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Disproportionality of African American Students in Special Education

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Abstract

Many students primarily those in the urban school districts are at risk of dropping out or not achieving their true academic potential. The school district used for this study, which is the poorest district of the recognized 5 biggest districts in New York State, has a dropout rate well below the statewide average (T. Harris, personal communication, March 18, 2011). The performance of its schools amounts to a barometer for the success of the city and the region. Who's to blame? The teachers, the parents, administrators or state and federal officials who generate and promote funding and programs to the 859 districts throughout New York State. This paper will provide an in-depth investigation relating to the relationships teachers and students have that are from diverse cultural backgrounds. More importantly, the impact of these relationships on academic achievement on urban students will be investigated. The research will include the disproportionality of African Americans in special education programs, the subjective labels many children are given by teachers and medical practitioners, and the history of the public educational system regarding African Americans. Resources used for this research will include, professional journal articles, personal communications with teacher, medical practitioners and students, textbooks relating to culturally diverse teaching strategies and statistical data retrieved from reliable internet sources. Though most want personally acknowledge that they are many differences between teacher and student relationship, this continues to play a vital role in the outcome of the academic endeavor of students. As a result, all teachers and students must be aware of their own cultural biases to achieve their fullest academic and pedagogical zenith.

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Disproportionality of African American Students in Special Education

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Abstract

Many students primarily those in the urban school districts are at risk of dropping out or not achieving their true academic potential. The school district used for this study, which is the poorest district of the recognized 5 biggest districts in New York State, has a dropout rate well below the statewide average (T. Harris, personal communication, March 18, 2011). The performance of its schools amounts to a barometer for the success of the city and the region. Who's to blame? The teachers, the parents, administrators or state and federal officials who generate and promote funding and programs to the 859 districts throughout New York State.

This paper will provide an in-depth investigation relating to the relationships teachers and students have that are from diverse cultural backgrounds. More importantly, the impact of these relationships on academic achievement on urban students will be investigated. The research will include the disproportionality of African Americans in special education programs, the subjective labels many children are given by teachers and medical practitioners, and the history of the public educational system regarding African Americans. Resources used for this research will include, professional journal articles, personal communications with teacher, medical practitioners and students, textbooks relating to culturally diverse teaching strategies and statistical data retrieved from reliable internet sources. Though most want personally acknowledge that they are many differences between teacher and student relationship, this continues to play a vital role in the outcome of the academic endeavor of students. As a result, all teachers and students must be aware of their own cultural biases to achieve their fullest academic and pedagogical zenith.

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Literature Review

Disproportionality exists when student representation in special education programs or specific education categories exceeds their proportional enrollment in a school's general population (Blanchett, 2006). This is seen throughout the United States and according to Harry and Anderson (1995) African American males have been disproportionately represented in special education since its inception. African American students are 2.41 times more likely than white students to be identified as having mental retardation, 1.13 times more likely to be labeled with a learning disability and 1.63 times as likely to be found to be identified with an emotional or behavioral disorder (Blanchett, 2006). These statistic show African Americans are more likely to be placed in special educational programs more often than their white and Hispanic peers.

The construct of a disability is the centerpiece of special education. Despite the many unresolved questions about the validity of the disability classification system, many students throughout the county continue to be deemed eligible for special education services by the virtue of their being diagnosed as having a disability (Harry and Anderson, 1995). When categorizing children and the severity of their disability, Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act, IDEA classifies individuals within their 13 disability categories. Of the 13 categories, research has found that several are very subjective and used to place African Americans in special educational programs. Subjective labels, like mental retardation, emotional disturbance and learning disabilities, are more likely to be used when classifying African Americans for special education services (Harry and Anderson, 1994).

Mental Retardation

Disabilities are often viewed as physical or mental impairments that effect individuals' social or educational endeavors. Often many of the known disabilities are seen on a spectrum, measuring from, mild, moderate or severe. Mental retardation, which is one of the 13 categories recognized by IDEA, is considered to have this measurement of spectrum when categorizing individuals for services. Not all people with mental retardation have the same level of intelligence. The scientific method of measuring intelligence is through standardized psychological tests called IQ tests (Harry and Anderson, 1994). Intelligence quotient (IQ) is the percentage of intelligence a person has, in comparison to a typical person from a similar background. An IQ of 100 is considered normal intelligence. The lesser the IQ, the more severe the level of mental retardation the individuals has. Based on IQ, mental retardation can be classified into, mild, moderate or severe. However, the official definition of mental retardation has undergone important changes within the years. In 1973, the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR), which previously used the term "mental deficiency" in its title, changed the IQ score cut off point for this category to 70 (Harry and Anderson, 1995). Wehmeyer (2003) states, if the individual has severe case of mental retardation it may prevent the person form achieving goals, unlike mild and moderate, the individual will have the ability to achieve their goals.

Mental retardation is a disability that is not easy to prove. This disability is very subjective and practitioners of education often use their judgment to categorize many African Americans with this disability. According to Wehmeyer (2003) mental retardation is characterized by significantly sub-average intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas:

communication, self-care, home-living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure, and work. For a student to be considered mentally retarded, only two adaptive skills are needed to found as a substantial limitation for the individual to be classified. Research shows the adaptive skills previously mentioned are too vague and individuals with and without disabilities can be subjectively viewed as having limitations in at least two of these areas. It is said, "mental retardation is never a thing or characteristic of a individual, but rather a social invention stemming from time bound societal values and ideology that makes diagnosis and management seem both necessary and socially desirable" (Wehmyer, 20006, p.2).

Many individuals have a negative perception regarding mental retardation. This lack of understanding of mental retardation has individuals to be prematurely placed in special education. In the United States, mental retardation affects about 1-3% of the population (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2010). There are many causes of mental retardation, but according to Harris (2010) doctors have only found specific reasons for only 25% of the cases documented. Such reasons for this disability include: infection presented at birth, chromosomal abnormalities, environmental effects, genetic abnormalities, nutrition, metabolic effects, toxic effects and trauma (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2010). Symptoms of mental retardation can range from physical conditions such as being short of stature or possessing unique facial characteristics to subjective psychotic disorders.

Cultural and cognitive conflict often occurs when a group is asked to perform in a manner and setting which in some ways is foreign to their style. According to Edeh (2007), "In many critical areas of human functioning and behavior, the world view of the dominant group is indifferent to or conflicts with the world view of other groups in that culture" (p. 164) . Students

of African decent use different problem solving strategies than students of European decent. Edeh (2007) attributed these differences to the Nigerian social and cultural make-up, which places much value on the extended family and community as part of the immediate family. The educational system in the United States is driven from a European aspect, which causes cultural bias with other cultures driven from their rooted tradition. These external factors play a important roll in the cognitive development and perception of African Americans.

Emotional Disturbance

Emotional Disturbance (ED) is defined in the individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) as follows:

> a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance :(A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.(B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.(C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.(D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.(E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. (Cullinan, Epstein and Osborne para 2)

Individuals classified as having emotional disturbance (or behavioral disorders) represent 8.1% of all students age 6 to 21 served under IDEA, or 7% of the school population in the United States (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2010). Harry and Anderson (1994) claim, "Shifts in frequency rates for emotional disturbance classification,

tremendous variability in placement rates from state to state and the exclusion of the notion of social maladjustment from classification consideration, all call into question the validity of the this category" (p.608). Individuals need to have a least one of the previous mentioned factors to be labeled as having ED. A child that may have difficulties building interpersonal relationships with his or her peers and teacher can be labeled as having ED.

The cultural relativity of the student's behavior and teacher judgment is essential when classifying a student as emotionally disturbed. The increasing number of African American students taught by educational practitioners, that don't have cultural or social knowledge of minorities result in the misinterpretation of the true student. The court case Lora et al. v. Board of Education of the city of New York (1975), exemplified the false assessment procedures that were placed on minority students in special education with emotional disturbance disorders. According to Harry and Anderson's (1995) research the court found that the school district's assessment procedures were inadequate and discriminatory, and ordered the retraining of teachers in nondiscriminatory assessment procedures.

Blanchett (2006) has written the opinion of Geneva's Gay's research in Culturally responsive teaching her feelings towards diversity and cultural blindness in the field of education:

> Some educators continue to exit the collegial programs with many of their negative perceptions of "Blackness" and the prejudice, racism, and sense of entitlement regarding white privilege intact and it is completely unchallenged when making request for special education services. (p.27)

It is difficult to increase respect of all individuals without having some knowledge about the differences among different cultures of people. When educators are aware of the ethnic and cultural behaviors of all groups of students, only then will African Americans be less likely to be classified as having emotional disturbance. According to IDEA, 1.39 African Americans are labeled as having emotional disturbance compared to .69 of white students and .42 hispanic students (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2010). African American children having emotional or behavioral disorders are more likely to be suspended, expelled, or removed from local educational settings. They also tend to receive harsher discipline than their white peers (Green, 2005). The lack of understanding between the teacher and student, may lead to the misunderstanding of the student's actions, which include verbal and nonverbal communications. When there is a cultural misunderstanding, this can cause interpersonal conflicts between the teacher and students. Therefore, because they do not share a common cultural knowledge, communication, values, traditions, attitudes, and norms, the processing between the two are often misconceived and can be taken as a threat or a form of withdrawal that is deemed socially or academically constructed. This traditionally leads to negative a consequence, which leads to requests for special services for the student (Costello, 2010).   These services can include special educational services, verbal reprimands or suspensions.

Costello also mentioned in her article Cut Your Chances of Suspension: Don't be Black, the U.S. Department of Education reveled data from 2002 and 2006 that black urban children were three times as likely as white boys to suspended from school (Costello, 2010). The relationship between student attendance and academic success should reflect the data the U.S. Department of Education reveled on suspension rates. If the students are not in school they are more likely to fail academically in the educational setting. The highly impressive "data" that all

schools around the country use to drive their instruction, should be looked at a little deeper to

expose the reality of racial and cultural effects on their students. The information that critically

effects the test scores, teacher/student relations and in some cases special education are solely

related to racial and cultural differences that are all so often pushed under the rug . Research by

(Harry and Anderson, 1994) expressed some bias actions reflecting the rate in which African

American students are reprimanded and labeled in the educational setting. Labels such as

emotional disturbance or behavior disorders are the excuses to ostracize these students and later

have justification to medicate these normal individuals to later cause cognitive imbalances that

exclusively make them disturbed.(Costello, 2010)

      Children that are often labeled with variation of disturbance disorders are recommended

to take medications. One particular medication that is actively used within the African

American population of students is Ritalin.   Ritalin, also sold under the generic name

methylphenidate, is a central nervous system (CNS) stimulant used to treat attention deficit-

hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (White, 2003). One serious emotional effect of Ritalin is

depression, a mood disorder characterized by sadness, withdrawal from people and activities,

feeling hopelessness and helpless, self-blame and changes in eating and sleeping patterns. (Dr.

Harris, personal communication, November 21, 2010). As previously mentioned, these are the

characteristics that are needed to classify individual as emotional disturbed. It is not the

symptoms that promoted the classification of students, but the lack of diversity and

understanding of the practitioners, which lead to the classification that promoted their emotional

behaviors. White (2003) claims many children are inappropriately diagnosed as having a

emotional disturbance disorder and treated with medications that lead to more server learning

impairments. Abnormal or strange behavior is another mental change that results from Ritalin

use. Parents and teachers can be more prone to see this activity and truly believe something

maybe wrong emotionally with the students or child.

Learning Disabilities

Miranda, Soriano, Fernández, & Meliá (2008) claim, learning disabilities (LD) are

frequently associated with low academic performance, which usually worsens as the behavioral

manifestations of the disorder become more severe. Learning disabilities are problems that

affect the brain's ability to receive, process, analyze, or store information (Crabtree, 2010).

These problems can make it difficult for a student to learn as quickly as someone who is not

affected by learning disabilities. There are many kinds of learning disabilities. Most students

affected by learning disabilities have more than one kind. Certain kinds of learning disabilities

can interfere with a person's ability to concentrate or focus and can cause someone's mind to

wander too much (Crabtree, 2010). Other learning disabilities can make it difficult for a student

to read, write, spell, or solve math problems. These inabilities to achieve are very subjective and

individual teaching styles may play a considerable role in which the student learns how to read,

write, spell or solve math problems. The behaviors that are noted with LD are generally related

to the symptoms of students that are medicated are with the drug Ritalin. This leads scholars to

believe, once a student is classified as having ED and recommended to take medication, the

effects of the medication gives the student another type of learning disability. A behavioral

condition called attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is often associated with

learning disabilities because people with ADHD may also have a hard time focusing enough to

learn and study. Students with ADHD are often easily distracted and have trouble concentrating,

which can be a direct effect of the medication. Many students of African descent act out not

because of ADHD, but they are expressing their inner feelings and building defenses that only

get them into more trouble and viewed as LD (Crabtree, 2010).

       Analyzing data from The Disproportionality of African American Students With

Disabilities Across Educational Environments (Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons &

Renae Feggins-Azziz ,2006) found:

> among students with disabilities, 55% of European American students as
>
> compared to only 37% of African American students were educated in inclusive
>
> settings (defined as spending less than 21% of the school day inside of the general
>
> classroom). Conversely, 33% of African American students with disabilities
>
> received services in substantially separate class placements, compared to only
>
> 16% of European American children with disabilities" (p. 413).

What caused the division or segregation between the two groups? Understanding the conditions

are not are not solely equivalent, the data concluded on African Americans with LD can not be

valued or used relating to any study of LD.   The implications of racial disparity in special

education environments differ depending upon the causal hypothesis applied to the data which is

all subjective (Skiba et al, 2006).

The Quality of Instruction to African American Students

       The national system of formal education in the United States developed in the 19th

century (Thattai, 2001). Thomas Jefferson, the United States 3rd president was among the first to

suggest creating a public schooling system. The public schooling system he envisioned didn't

take into account the special needs children may have academically or the equality of educational

instruction to "black" individuals. Accounting to Thattai, (2001), Thomas Jefferson's ideas formed the basis of our public educational system developed in the 19ᵗʰ century.

The earliest education given to African American individuals was not through the public school ideologies of Jefferson. Early African Americans were instructed by missionaries with the sole intentions of converting black slaves into the religious beliefs of Christianity (Thattai, 2001). The Society for the Propagation of Gospel in Foreign Parts established many school in hopes to convert black individuals to Christianity, not to enlighten or build literacy skills. In spite of their individual efforts, the education of black individuals remained very low until President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 (Jeffries, 2004). Accounting to Thattai (2001) the literacy rate for African Americans students during the start of public education was around 5%. Though slaves "African Americans" were considered emancipated, segregation by race throughout the country continued to suppress the unequal treatment of African Americans in public and private schools. The separation and inequalities of African Americans was the basis of the court case Plessy v. Ferguson (Avant and Hassian 2002). The segregation of students, primarily of African descent, resulted in the inferior education practices, which continues to exist in public education today.

In 1954 the Supreme Court unanimously ruled in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional (Avant and Hassian 2002). Despite resistance for many years by many southern states, by 1980 the federal courts had largely succeeded in eliminating this bias system, but many educational instructors continue to ostracize and discriminate against the African Americans student in the classroom (Thattai, 2001). Moving on to the present day, approximately 90 percent of K-12 teachers in the U.S. are white, while 36 percent of the national school population is students of color (King, 2000). These cultural differences differently play vital roles in how non-white students are taught, viewed in the classroom, and discipline in public education. King (2000) claims this contrast underscores the critical role of White teachers in challenging racial bias in the curriculum and in school culture. A prerequisite for effectiveness in this effort is a willingness to confront one's own

attitudes and privileges. Boykin (1982) has referred to this as a greater "verve" and has called for instructional approaches that are universal and non-biased. Many instructors who teach African American students do not understand some of the cultural and fiscal differences between their students and themselves which makes their teaching philosophies critically biased.

Cultural preference for both physical and verbal behavior has a powerful influence on teachers' perceptions on African American students. These perceptions and bias views are the initial inculcations to refer African Americans children to special education (Harry and Anderson, 1994). According to Harry and Anderson (1995), instead of building on these misconceived behaviors, teachers typically aim to extinguish and replace these behaviors with conduct more acceptable to their beliefs. When this is challenged rather with verbal or physical resistance to conform, these students are ostracize and viewed as having behavioral or learning disabilities. The research on specific instructional strategies used with poor African American readers presents a preconceived expectation of teachers. According to Kamps et al. (1989), poor black children spend significantly less time directly engaged in academic reading activities than do their white suburban counter parts.

To have productive academic achievement in the classroom, the educational institution must be a warm and friendly environment. The elements within the classroom can make a student feel safe and welcomed or threatened and not wanted. For many African American students, the typical classroom presents a unfamiliar aura to learning. Beyond the question of teachers is quality of the schools many African Americans attend. Kozol's (1991) study of the "savage inequalities" in our nation public school reveals that poor children, which means a disproportionate number of African American children, attend poor school. As he notes:

> There is a certain grim aesthetic in the almost perfect upward
> scaling of expenditures from poorest of the poor to richest of the rich
> within the New York City area: $5,590 for the children of the Bronx
> and Harlem, $6,340 for the non-White kids of Roosevelt, $6,400 for

the Black kids of Mount Vernon, $7,400 for the slightly better-off

community of Yonkers, over $11,000 for the lucky children of

Manhasset, Jericho and Great Neck. In a ethical society, where

money was apportioned in accord with need, these scaling would run

almost in perceived reverse. (p.123)

Though there continues to be inequalities in public school education, each student is

expected to learn. Each teacher and their students are assessed at the end of the academic school

year on state or local exams that reflect the content they are required to master. For many

students, the confidence many teachers should instill is missing, which leads to low self-

confidence and poor academic achievement (Harry and Anderson, 1994).   According to Quality

of Education for Minorities (1990), an African American male in this cycle of academic failure

leads to the designation of a disability.

Data Collection

As a teacher in the Rochester City School District (RCSD), I conducted a simplistic

survey with both teachers and administration looking for their honest and professional answers.

They were each given an 8 question survey with the cover letter that explained the purpose of my

study. Teachers and administrators were verbally informed that each survey was confidential

and anonymous. They were also reassured via email that the results of the responses would have

no impact on their professional leadership or teaching philosophies. As previously mentioned,

the survey consisted of eight questions. The questions were strategically designed to interpret

their personal ideas and views on urban education and the population of students educated in the

specific setting. To establish geographical information, the first question was straight forward

asking the participant where they currently reside. The remaining seven questions were designed

to explore the participant's personal views on urban education and the students in which they

educate and or discipline in their current professional setting. Though some questions were quite

personal, I believed those who participated would give their honest opinion and answer each

question with professionalism. All the participants who took part in the survey were given one

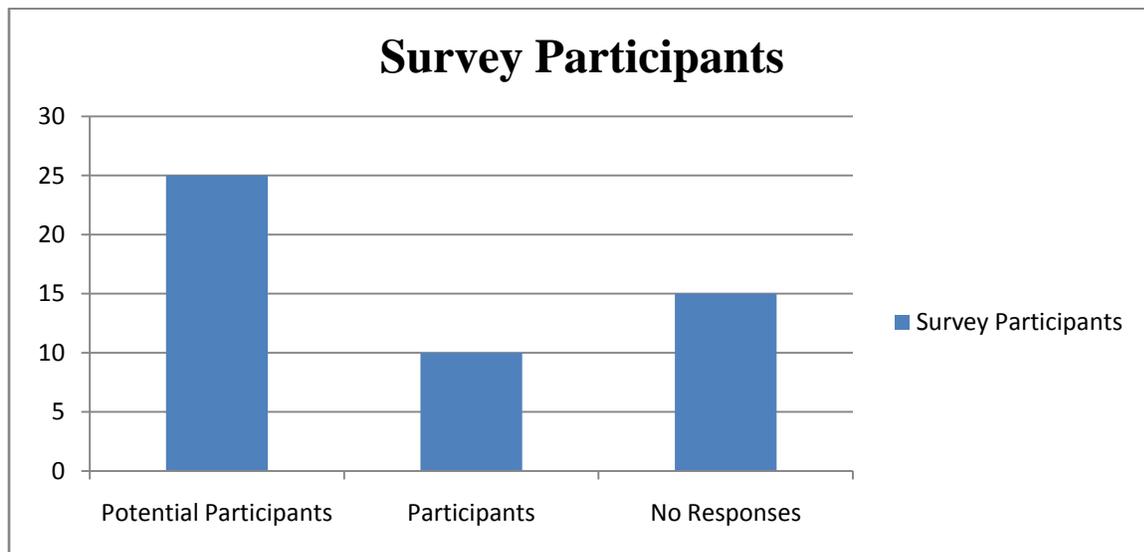week to return the survey to my personal mailbox anonymously.

Methodology

The study will include surveys and personal communication question to teachers who

work in the urban school setting. Surveys will be sent out to the teachers in the form of an e-

mail that is confidential to others view. Students will be selected but not allowed to participate

without parental consent. Students who are allowed to participate will take a short survey about

the relationships teachers and students have that are from diverse cultural backgrounds. The

teachers and the students will be from a urban school district located in the city of Rochester,

New York. The findings from the surveys and personal communication will be analyzed to

make a sound conclusion of the relationships between the two targeted groups.

Results of the data

Surveys were distributed by hand to all teachers and administrations in the anonymous

elementary school used for this survey. Of the 25 potential participants who received a survey by

hand, only 10 of the 25 or (60%) were completed and returned to my mailbox as directed.

Though 10 were handed in, 9 were completed and 1 anonymous survey answered only a few

questions leaving 4 questions unanswered. All surveys including the incomplete one were

analyzed and assessed to translate the finding into useable data. After closely analyzing the data, I created two groups which were based on the geographical residence of the participants. These groups consisted of the teachers and administrators who lived in urban environments and those who lived in suburban or rural areas. The data from each of these groups were then analyzed more to find comparisons or differences between the two indentified groups.

Survey Participants

A bar chart titled "Survey Participants" with a y-axis from 0 to 30. Bars: Potential Participants = 25, Participants = 10, No Responses = 15. Legend: Survey Participants.

Question 1 asked the participants to report their current geographical residence. Of the 10 surveys submitted two indicated they were city residents and eight indicated suburban or rural areas of residency. Of the total participants in the study (20%) were city residents and (80%) were non city residents. Of the group of non- city residents only one indicated that he or she lived in a rural area which translated into (10%) of the total (80%) of the non- city residents.

Geographical Residence of the Participants
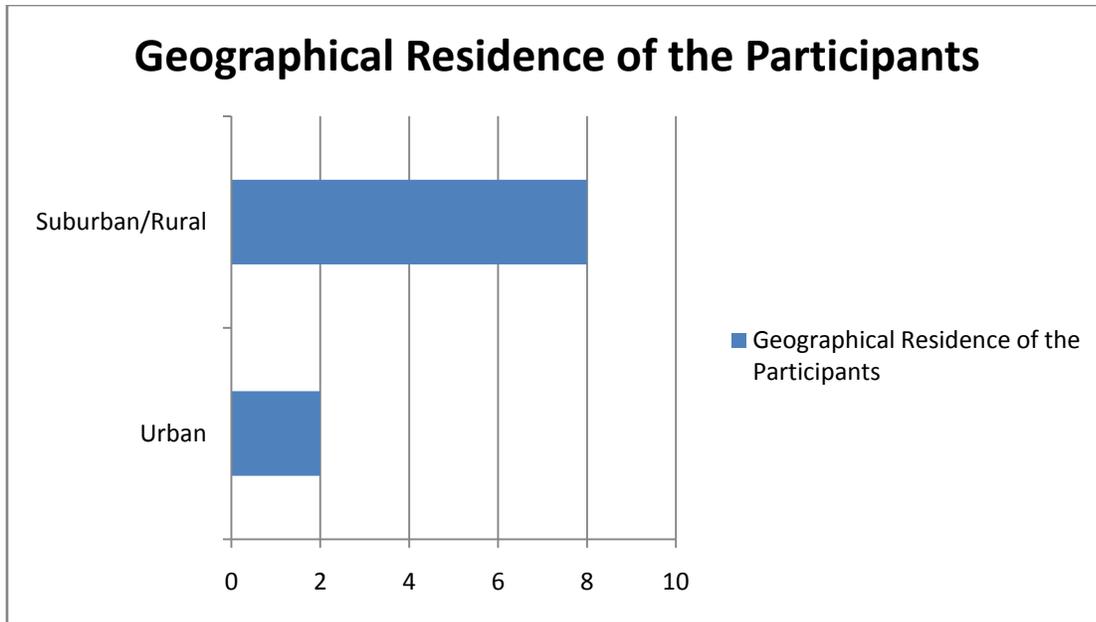
Participants were then asked what they believed were the key elements to promote a diverse classroom environment. Four of the ten participants (40 %) reported key elements of the classroom started first with instructor while six of the ten reported (60%) key elements dealing with administration and the aura of the school environment. Though many of the survey had differences, there were some similarities in which all teachers and administrator believed the instructor is the sole person who reflects a positive or negative environment that translates to the students productivity.

Diversity in The Classroom
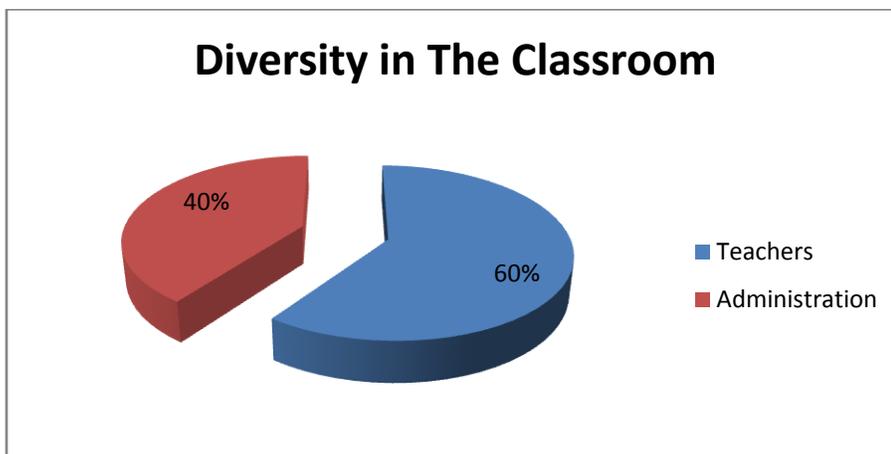
When asked if cultural and social-economics backgrounds play a role in the students academics performance three of the ten (30 %) reported that they believed it didn't, five of the ten reported it certainly did, while two of the ten (20%) decided to omit the question. Of the (30%) who felt cultural and social-economics plays no role in student's performance none of the participants reside in the urban areas while the other (30%) reside in suburban areas. Of the (50%) who felt cultural and social-economics plays a vital role in educational performance (30%) reside in the city compared to (70%) that reside in the non- urban areas. The remaining three surveys that omitted the question relating to cultural and social-economics of students resided in non- urban areas. When asked if they relate to certain students of the same cultural background as themselves one of the ten omitted the question, four of the ten answered no, and five of the ten answered yes.
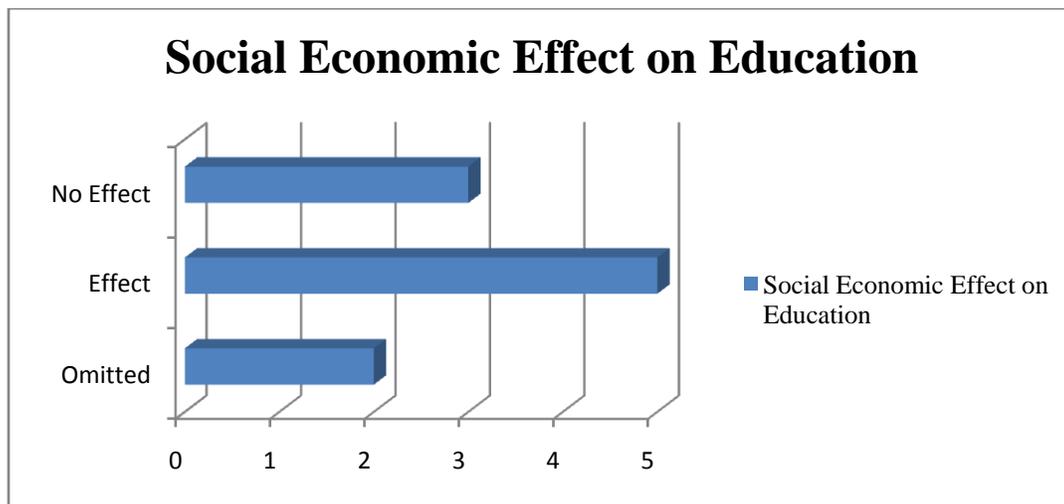

For the sole purpose to find out how educators and administration feel about their work environment, I sought out information relating to their local school's community. Four of the ten participants had no interest in their schools local community, three of the ten omitted the

question, while three of the ten saw positives and business opportunities within their schools

local community.

School Community
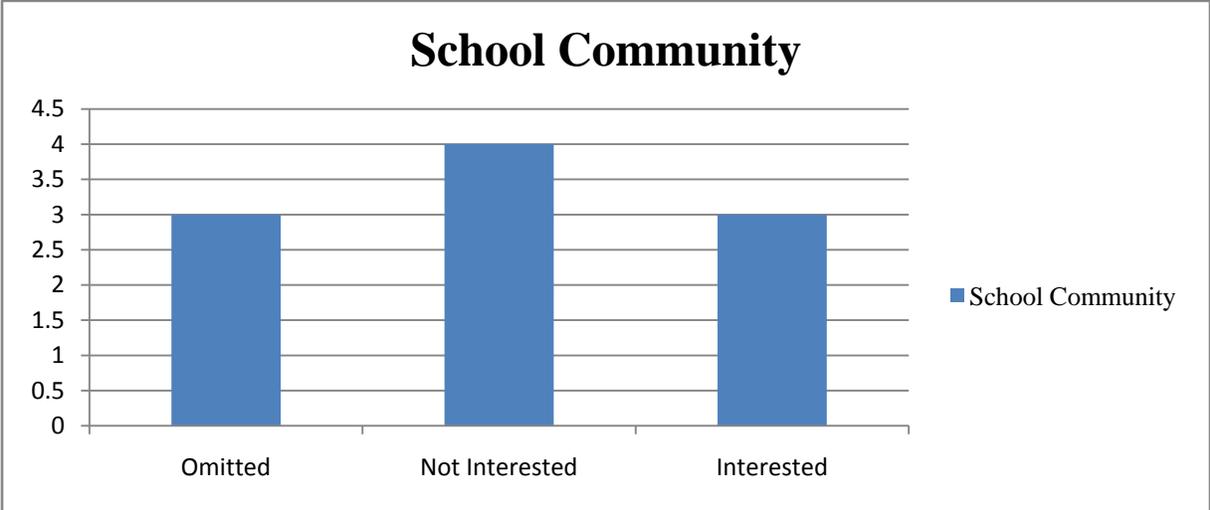
When asked to describe their early field experience and background working with urban

students only two of the ten participants (20%) lived or grew up in the urban environment and

worked with local organization dealing with urban youth, while eight of the ten (80%) had no

experience prior to student teaching or working or working for a urban district. Those that

indicated that they lived in the city mentioned they were in youth programs as children and were

inspired to become a teacher from these programs.

**Field Experience in Urban Education**
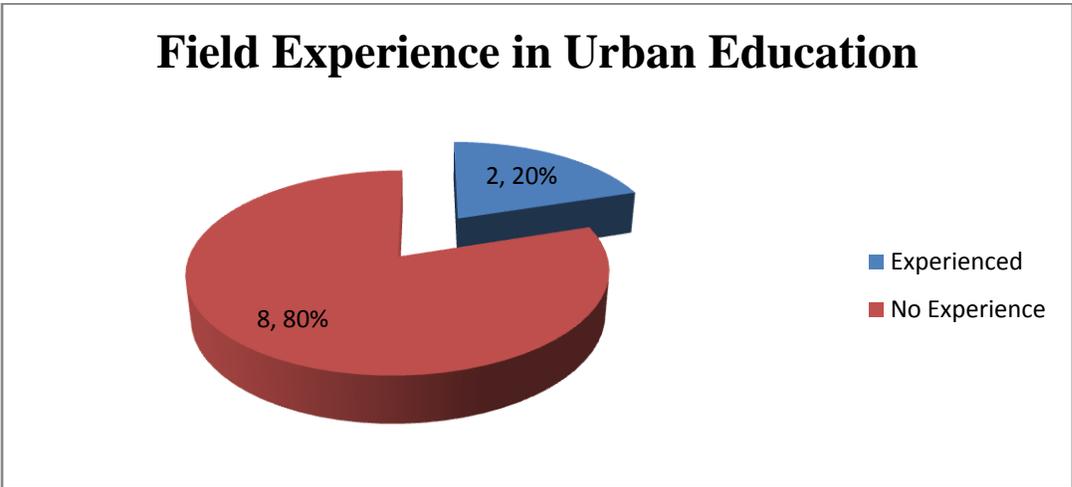
Question eight was a personal opinion question relating to how the participants feel when communicating with students that use ebonics/slang terminology in the classroom. Of the ten participants three of the ten found it very difficult to communicate and translate the information into written form, while seven of the ten seemed to have no problem understanding the slang/ebonic terminology of the students. Of those who had no problem understanding the slang terminology of their students four of the seven said "it took time to understand but uses it as a tool to break the ice with their students."

Students Communication
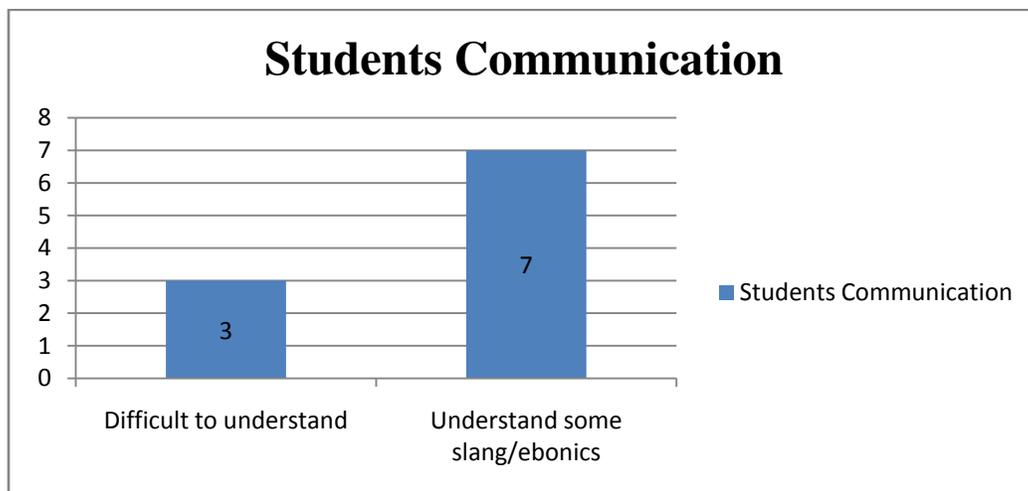
To better understand how participants interacted with their students on a daily bases, participants were asked what type of classroom management best suit their personality and teaching style. Maintaining good order in classrooms is one of the most difficult tasks facing all teachers. The task has become more difficult over the past few decades as young people's attitudes to people in authority have changed dramatically. Some of the changes have led to greater self-confidence in students. Others, such as the acceptance of violence to achieve ends, attitudes to substance abuse and an increasing lack of respect for authority have made classroom management and life in school generally more difficult.

This was very open-ended and there were many different answers as a result. I broke this question down into two groups, structured classroom management and token economy communities. Of the 10 participants of the survey three (30%) preferred a structured classroom environment while seven preferred token economy communities. Participants were asked to explain their reasoning behind their preferred management style and they all gave what they felt best worked for them and maximized the productivity of their students.

Teacher Classroom Management Style
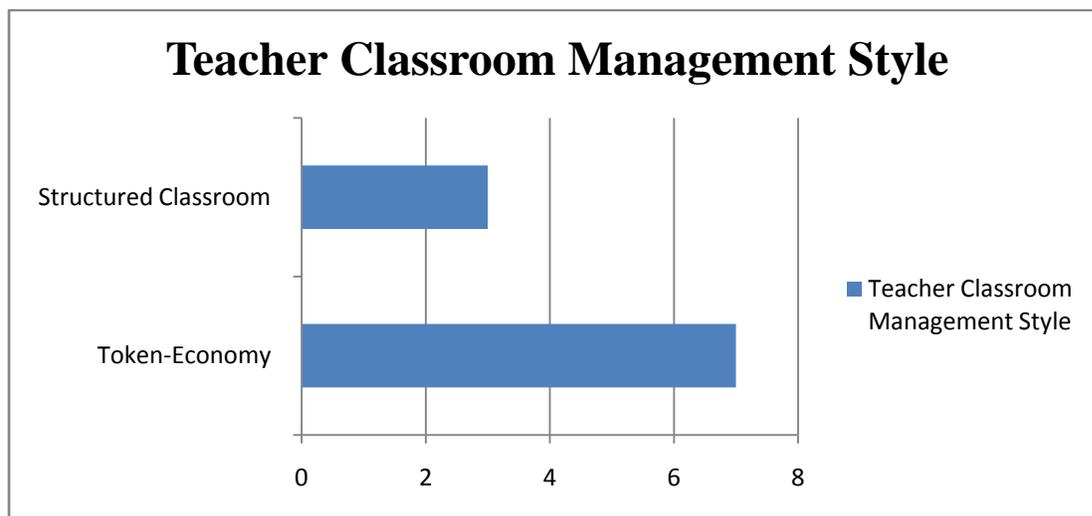
Discussion

The responses from the surveys collected from urban education professionals allowed me to understand the cognitive aspect of teacher and student relationship. Though it was only interpreted from the perspective of teachers, their responses gave me insight into the serotypes, cultural beliefs and expectations many urban teachers have on their pupils in the classroom. The data collected drew me to the conclusion that many teachers with non-urban backgrounds may have predetermined expectations for the children they teach in the urban setting. Please keep in mind this data was only conducted with a minute population of urban education professionals

and from this I draw my conclusion. With the data collected from the survey 80% of the teachers

working in the survey population expressed they had experience working with urban students. If

each particular teacher within that 80% never experienced dealing with urban students, from the

start their relationship, expectations and educational theories are affected in the educational

environment. This shows that many educational professionals need more experience working

with children from diverse background and cultures that differs from their own.

Research shows that students of African American decent benefit from more direct and

structured classroom environments. The data collected from the survey provides unique evidence

that many instructors from the survey population expressed the need to have a token economy

structure in the classroom. My general perspective on the type of instruction with urban students,

which most are of African descent solely depends on the student but many factors influence the

productivity of the student. I believe more powerful than the reward is the "recognition" that

accompanies the reward. Perhaps we should consider a system that offers consistent and specific

recognition to students for their achievements in the educational environment that will lead to

more positive endeavors in their schooling. With direct instruction, the entire class has the

opportunity to acknowledge individual students and their accomplishments.

It is assumed student's educational outcomes and academic success is greatly influenced

on the fiscal resources that child has. Many struggling students in the urban population that may

have academic deficits seek help, but this help or tutoring is influenced by budgets or lack of

monetary fund's to aid in repairing their low academic achievement. Research conducted by

Harry and Anderson (1994) found that the social-economic statues of parents correlate to

positive academics for their children. The data collected showed that many educators truly

believed social-economics played a big role in student performance. Though I had a small

population social-economics plays a major role in education. Social- economics is the hot topic across the country where many educators as well as administrators feel the same way as concluded in this study.

Without have a clear understanding of who children are and the dynamics that create the behaviors, verbal linguistics, and academic beliefs that they are accustom to follow, education is not possible. This solely correlates with the relationship the educator has with the student. This may seem like minute issues but can quickly transform into the traumatic national concern in education. Allowing yourself to build a professional teacher to student relationship with a non bias point of view, will surly improve the student and the educator's outlook on teaching and learning in the classroom.

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<u>Appendix</u>

1. What do you think are the key elements needed to promote a diverse classroom environment?

2. Do you think students of different cultural and social-economic backgrounds perform differently in the classroom?

3. Do you find it easier to relate to students of the same cultural background as yourself?

4. How do you feel about your school's local community?

5. Do you find it hard to communicate with students that use ebonics/slang terminology?

6. What type of classroom management best suits your personality and teaching style?

7. Please describe your early field experience and background working with urban students.