA

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-5, 2013) describes racism as a primary antecedent to trauma. Currently, as described, trauma is associated with direct experience with actual or perceived death, injuries, and sexual violence or the trauma associated with witnessing such events, learning, and hearing about them repeatedly (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, n.d). However, the DSM-5 (2013) falls short in naming the physical and psychological injuries endured by young people of color due to racism. For Black males, these physical and psychological injuries occur from their exposure to persistent threats to their racial selves (e.g., the complexion of their skin, hair texture, and physical features), their racial identity (e.g., expressions, sense of pride, positive racial regard), and their racial group (e.g., the death of George Floyd, Michael Brown, Ahmaud Arbery, and Travon Martin). Consequently, the physical and psychological injuries stem from race-related traumas in the education system and in the form of alienation, discrimination, harassment, and racial invalidations and omission (Henderson et al., 2019).

A framework for race-related trauma in the education system denotes the insidious and persistent ways racism shows up in the educational trajectories of Black students (Henderson et al., 2019). For example, institutional racism, in the form of policies developed and enforced in schools, contribute to the disproportionate placement of Black males in subpar learning environments or out-of-school completely (Dancy 2014; Ferguson 2004; Howard 2013; Kenyatta 2012; Noguera 2003). Discipline policies enforced by schools, reliance on metrics created by people who do not share the same cultural identities and experiences to evaluate the learning potential of Black males perpetuate a model of deviance and underperformance. Cultural racism remains evident in the messages and visual representations of Black males as school dropouts, as criminals, as hyperviolent, as beings who possess physical prowess and athleticism over intelligence (Dancy, 2014; Howard, 2013; Kohli et al., 2017; Hatt 2011; Van Thompson & Schwartz 2014). Interpersonal racism in the form of mistreatment, racial slurs, physical assault, and invalidations from peers, teachers, and other school personnel can crush the psychological spirit of Black males. This framework of race-related trauma articulates the pervasiveness of racial alienation, of racial discrimination, harassment, and the frequency of racial invalidations and omission in the K-12 education system. Black males will experience this race-related trauma directly, they will witness and hear about it, and they will encounter these traumas repeatedly.

Racial Alienation

Racial alienation in the K-12 education system can be captured in two ways: 1) the physical removal from the learning environment or a group or school and 2) inducing feelings associated with meaninglessness or social estrangement due to misrepresentation of race or none whatsoever. The discipline enacted against Black males leads to physical removal from the K-12 learning environment. Public schools continue to disproportionately suspend Black males compared to their peers, which contributes to increased loss of instruction time (Losen & Martinez, 2020). Black males become removed from the physical environment and educational opportunities due to the disproportionate

referral to remedial and alternative education programs (Ladson-Billings, 2011). The loss in instruction time can lead to learning gaps and increase the distance from academic success and educational persistence. The cumulative effects of exposure to remedial instruction can contribute to the education opportunity gap. Scholars have long argued that repeated exposure to remedial instruction increases Black males' chances of repeating a grade, dropping out of school early, and involvement in the criminal justice system (Walker, 2016).

A persistent education opportunity gap ensures Black males remain at the bottom across academic outcomes (e.g., performance on standardized tests and educational persistence). The K-12 curriculum and textbooks chosen in schools misrepresent Black males, depicting often negative stereotypes, images, and messages of invisibility and subordination (King, 2018). The cognitive load placed on Black males to navigate the U.S. education system while also managing the dissonance between self-beliefs and the beliefs communicated from the system can elicit a sense of alienation (Dancy, 2014; Howard, 2013). Consequently, Black males may feel the need to distance themselves from these messages, become vigilant against these experiences, or work excessively to prove them wrong (Hatt 2011). However, using these strategies can lead to fatigue and, for some Black males, finding spaces that allow them to express themselves freely, to exercise personal power reduces this fatigue (Walker, 2020). As a result, some Black males may spend more time in their neighborhood and with peers rather than being in school, contributing to further alienation and disengagement from school completely (Hatt, 2011; Payne & Brown, 2010; Van Thompson & Schwartz, 2014).

Racial Discrimination

There is a plethora of literature on racial discrimination and its adverse effects on Black males. However, this literature often uses broad definitions of racial discrimination (Butler-Barnes et al., 2019; Cogburn et al., 2011; Respress et al., 2013; Sanders-Phillips, 2009; Seaton & Douglass, 2014) to encompass more distinct traumas like racial alienation (e.g., excluding a Black student from activities or educational opportunities) or racial harassment (e.g., verbal or physical abuse targeting one's race or racial identity). We add specificity to racial discrimination and define it as behaviors and acts by peers, teachers, and school personnel that result in label characterization and unfair treatment. Marsh and Noguera (2018) outlined how labels characterize Black males as delayed, incorrigible, defiant and how these labels deny them educational opportunities. The authors found that Black males from working-class backgrounds and those in classes deemed for exceptional children encountered these label characterizations from teachers and how these labels diminished their hopes for college and professional success.

Black males experience more racial discrimination when compared to their peers (Assari, et al., 2018, Assari et al., 2017). Racial discrimination is unfair treatment; it is unfair teacher evaluations and expectations. Butler-Barnes and colleagues (2019) claimed that Black students reported receiving lower grades from teachers when compared to their peers. Black males may report teachers evaluating their academic performance and work harsher because teachers have lower expectations for them and make negative and unfair associations toward their intellectual aptitude (Cogburn et al., 2011). When Black males

experience and witness racial discrimination, they develop cultural mistrust, particularly against those who do not look like them (Assari et al., 2017). Cultural mistrust can interfere with a students' ability to learn in a system dominated by White female teachers or interfere with their sense of belonging if they must contend with whether adults in schools care or value them (Assari et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2013; Howard, 2013). This increased exposure to racial discrimination can lead to higher susceptibility to adverse psychological symptoms like anxiety, depression, and even lower academic self-concept (Assari et al., 2017; Chavous et al., 2008; Cogburn et al., 2011). Unfortunately, recent research highlights the connection between racial discrimination and trauma within the Black community (Kirkinis et al., 2021).

Racial Harassment

Racial harassment can manifest in two primary forms in the K-12 education system: 1) the use of language to degrade or diminish the racial identity of Black males and 2) the use of physical contact or force that is unwarranted and unwanted (Henderson et al., 2020). More often, racial harassment is deliberate and aims to induce a sense of intimidation, fear, and powerlessness. Black males encounter peers and teachers who use racial threats, slurs, and name-calling that attack their racial identity. Boutte and Bryan (2019) specifically outlined the physical and verbal assaults Black males experience early in their educational experiences, citing how young Black males, if not experiencing these assaults themselves, witness these done by teachers and peers in schools. Since school adults and peers perceive Black males as dangerous and threatening (Payne & Brown, 2010), these same adults and peers respond to them in more punitive and violent ways. For instance, Schulz and Rubel (2011) found that Black males who had decided to drop out of school had repeated patterns of teachers verbally abusing them. Additionally, school resource officers are often used to handle Black males perceived as having behavioral or emotional problems, thus, increasing the likelihood of these young people being forcibly removed and harassed (Resendes, 2020).

Love (2016) asserted that Black students encounter humiliation, witness, and constantly experience physical and verbal attacks. One study examining the prevalence of violence among adolescents in urban schools found that Black males reported experiencing higher levels of physical harm than females (Taylor et al., 2010). When Black males experience racial harassment, they may be less likely to seek external support or help. Some may internalize the harm they experience and then project their rage and anger on others through violence or engagement in risk-taking behaviors like illegal substance use (Jiang et al., 2018). Moreover, racial harassment is psychologically injurious when such attacks occur from teachers and other school adults, like school resource officers, who are supposed to protect students rather than harm them. In addition, to increasing cultural mistrust of school adults, increased exposure to racial harassment can lead to hypervigilance and contribute to a prolonged stress response. For example, increased encounters with racial harassment, whether from the language of others or physical harm, has the potential to elevate levels of anxiety and interrupt cognitive functioning (e.g., the ability to concentrate or focus; Albdour & Krouse, 2014; Gower et al., 2015). Ultimately, this disrupts the learning potential of Black males and leads to psychological and physical injuries.

Racial Invalidation and Omission

There is no subtlety in the invalidations Black males experience in the K-12 education system, no subtlety in their omission from it. One body of literature captures invalidations in the broader domain of microaggressions. Racial invalidations aim to negate, deny the racialized experiences of Black males and deny their voices, their cultural expressions, their aspirations, and contributions in the learning environment. Henderson and colleagues (2021) further conceptualized these invalidations in the interrogation of students of color by teachers and peers questioning their legitimacy in advanced courses and intelligence. The racialization of intelligence and smartness often leads teachers to negate the intellectual aptitude of Black males, their genius and deny its presence in Black students (Hatt, 2016). As a result, teachers and other school personnel cannot see Black males beyond these negative stereotypes and cannot see their cultural assets and identities as valuable (Henderson et al., 2020; Dancy, 2014; Hotchkins, 2016; Howard, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2011). The psychological injuries for Black males often lead to feelings of alienation, a negative sense of self, anger, and frustration (Dancy, 2014; Howard, 2013; Hotchkins, 2016).

Racial omission may be normalized because the invisibility of Black males from high school and college graduations, their invisibility in advance and college preparatory courses is more often associated with a lack of drive or some other deficits found in them, in their families, and communities (Kenyatta 2012; Noguera 2003). However, Black males enter the U.S. education and bring their joy, their genius only to have it slowly deteriorate and diminished by racism. Unfortunately, there is less known about the psychological injuries of racial omission, or in this case, how a lack of Black males' experiences, voices, and their perceived invisibleness impact the educational experiences of other Black males. Yet, racial omission is a part of the traumatic experiences of Black males. Scholars note that Black males often report being invisible in the classroom, ignored, and express how no one calls on them or even notices they are missing (Boutte & Bryan 2019; Hotchkins, 2016; Kaufman, 2018). Kaufmann (2018) argued Black males become hypervisible when they act or are perceived as violating school norms. On the other, their intelligence and their active participation in instruction are ignored. Quite possibly, racial omission is psychological and emotionally injurious because it diminishes mattering and the humanity of Black males. Black males may struggle with whether the education system is a place for them, without seeing themselves present in high school and college graduations, in advance and college preparatory courses, Black males may not see themselves in the educational trajectory at all.

In summary, race-related trauma occurs through insidious and specific institutional policies, practices, message, and visual representations, acts and behaviors carried out by school leaders, school resource officers, teachers, and peers. A framework for race-related trauma in the K-12 education experiences of Black males articulates how racial alienation, discrimination, harassment, invalidations, and omission leads to psychological, emotional, and physical injuries Black males must endure. The reoccurrence of such trauma disrupts the educational experiences of Black males and has deleterious consequences on their wellbeing and educational trajectories (Boutte, & Bryan, 2021; Dancy, 2014; Marsh & Noguera, 2018; Van Thompson & Schwartz, 2014). Black males are then tasked with the

need to possess an emotional acuity, fortitude, and physical and psychological aptitude to maintain a positive sense of self and 'keep their eye on the prize' as they transition from elementary to middle, high school, and graduation. More broadly, the framework for race-related trauma in the education experiences of Black males can situate holistic solutions that are culturally affirming, responsive to the needs of Black males, and solutions that work to build stronger interdependent relationships between family-school-community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATORS & SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

When considering the impact of race-based trauma on Black males in schools it is vital to consider the role that school administrators have in creating a school culture and climate that allows these experiences to occur. For administrators first there must be a recognition that Black males have a unique experience in schools and because of their race and gender they are susceptible to racial-based trauma in both the formal classroom setting and even in non-academic activities in the school (i.e., walking down the hallway between classes). Acknowledging this challenge is an important first step because often initiatives aimed at supporting the wellbeing of Black males in school do not always recognize Black males uniqueness (Bush & Bush, 2013) and as a result interventions miss the mark to support Black males specifically.

Secondly, there must be more opportunity for school administrators to train their teachers on incorporating more relational and pedagogical techniques where Black males in the schools feel valued and appreciated. One such example where programming creates a culture where Black males feel supported is in the Pathways2Teaching (P2T) Program. This program created by Dr. Margarita Bianco has sought to diversify the teacher workforce by recruiting students of color into the profession as high school students. One of the supports in this program that has been effective for Black males is that their experiences in education are centered in the curriculum and they have interactions with their P2T that affirm their identities as Black men and academicians. Furthermore, the training that teachers receive position them to be more culturally responsive, incorporate critical pedagogy, and approach supporting students from a critical consciousness (see Goings & Bianco, 2016 and Goings et al., 2018 for more information about P2T). Administrators should look to programming like this to provide their teachers with an opportunity to improve their pedagogy to support Black males in their schools.

School administrators have to continue to push for mental health support services in schools. Given the reality that the racial-based trauma Black males experience will not stop overnight as it is ingrained in our education system but there is an opportunity to put these supports in place. In a national study of Black 9th graders' use of counseling services Shi & Goings (2018) found that Black males seek the support of school counselors to discuss their academics (science specifically) but this occurred more often when Black males felt a sense of belonging to the school. In essence, school administrators should push for mental health services as a mechanism to increase belonging in the school and show Black males that they have adults in the building who care about their well-being beyond their behavior and academics.

Lastly, school administrators must continue to interrogate their disciplinary infraction data. They must consider who is getting referrals for school discipline actions and law

enforcement encounters. Additionally, they should look at the data around the severity of punishment for Black males to ensure that when infractions do occur that Black males are not receiving harsher punishments for the same infraction as a student from another racial group. Furthermore, when reviewing this data there should be collaboration and training from school administrators with law enforcement on how to deescalate disputes versus resorting to detaining Black males. This training must also focus on providing school-based law enforcement with culturally responsive approaches to interacting and building relationships with students in the building.

Considering the detrimental impact SROs can have on the success of Black males, districts should carefully examine whether SROs have a place in schools, and if so, what should that look like to protect students. Far too often, SROs are called to address minor infractions that should be solved by school administrators, teachers, and auxiliary staff. As we noted previously this leads to violence and trauma, which disproportionately impacts Black boys. Like other students that have the right to see schools as safe spaces and not institutions that deploy SROs to police their every move.

After the murder of George Floyd some districts have implemented measures to ensure minoritized students feel safe and valued. This has included removing SROs from all schools (Riser-Kositsky et al., 2021). While the number of districts that have taken this step are small we must consider measures that will dismantle the school to prison pipeline. Riser-Kositsky et al. (2021) found from a period beginning in May 2020 to November 2021 nearly fifty school districts ended or modified their SRO programs. Black boys deserve to live in peace, free from traumatic experiences caused by SROs.

It is important to recognize that some research has suggested that SROs seek to implement alternatives to prevent students from becoming part of the juvenile justice system (Lynch & Chappell, 2022). The researchers interviewed SROs and found that they also believed that school administrators blur the line between what is deemed a criminal offense and traditional student behaviors. This point is emblematic of how administrators view the behaviors of Black boys compared to White students.

Overall school districts have to implement changes that are centered within the experiences of Black boys in school settings. Throughout the article we have highlighted how and why they are more likely to be traumatized in schools because of violence. Thus, educators should listen attentively to the group most at risk from SROs. For some districts, it will require courageous conversations with stakeholders to relay why making dramatic changes to SRO programs is connected to Black boys' well-being. Refusing to shift away from punishing students for perceived infractions will only further endanger Black boys.

CONCLUSION

In the beginning of the conceptual article, we provided evidence that pinpoints the numerous challenges Black boys have to overcome in school settings. Next, we utilized extant literature and outlined how school administrators and SROs officers contribute to the traumatic experiences of Black boys. We followed with an examination of a framework for race related trauma that focuses on three elements including: racial discrimination, racial harassment, and racial invalidation and omission. Furthermore, we identified implications for school administrators and SROs.

Overall, the barriers Black boys encounter in PreK-12 schools are caused by systemic racism. They have to navigate negative stereotypes and perceptions from principals, SROs, and members of the school-based staff. This contributes to a variety of traumatic experiences that shape Black boy's academic and socio-emotional outlook. For far too long, schools have neglected to meet the needs of Black boys; this form of erasure has limited their ability to thrive and develop secure relationships with adults. Consequently, stakeholders have to take dramatic steps to improve their experiences.

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LARRY J. WALKER, EdD, is an Assistant Professor and Program Manager in the Department of Educational Leadership and Higher Education at the University of Central Florida. His major research interests lie in the areas of leadership, policy, and Racism. Email: larry.walker2@ucf.edu

RAMON B. GOINGS, EdD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Language, Literacy, and Culture at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. His major research interests lie in the areas of exploring the academic and social experiences of gifted/high-achieving Black males PK-PhD, diversifying the teacher and school leader workforce, and investigating the contributions of historically Black colleges and universities. Email: rgoings@umbc.edu

DAWN X. HENDERSON, PhD, is the Director of Research, Power Building at Village of Wisdom. Her major research interests lie in the areas of racial trauma, resistance and healing strategies in K-12 learning environments and improving home-school-community partnerships for Black and Brown children to thrive. Email: dxhenderson@villageofwisdom.org
