

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?: THE VOICES OF HIGH ACHIEVING BLACK MALES  
EMERGE IN PREDOMINATELY WHITE HIGH SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Horace Mann has been recognized as describing education as “the great equalizer.” Further examining that statement would unveil American society’s admission that there are in fact—or maybe just opinion—inequitable experiences that exist among American citizens. Education should be the equalizer, but can it truly do so when it serves as an institution that is a mere microcosm of the greater society in which unequal experiences exist? Racism is a pervasive and enduring factor in American society and impacts the lives of Black people unceasingly and unrelentingly. Whether individuals are conscious or unaware of the impact of institutionalized racism and unconscious bias play in the social and academic experiences of Blacks, the fact remains that racism is ubiquitous in the United States.

This qualitative case study of 11 high-achieving Black males (HABMs) attending predominately white high schools sought to add to the growing body of literature on HABMs. Using critical race theory as a guiding paradigmatic perspective and the concept of identity development as a framing concept, the goal of the study was to highlight HABMs social and academic experiences while gaining additional insight into their conceptions of authentic identity development and identity expression. Furthermore, centralizing the voice of HABMs provided an opportunity to challenge common notions of Black male underachievement and upend the dominant narrative about Black male identity.