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K–12 Educational Experiences of African American Females

Trends in Cultural, Social, and Symbolic Capital Post–No Child Left Behind

**IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE
COGNITIVE AND NONCOGNITIVE ACHIEVEMENT
IN MICHIGAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

RoSusan D. Bartee

Internal and external implications of cultural, social, and symbolic capital influence the microlevel schooling process within the κ–12 educational system. The individualized and collective implications associated with these distinct forms of capital affect the manner in which the context of a school culture values certain types of activities, affiliations, and knowledge (Bourdieu, 1984; Coleman, 1988; DiMaggio, 1982; Lareau & McNamara Horvat, 1999; Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003). Nonetheless, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) uses a macrolevel systematic approach to improve academic measures and foster enhanced educational outcomes for public school constituencies. Academic measures of NCLB equate school account-ability with student performance on high-stakes testing and the integration of an evidence-based curriculum. Increasing educational outcomes focus on directed control for states, communities, and parents through autonomous governance and parental choice. The emanating challenge of NCLB as a macrolevel policy, juxtaposed with forms of capital as a function of microlevel procedures, evokes competing and/or coexisting views. Examining the manner in which macro- and microlevel phenomena interact within the public schools of Michigan is

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important in understanding the dynamics associated with the implementation of educational policies.

Both assessment and accountability are critical components of NCLB in enhancing academic achievement. States are required to test the knowledge of students in specified content areas of reading, math, language arts, social studies, science, or a combination of them. School districts are subject to the reward or reprimand of state officials, and the latter to that of the federal government. As part of the NCLB efforts, the Michigan Department of Education developed a School Improvement Framework to provide a structure for creating an assessment model and accountability standards. Understanding the tenets of the School Improvement Framework is important because it provides insight into the types of administrative, academic, and programmatic entities that are valued within the educational system in Michigan. These entities become forms of living capital given their prioritization and integration in a framework for improving educational outcomes. In effect, the success of the students and stakeholders is measured by their ability to achieve based upon a set of prescribed standards. More specifically, for the purposes of this study, some insight is plausible from the implications of African American females in Michigan public schools and diverse forms of capital.

Indicators of assessment and accountability juxtaposed with the role of capital contain value-based implications for cognitive and noncognitive outcomes. Such implications become the basis on which the accessibility of resources, quality of relationships, and viability of results are determined. According to Bourdieu, capital is defined as "accumulated labor which, when appropriated on a private basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor" (1984, p. 241). Capital and its diverse forms essentially consist of exclusive assets that contain the capacity to reproduce profitable and meaningful rewards (Borrem, 2010). Bartee and Brown (2007), in their book *School Matters: Why African American Students Need Multiple Forms of Capital*, address the manner in which education exchanges diverse forms of capital within the capacities of regulator, consumer, and producer. Depending upon who is acquiring the capital and in what context affects how they operate.

The form of cultural capital refers to "acquired knowledge that stems from affiliations with particular traditions" (Bartee & Brown, 2007, p. 53). Cultural capital is acquired through academic experiences within the school, affecting administrators,

teachers, students, and families (i.e., academic curriculum, professional development), and nonacademic experiences outside of the school context (i.e., leisure activities). The form of social capital is comprised of networks and associations through which access is made available (Bartee, 2011; Bartee & Brown, 2007; Coleman, 1988; Gordon, 2001). Social capital is garnered in influential relationships established for professional and personal purposes (i.e., organizational involvement, family ties). The form of symbolic capital serves as the physical representation or embodiment of legitimate forms of credential or accoutrements (Bartee, 2011; Bartee & Brown, 2007; Bourdieu, 1990; Delpit, 1988). Symbolic capital is an identifiable form of evidence to signify that skills or other relevant components are present and/or have been fulfilled (i.e., resumes, test scores).

Considering the macrolevel educational policy of NCLB in conjunction with the diverse forms of capital as operating in the microlevel tenets of schooling, important research questions need to be examined. Focusing on the cognitive and noncognitive experiences of African American high school females, the following questions within the context of the state of Michigan in purview of the larger research context of this edited volume are forwarded:

- What are the identifiable trends and subsequent implications of cultural, social, and symbolic capital for African American high school females after NCLB in the public schools of Michigan?
- What approaches can be used to enhance the quality of the dynamics between the macrolevel approach of NCLB and the microlevel functions of capital and thereby improve the overall effectiveness of NCLB and the performance levels of African American high school females?

These questions provide a useful framework for ascertaining insightful findings about the roles of a macrolevel educational policy and microlevel educational practices of capital. These questions provide a useful framework for further contextualizing female demographics within the Michigan Public Schools to include the following: American Indian / Alaskan Native (0.9 percent); Asian/Pacific Islander (2.7 percent); Black, not of Hispanic origin (20.3 percent); Hispanic (4.9 percent); White, not of Hispanic origin (71.1 percent); multiracial (0.9 percent). Forty-five percent (45.9 percent) of students from the state of Michigan are eligible to receive free and/or reduced meals (Meador, 2012).

Educational Trends of African American Females in School Settings

In today's high schools, the academic performance of African American females is consistent with the overall trends associated with the larger female population (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997; Gregory, 1997; Ogbu, 1990). Such trends indicate that females are excelling in educational-related capacities irrespective of racial composition, which affects the transferability of their individual capital and their ability to compete on a nationwide scale.

Saunders and coauthors (2004) addressed the role of gender differences within academic performance and self-perceptions among African American high school students. Regarding self-perceptions, the focus of the study is placed on self-esteem, racial self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy, while indices for academic performance target intentions to complete the school year and grade point average (GPAs). African American females indicated stronger intentions to complete the school year than African American males, and their GPAs were higher than their African American male counterparts'. Saunders and coauthors (2004) assert the following: "Patterns of school completion are molded by the interaction of the school environment, society, and individual characteristics. It is well documented that African American males and females experience the school environment very differently" (p. 82). The manner in which teachers and peers respond to African American males is more aggressive as compared to African American females.

Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson (1997) contend that the level of success African American females in high school achieve may be associated with a broader societal view of the role of education for them. The study suggests that the stronger perceptions of African American females in academic and nonacademic contexts are indicative of the implications of education as economically and socially beneficial. Having a positive image of what is possible and, to some extent, what is expected influences females in short- and long-term ways that have both cognitive and noncognitive rewards.

Rouse and Austin (2002) conducted a study that focused on academic performance and motivational influences of students from southwest urban school districts that are considered ethnically diverse. The article indicates that on a district-wide level, the district is implementing several initiatives and enhancement programs as well as offering a range of extracurricular activities (i.e., sports programs, Future

Business Leaders of America, cheerleading, and dance teams). Rouse and Austin (2002) assert the following perspectives:

> One of the striking differences [between African Americans and other ethnic groups] is the interaction between GPA and gender in the African American group of adolescents for three aspects of self-concept (beliefs about ability, beliefs about control, and beliefs about value/importance). No other ethnic group evidenced this interaction. More interesting is an examination of means that demonstrates that European-American females have even less motivation in these areas than the African American females, while Hispanic females have more motivation. . . . High-GPA students had more motivation in terms of their self-concept. However, in the African American sample this was evidenced in all four areas of self-concept (beliefs about ability, beliefs about environmental support, beliefs about control, and beliefs about value/importance). This was not the case for the Hispanic and Euro-American samples, though. In both of these ethnic groups, statistical significance was only evidenced in three areas: beliefs about ability, beliefs about control, and beliefs about value/importance. It seems the low-GPA African American adolescents do not feel that their academic environment is supporting them nor facilitating their achievement. (pp. 307, 311)

The finding suggests that differences exist among ethnic minorities when considering the implications of GPA. The study, too, finds that African American female adolescents who were considered as having high intellectual abilities based upon their GPAs demonstrated the most motivation about the certain beliefs about the ability, control, and importance, unlike those African American female adolescents who were considered as having low intellectual abilities, who were less likely to adapt to motivational patterns. When juxtaposing these two perspectives, it appears that a correlation is found between the motivation of African American females and their GPAs and having a positive concept of self. Each of the aforementioned studies provides interesting viewpoints about the status of African American females in schools.

Conceptual Perspectives on the School Improvement Framework in Michigan and Representation of Capital Forms

The School Improvement Framework contains the five different strands of Teaching for Learning; Leadership; Personnel and Professional Learning; School and Community Relations; and Data and Information Management. Each of the strands has corresponding standards, benchmarks, and key characteristics. According to the Michigan Department of Education, descriptions of the School Improvement Framework are as follows:

- ꜱᴛʀᴀɴᴅ 1: *Teaching for Learning.* The school holds high expectations for all students, identifies essential curricular content, makes certain it is sequenced appropriately and is taught effectively in the available instructional times. Assessments used are aligned to curricular content and are used to guide instructional decisions and monitor student learning.
- ꜱᴛʀᴀɴᴅ 2: *Leadership.* School leaders create a school environment where everyone contributes to a cumulative, purposeful, and positive effect on student learning.
- ꜱᴛʀᴀɴᴅ 3: *Personnel and Professional Learning.* The school has highly qualified personnel who continually acquire and use skills, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs necessary to create a culture with high levels of learning for all.
- ꜱᴛʀᴀɴᴅ 4: *School and Community Relations.* The school staff maintains purposeful, active, positive relationships with families of its students and with the community in which it operates to support student learning.
- ꜱᴛʀᴀɴᴅ 5: *Data and Information Management.* Schools/districts have a system for management data and information in order to inform decisions to improve student achievement. (*Michigan School Improvement Framework Rubrics*, 2006)

Cognitive and/or noncognitive approaches to academic achievement are identified within descriptions of the strands. Examining the School Improvement Framework provides an important opportunity to determine whether microlevel indicators of the diverse forms of capital are included within the macrolevel conduit of NCLB. These forms of capital again must be inclusive of administrators, teachers, students, and families who are stakeholders. Likewise, if the forms of capital are not included within the governing framework of the Michigan public schools, then the

implications of capital and its impact on African American high school females become invalid. The examination shows, however, that indices of cultural, social, and symbolic capital are present in the School Improvement Framework, although their presence is not consistently found in each of the strands and corresponding standards. The analyses of the strands are as follows:

- Strand 1, *Teaching for Learning*, contains indicators of cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Some of the identifiable sources of capital include the cultural capital forms of written units, lesson plans, and curriculum documents; symbolic capital forms of individual education plans, meeting agendas and minutes, competency profiles, and syllabi; and social capital forms of district-wide/school one-way communications, school accommodations, and two-way parent communications. Analyses of these different forms of data about the Teaching for Learning strand contain indicators of cultural, social, and symbolic capital within three of the standards, while two of the three standards only contain indicators of cultural and symbolic capital (see table 1).

- In strand 2, *Leadership*, an indicator of symbolic capital is found, while there are no indicators of social and cultural capital. Some of the identifiable sources of symbolic capital forms are resumes, certification requirements, observation protocols, teacher evaluations, school policies and procedures, rubrics, school improvement plans, and professional development plans. Analyses of these different forms of data related to the Leadership strand demonstrate forms of symbolic capital within the three standards, while there are no indicators of cultural and social capital within any of the three standards (see table 1).

- Strand 3, *Personnel and Professional Learning*, has indicators of cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Some of the identifiable sources of data on cultural capital forms are lesson plans, professional development plans, and unit plans, and the social capital forms of communications inviting parents to schools, teacher phone calls, e-mails to parents; and the symbolic capital forms of meeting agendas and minutes, teacher credentials, observation protocols, team policies and procedures manual, and records and reports of curriculum committees). Analyses of these different forms of data about the Personnel and Professional Learning strand contain indicators of cultural, social, and symbolic capital within one of the two standards and an indicator of symbolic capital within both of the standards (see table 1).

- Strand 4, *School and Community Relations*, also contains indicators of cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Some of the identifiable sources of data are the cultural capital forms of mentoring programs, professional development documentation, and communication system; the social capital forms of lists of parent support mechanisms, translation services, and school committee membership lists; and the symbolic capital forms of school/district websites, school calendars, walls of school, websites, and flyers. Analyses of these different forms of data regarding school and community relations' strand contain social and symbolic forms of capital within both standards, while the indicator of cultural capital is found within one of the standards (see table 1).
- Strand 5, *Data and Information Management*, has indicators of cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Some of the identifiable sources of cultural capital forms are assessment plans, intervention and/or differentiation plans, and lesson plans; and the social capital forms of staff and parent meetings, parent advisory council meetings, parent-teacher association meetings, and board of education meetings; and the symbolic capital forms of policies and procedures handbook, data arrays, and student records. Analyses of these different forms of data related to the Data and Information management Strand include cultural and symbolic capital within both of the standards, while the indicator of social capital is found in only one of the standards (see table 1).

Cultural Capital and Academic Underpreparedness

Cultural capital is based upon acquired knowledge or values that are often affiliated with certain traditions (Bartee & Brown, 2007; Bourdieu, 1984; Franklin & Savage, 2004; Olneck, 2000). These types of knowledge are often generated in families and schools and are often linked to literature, music, arts, and other culturally relevant experiences. Bourdieu (1984) suggests that for participants who acquired their cultural capital primarily from educational settings, their knowledge base and experiences are more transferable or valued within those areas that accommodate high academic qualifications. Particularly within the educational setting related to students, on the microlevel, one measure of the level of cultural capital acquired is linked to test scores in the content areas of reading and mathematics. Data from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) in 2011 contains some

TABLE 1. INTERSECTION OF DIVERSE FORMS OF CAPITAL WITH MICHIGAN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK STRANDS AND STANDARDS

	STANDARDS		
	CULTURAL CAPITAL	**SOCIAL CAPITAL**	**SYMBOLIC CAPITAL**
STRAND 1: TEACHING FOR LEARNING	• Curriculum • Instruction • Assessment	• Curriculum	• Curriculum • Instruction • Assessment
STRAND 2: LEADERSHIP	• Shared leadership	• Instructional leadership • Shared leadership • Operational and resource management	• Instructional leadership • Shared leadership • Operational and resource management
STRAND 3: PERSONNEL AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	• Personnel qualifications • Professional learning	• Professional learning	• Personnel qualifications • Professional learning
STRAND 4: SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS	• Community involvement	• Parent/family involvement • Community involvement	• Parent/family involvement • Community involvement
STRAND 5: DATA AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	• Data management • Information management	• Information management	• Data management • Information management

interesting disaggregated findings for African Americans and females (*MEAP State Demographic Report*, 2011).

From a racial context, table 2 demonstrates how all of the racial groups have continuous decline in the content area of reading from third grade to fifth grade to eight grade, while in the content area of writing, by eighth grade, all of the racial groups show increases from the fifth grade. African American students, however, show the least amount of percentage gains. From a gender context, table 2 also indicates a decrease in the academic performance of females in the content area of reading and mathematics from third grade through eighth grade. Similar trends exist in the same content areas with males, but the females' increase in writing percentages is higher.

Inherent within this aggregate view of race and gender-specific data resonates a unique perspective about the role of cultural capital. As indicated previously, cultural capital is gained traditionally from types of knowledge often associated

TABLE 2. PERCENTAGE OF THIRD-, FIFTH-, AND EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS DEMONSTRATING PROFICIENCY IN READING AND MATH ON MEAP, 2011, BY GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY

	3RD GRADE		5TH GRADE		8TH GRADE	
	READING	MATH	READING	MATH	READING	MATH
GENDER						
Female	66	35	72	38	65	28
Male	59	38	66	42	56	31
RACE/ETHNICITY						
American Indian/Alaskan Native	59	29	59	25	54	22
Asian	74	63	81	71	76	62
Pacific Islander	73	41	81	45	59	28
Black, Not of Hispanic Origin	38	14	48	17	39	9
Hispanic	48	23	57	26	48	16
White, Not of Hispanic Origin	70	42	75	46	66	26
Multiracial	63	34	69	37	60	68

Source: MEAP State Demographic Report (2011).

with the humanities, where writing is encouraged. These findings are consistent with the literature from both a gender and discipline perspective. When considering the implications of race and capital within this model, African Americans' level of cultural capital as identified by reading and writing scores is not competitive when compared to different racial groups other than Hispanics. As early as the third grade, African American scores in these areas begin significantly lower than other racial groups. In many regards, cultural capital associated with reading and writing test scores is almost nonexistent.

Students from environments filled with cultural capital building experiences nonetheless understand the intricacies of their educational settings and they become resigned to the ideological expectations of that climate. Bourdieu (1984) asserts the following perspectives regarding scholastic and status-based capital:

> The more the competences measured are recognized by the school system and the more academic the techniques used to measure them, the stronger is the relation between performance and educational qualifications. The latter, as a more or less adequate indicator of the number of years of scholastic inculcation, guarantees cultural capital more or less completely, depending on whether it is

inherited from the family or acquired at school, and so it is an unequally adequate indicator of this capital. (p. 13)

The argument implies that family resources have greater impact upon academic performance than the traditional forms of education acquired in schools. Family resources contain a variety of networks that offer options and opportunities for individuals from middle, upper-class backgrounds. DiMaggio (1982) and DiMaggio and Ostrower (1990), in a classic study, argues that participation in high-cultural activities significantly influences grade performance. Those students who participate in certain activities are more likely to get better grades. Particularly, females from high-status families receive greater cultural capital returns than females from low-status backgrounds. Such findings remain consistent with the positions related to the cultural reproduction model. Findings point to a relatively low correlation between parental education and cultural capital. The quality of opportunities that is afforded by schools compensates for the lacking family resources. Table 3, providing data from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) in 2011, contains some interesting disaggregated findings for economically disadvantaged students, among which there is a disproportionately higher number of African American and other students of color.

Table 3 shows how the economically disadvantaged have test scores beginning substantially lower than other students in the areas of writing, reading, mathematics, and science. In effect, schools with students a greater number of whom receive free and reduced-price meals are more likely to encounter challenges with their writing test scores. The implications of the area of reading are not as pronounced in this

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGE OF FOURTH-, FIFTH-, AND EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS DEMONSTRATING PROFICIENCY IN READING, WRITING, MATH, AND SCIENCE ON MEAP, 2011, BY ECONOMIC STATUS

ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	4TH GRADE			5TH GRADE			8TH GRADE		
	READING	WRITING	MATH	READING	SCIENCE	MATH	READING	SCIENCE	MATH
Yes	55	31	25	56	7	25	47	8	15
No	81	58	55	81	24	54	72	24	41

Source: MEAP State Demographic Report (2011).

same context. Juxtaposing these viewpoints with the dimensions of cultural capital, data suggests that African American females within the Michigan public schools are subject to a negative impact of being African American, female, and poor. It may be true that the quality of resources available in economically disadvantaged schools is not sufficient for educating in ways that enhances and/or builds upon existing skill sets. Notwithstanding this possibility, while children from poor families populate economically disadvantaged schools, the delivery of education does not have to be conducted in a poor manner. The work of DiMaggio (1982) and DiMaggio and Ostrower (1990) serves as a reminder that no correlation exists between parental education and cultural capital. Closer examinations of the pedagogical strategies that are being used within the classrooms must be done. Nonetheless, there remains a level of academic underpreparedness for African American females to be able to compete statewide and nationwide.

Social Capital and Untapped Networks

Social capital emanates through the quality of networks and relationship that are available and resourceful (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Bartee & Brown, 2007; Coleman, 1988; Lee & Croninger, 1999; Koka & Prescott, 2002; McNeal, 1999; Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003). Social capital provides built-in tools of resources and becomes a source of convenience at any given time for any given purpose. Having direct access to forms of resources provides a comfort level for being able to navigate and negotiate different contexts. Involvement with different organizations and associations provides the needed alliances through which the quality of exchange is enhanced. Porath (1980) in his assertion of the F-connection of families, friend, and firms discusses how these exchange systems are embedded with the inherent capacity to get the desired results of what is pursued. The level of bureaucracy involved is diminished because many of these relationships are in some ways personal, but in many ways these relationships are functional.

Coleman (1990) builds upon the functionality argument of social capital in the sense that individuals belong to networks that serve a variety of functions. These functions are neither stagnant nor fluid. These functions are deliberate and purposeful. Coleman (1990) puts forth the following position related to social capital and function:

Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of a social structure and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would be attainable in its absence. . . . Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. It is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production. (p. 302)

The argument clearly suggests that social capital is identified by its capacity to operate in different capacities. Such capacities allow individuals to move into and out of different circles and to achieve desired outcomes. In effect, the quality of the relationship that social capital allows is measured by its ability to promote mobility and stability. Again, these relationships are formed by access that is made available through associations, networks, and organizational ties.

More specifically, social capital is nurtured through the availability of and caliber of extracurricular activities. Such activities sponsored by the school or not sponsored by the school provide the venue to establish access to influential networks and/or skill sets that become useful for gaining access to a variety of venues. It is particularly important for students from economically challenged backgrounds to have these outlets afforded by the school for developing leadership characteristics and other requisite skills. Derived from the Detroit Public Schools, which is the largest school district in Michigan and the school district with the highest percentage of African American females, aggregate data in table 4 are presented about the status of extracurricular activities (Detroit Public Schools, 2005).

The data clearly demonstrate in table 4 that the Detroit Public Schools are providing a variety of activities for students. The extracurricular program focuses on academic, cultural, and sporting activities. In 2003–2004, the report indicates, the majority of students participated in the reading component of the after-school programs, while the smallest number of students participated in the debate program. In 2004–2005, the majority of the students participated in the science, reading, math, and social studies programs, while the least number of students participated in the chess club. It is interesting to note, however, that while the number of schools with different types of social-capital-building programs increased consistently for three academic years, the number of students in those programs decreased between the

TABLE 4. BEFORE- AND AFTER-SCHOOL SPORTS, ARTS, CULTURAL, AND ACADEMIC OFFERINGS WITHIN DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 2002–2003, 2003–2004, AND 2004–2005

	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005[*]
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS WITH OFFERINGS	205	208	224[†]
TOTAL NUMBER OF OFFERINGS	426	1,370	1,594
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED	27,634	34,619	25,559

Source: Detroit Public Schools (2005).

*Document Sports: 2003–04 baseline—Competitive 110 schools; 5,352 students 1+ week; Document Recreational: 2003–04 baseline 87 schools, 2,574 students; Competitive: 120 schools, 4,130 students; Recreational: 76 schools, 2,249 students.

†No report from 33 sites; nil reports from 19 sites.

academic years of 2003–2004 and 2004–2005 within the Detroit Public Schools. The year in which the students encountered a decline in participation was after the enactment of No Child Left Behind. Nonetheless, while having a plethora of activities within the school would encourage more school involvement and financial support, it also important to consider the manner in which the human resources of these social-capital-building elements are utilized within the schools. Approaching social capital in multidimensional ways is important in sustaining its capacity within the schools.

Symbolic Capital and Conflicting Results

Symbolic capital serves as the physical representation or embodiment of a legitimate source of exchange (Bartee & Brown, 2007; Delpit, 1988; Bourdieu, 1984). The recognition of symbolic capital signifies the presence of a valued commodity. Symbolic capital operates as both embodied and objectified. The embodied nature of symbolic capital is the inherent value that has meaning, which is known by a select group of individuals. The objectified nature of symbolic capital is linked to something that is visualized, and its meaning is known by a wider audience. Both the embodied and objectified nature of capital demonstrates the diverse, yet meaningful, forms of symbolic capital.

From an objectified nature, symbolic capital emerges as visual identification

that is known publicly and its implications are understood widely. Bourdieu (1990) identifies symbolic capital as "the form that various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate" (p. 127). For schools, graduation rates, grades, AP course enrollment, and other measures serve as the objectified nature of symbolic capital. Those objectified forms of symbolic capital position students for consideration at highly selective schools and/or universities.

It remains important that students have the required test scores and grades that the school or university warrants as legitimate. While test scores, grades, and other AP courses do not necessarily connote student intelligence, they are significant to the enrollment or admissions process and are considered the measuring stick of intelligence. Having these credentials as a form of symbolic capital suggests that students are qualified and highly capable. In effect, the power to generate and produce accessibility is attached to the objectified nature of symbolic capital.

Considering the indicators of graduation and dropout rates of African American females in Michigan, the findings in table 5 indicate that African American females have significantly low graduation rates within Michigan. Such findings suggest that, overall, African American females are not academically competitive when compared to other racial groups other than Hispanics. The graduation rates of African American females in Michigan are lower than the national average of 84 percent of African American females identified by National Center for Education Statistics (Hoffman & Llagas 2003).

From an embodied nature, symbolic capital is attached to the entities that relay some type of message to connote legitimacy. In effect, this recognition is considered as private, and those who are aware of its value are those who recognize the conveyed message as being legitimate, while those who are not aware minimize or fail to recognize the level of importance. Both contexts are value-laden and signify belief systems, traditions, and other resonating ideals. The difference, however, that separates the two forms of capital is that symbolic capital assumes a greater likelihood to be transferred in different capacities. Bourdieu (1990) alludes to this viewpoint accordingly:

> It [cultural capital] thus manages to combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition. Because the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital, it is predisposed

TABLE 5. GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES OF FEMALE STUDENTS IN MICHIGAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2007

	ON-TRACK GRADUATED	DROPOUT	OFF-TRACK GRADUATED	OFF-TRACK CONTINUING	OTHER COMPLETER	GRADUATION RATE AND TOTAL
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	488	106	<10	70	<10	72.40% 674
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,229	99	0	47	<10	88.86% 1383
Black, Not of Hispanic Origin	9,083	3,206	<10	1,656	57	64.83% 14,011
Hispanic	1,563	617	<10	241	34	63.54% 2,460
White, Not of Hispanic Origin	42,051	4,428	73	2,516	324	85.14% 49,392
Multiracial	265	51	<10	40	13	71.62% 370

Source: The Center for Educational Performance and Information (2008b).

> to function as symbolic capital (i.e. to be recognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition. . . .
>
> Furthermore, the specifically symbolic logic of distinction additionally secures material and symbolic profits for the possessors. (p. 245)

Some aspects of symbolic and cultural capital are interlinked and become significant in determining outcomes. Symbolic capital may or may not signify cultural capital. The prevailing attitudes and resonating ideologies, as defined by the setting, become the point of departure for assessing whether or not the capital is legitimate. For example, with respect to the statewide percentages of highly qualified teachers within the state of Michigan, table 6 details some interesting findings that reveal some insightful perspectives for consideration about symbolic and cultural capital.

Table 6 indicates that a significant percentage of classes are taught by highly qualified teachers. Having such percentage of highly qualified teachers within the schools is notable. From a broad perspective, it is presumed that the students within Michigan are being taught by the most credentialed teachers and that the quality of preparation in the class promotes student success. From a specific perspective,

TABLE 6. NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF CORE ACADEMIC CLASSES TAUGHT BY HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS, 2005–2006

	NUMBER OF CORE ACADEMIC CLASSES	NUMBER OF CORE ACADEMIC CLASSES TAUGHT BY HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS	PERCENTAGE OF CORE ACADEMIC CLASSES TAUGHT BY HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS
All Schools in State	*187,500*	*182,610*	*97.4%*
ELEMENTARY LEVEL			
High Poverty	7,726	7,679	99.4%
Low Poverty	10,701	10,671	99.7%
All Schools	*36,696*	*36,506*	*99.5%*
SECONDARY LEVEL			
High Poverty	20,5822	19,805	96.2%
Low Poverty	69,447	67,670	97.4%
All Schools	*150,187*	*145,519*	*96.9%*

Source: Michigan NCLB State Report Card (2005–06).

given that the majority of African American female students in Michigan are concentrated within the Detroit Public Schools and their graduation rates are less than 70 percent, the implications of having highly qualified teachers are not manifesting the expected type of competitive outcomes. Therefore, it is important to consider symbolic capital within its context to determine the various dynamics; otherwise the possibility of having conflicting results is more likely to occur.

Quality of C³ = Quality R³

From a macrolevel viewpoint, it is evident that diverse forms of capital, cultural, social, and symbolic, influence the accessibility of resources, quality of relationships, and viability of results within the educational context. The quality of capital and its capacity to be exchanged is based upon what occurs in cognitive and noncognitive arenas. Examining the School Improvement Framework as a conduit of the macrolevel NCLB in light of the perspectives on the different forms of capital and their micro-level functions, some interesting viewpoints emerge. Those viewpoints are as follows:

■ Strand 1, *Teaching for Learning*, did not include social capital indicators of the standards of instruction and assessment. The key benchmarks of instruction are *planning and delivery* and the key benchmarks of assessment are *aligned to curriculum, data reporting, and use*. In both cases, given the absence of social capital indicators, consideration is needed of how extracurricular activities (school-sponsored and non-school-sponsored) can be integrated as core curricular matter. The curriculum will then need to be modified in a manner that permits aligning types of data to be collected.

■ Strand 2, *Leadership*, did not fully include cultural capital related to indicators of instructional leadership, shared leadership, and operational and resource management. The key benchmarks of instructional leadership are *educational program and instructional support*, of shared leadership are *school culture and climate and continuous improvement*, and of operational and resource management are *resource allocation and operational management*. For the educational program and operational and resource management platforms, the absence of cultural capital indicators fosters a need to focus on the types of activities being used to reinforce what is being taught in class and how material and nonmaterial resources are being used to support these efforts. Bridging the gap between "theory and practice" becomes critical to creating effective measures for learning.

■ Strand 3, *Personnel and Professional Learning*, did not fully include social capital indicators for the standard of personnel qualifications. The key benchmarks of personnel qualifications are *requirements and skills, knowledge, and dispositions* and the key benchmarks of professional learning are *collaboration, content and pedagogy*, and *alignment*. To encourage social capital within this standard, interest needs to be taken toward integrating some of the professional associations, community organizations, and other related social entities into the activities of the school. The affiliations of the personnel need to be considered as a resource, and efforts need to be created to engage those networks in valued ways.

■ Strand 4, *School and Community Relations*, did not fully include cultural capital indicators for the standard of parent/family involvement. The key benchmarks of parent/family involvement are *communication* and *engagement*. The absence of cultural capital within this particular benchmark suggests a need to find creative ways to involve the families in activities that interest them and to conduct these activities frequently and deliberately at times when they will be available, which, in effect, builds buy-in from the families. Surveys can be

completed at these activities or by students to determine the types of activities that families would enjoy.

■ Strand 5, *Data and Information Management*, did not fully include social capital indicators for the standard of data management. The key benchmarks of data management are *data generation, identification, and collection, data accessibility*, and *data support*. Issues related to social capital in this strand are based upon previous recommendations about the integration of extracurricular activities as part of the core curriculum, the treatment of personnel affiliations with professional organizations as a resource for the school, and the involvement of families within the school. A structured approach needs to be institutionalized and implemented in order to create a data-generating system to inform the policies and practices of the respective schools.

From a microlevel viewpoint, the use of particular programmatic efforts provides the practical application for capital to be generated in school settings. The Young Empowered Sisters (YES!) program is one example currently being implemented within a Michigan school that addresses the noncognitive needs of African American female adolescents. YES! uses diverse intervention measures to enhance foster increased self-awareness and consciousness in African American females attending an academically underperforming school. Thomas, Davidson, and McAdoo (2008) characterize the school-based intervention YES! program as follows:

> The goals of the intervention are to instill a healthy Black identify, promote a collectivist orientation, increase an awareness of racism, and encourage participation in liberatory activities. To achieve the goals of intervention, three overarching themes were integrated within the intervention's curriculum: cultural values, African American history, and contemporary culture. The cultural values component emphasized values and expressions of collectivism.... Participants engaged in discussions on what Black unity meant to them and how they as individuals could bring about further unity among African Americans. Participants also engaged in-group projects to facilitate collective responsibility and shared personal experiences with each other to build a sense of belong and sisterly camaraderie. The history component focused on the shared historical experiences of Black people in the United States. Participants discussed the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Black enslavement, and key historical figures in the

1960s civil rights movement. The contemporary culture component addressed present-day environmental risk factors African Americans encounter. Specifically, this component sought to increase students' awareness of their sociopolitical environment vis-à-vis racism and to inspire involvement in liberatory behaviors. … They also engaged in discussions on how to effectively cope with and overcome the effects of racism. (pp. 286–287)

The description of the YES! program indicates its integration of cultural, social, and symbolic indicators of capital in its curricular makeup. Cultural capital is acquired through the teaching of African American and American-centered values of collectivism and individualism respectively. Social capital is facilitated through the implementation of group activities to foster personal networks and friendships. Symbolic capital emerges through the exuded confidence in the dispositions of these students since they are equipped with different strategies to cope with the continuing, not-so-present implications of racial and gender discrimination.

Furthermore, it is important to note that, consistent with the goals of the YES! program, Thomas, Davidson, and McAdoo (2008) indicate that those students who participated in the YES! program had increased awareness of their racial identity and discrimination, the importance of communalism, and increased participation in activism. The study argued that both the curriculum structure and its use of group-based activities provided the framework for fostering a program to meet the holistic needs of its African American female adolescents. While the study indicates improvement in the noncognitive areas of the students, the study does not address the cognitive results of having participated in this program. However, considering the work of Saunders and coauthors (2004) and Rouse and Austin (2002) and their focus on self-esteem and academic performance, it is reasonable to conclude that there was some impact in the cognitive areas of these females' schooling experience by their having participated in the YES! program.

Implications for Research

There are various implications related to cultural, social, and symbolic capital within this important study on the interactions of the macrolevel policy of No Child Left Behind and the microlevel operating tenets of capital. From a cultural

capital viewpoint, alternative measures need to be taken in the Michigan public schools to nurture cultural capital among African American females. Specific attention needs to be placed upon their current involvement in activities that are considered culturally relevant, integrating those activities within the course and using appropriate pedagogical strategies. As Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) addresses in her book *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teaching for African American Students*, there is significant importance in using the background and experiences of students as a teaching tool in the curriculum. Ladson-Billings (1994) comments that "students must experience academic success, students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 160). Teachers and administrators must encourage and support these nontraditional efforts in order to build cultural capital in ways that benefit the school and the students.

Although many of these African American females may be from economically impoverished families and face the associated challenges, it still remains important to understand how their circumstances are to be used in constructive ways. Ruby Payne (1998), in her book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, discusses poverty as having its own language and own rules, by which it is governed. Breaking into these unspoken codes as a means to understand the population that is being served is critically important. However, Gorski (2006) uses a critical social theory lens that acknowledges the intersections of class inequities that are exacerbated by race and gender in schools. Whether or not the teacher is the same race of the student, deficit theories and thinking should not be applied; in contrast, deliberate efforts must be taken to decode and integrate the experiences of African American students (particularly females) in the curriculum in meaningful and appropriate ways.

The components of social capital are also critical to the success of African American females within the Michigan public schools. Involving persons from the community within the activities of the school encourages participation in the extracurricular activities that the schools have to offer. These individuals serve as both a material and a nonmaterial resource for the students, who may come from economically challenging backgrounds. According to Lee and Croninger (1999), social capital is considered a "resource embedded in a person's social network . . . the manner in which the structural characteristics of social groups facilitate or hinder helpful exchanges between members" (p. 6). In effect, the schools would be establishing the venue for long-term relationships to be established between the

students and the mentor from external organizations and associations. These mentors would be able to offer noncognitive support to the students in essential ways for their life after school. The role of symbolic capital for African American females in Michigan public schools is critical for both public and private purposes. Within the public sphere, the level of progress that is being made is often determined by the rates and percentages that are shown. If the rates are high, then it is perceived that great strides are being made within that respective domain and vice versa. Within the private sphere, only those who are knowledgeable of what the rates and percentages are connoting understand their implications. The outcomes for African American females in Michigan public schools are dismal in both the public and private spheres. Efforts need to be taken toward bridging the gaps between the two spheres, thereby allowing the symbolic representation of the percentages and rates associated with graduation rates and highly qualified teachers to serve as representative insight into what is occurring within the schools.

The research study on trends and status of African American females within the public schools of Michigan as juxtaposed with the different forms of capital has evoked some interesting perspectives. The role of No Child Left Behind vis-à-vis the School Improvement Framework provides critical insight into the macro- and microlevel dynamics of these two competing items. Given that No Child Left Behind will continue in some capacity as the federal mandate on academic performance, it remains important to encourage and integrate capital-building elements into the governance and operations of the Michigan public schools. Nonetheless, the YES! program, as implemented in one of the Michigan schools, provides a viable example regarding how cultural, social, and symbolic capital can be integrated within a school setting. Not only will African American females benefit, but the state and nation as a whole will gain from the positive implications of producing competitive students. Academic underpreparedness, untapped resources, and conflicting results that are currently being generated as ill forms of capital can no longer be tolerated as the norm but, instead, must be considered a stepping stone for generating legitimate forms of capital.

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