

JTABSE

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The *Journal of the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators* is published by the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators (TABSE), 3100 Richmond Avenue Suite 306, Houston, Texas 77098. The *Journal of the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators* carries a variety of articles and manuscripts that contribute knowledge and ideas in the quest for excellence in educating children of African decent and other minority learners. Each issue contains research articles, general interest articles, and book reviews. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect the position taken by the National Alliance of Black School Educators.

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Educators

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Co-Editors

Edwin Paul Hood, Garland Independent School District,
ephood@garlandisd.net

Lucian Yates, III, Prairie View A&M University, LYates@pvamu.edu

Guest Editors

Pamela Minigan-Finley, LeadershipHBCU
pfinley@leadershiphbcu.org

Terence L. Finley, LeadershipHBCU
tfinley@leadershiphbcu.org

Editorial Review Board

Kim McLeod, Texas Southern University
Lucian Yates, III, Prairie View A&M University

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Terence L. Finley, LeadershipHBCU



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FROM THE EDITORS

When charged with the task to put together the research journal for the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators, we accepted the challenge and the opportunity. It brings us great pleasure to reintroduce *The Journal of the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators (JTABSE)* with this Spring 2015 edition. It has been 8 years since the last publication of the *JTABSE*. During that time, a wealth of knowledge has been added to the field of education that has had a tremendous impact on the lives and the successes of minority students in both Pk-12 and higher education. Thus, the purpose of this journal is to provide peer-reviewed research addressing topics that continue to impact minorities in public and higher education. Our goals are to:

- Provide current research relevant to the field of minority education in the Texas.
- Contribute to the current body of existing literature.
- Spark further interest to add to the research presented within the journal.

We hope that you enjoy the manuscripts provided in this edition. The next edition will be available in August 2015, the “Back to School Edition”. We are currently accepting manuscripts for review. Please send an electronic copy of your manuscript to Dr. Edwin P. Hood. All manuscripts will be reviewed for proper formatting. Please see the manuscript formatting information provided.

As a peer-reviewed journal, we are looking for additional reviewers. If you are interested in being a reviewer, please contact Dr. Lucian Yates. We ask that reviewers currently hold a doctoral degree and have an in depth knowledge of current APA guidelines.

Thank you so much for your continued support in the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators and for taking the time to read the following pages of research. If you should have any questions, concerns, or want to offer any feedback, please do not hesitate to contact either Dr. Edwin P. Hood or Dr. Lucian Yates. We hope that you enjoy the information and look forward to the next release!

Repectfully

Dr. Edwin P. Hood, Co-editor

Dr. Lucian Yates, III, Co-editor

MEET THE GUEST EDITORS

Dr. Pamela Minigan-Finley, a native of Maryland, is a results-oriented professional with 16+ years of experience in Organizational Effectiveness and Instructional Design. The breadth of her experience covers a wide area of responsibilities and substantive contributions within both the educational and corporate sectors, inclusive of building solid learning organizations through leading and driving change; as well as linking and aligning organizational learning with strategy and business execution. Dr. Minigan-Finley holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Prairie View A&M University; a M.Ed. in Instructional Technology from the University of Houston; and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Phoenix. She is currently a Manager of HR Talent development in the oil and gas industry, where she delivers results-focused solutions that drive improved organization performance. Dr. Minigan-Finley is actively engaged in the educational community and serves as a dissertation coach and literary consultant. She firmly believes that, “Learning is the time-portal of change and those who embrace it arrive at new dimensions of opportunity with each experience.”

Dr. Terence Finley, a native of New York, holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Prairie View A&M University, a M.B.A. in Marketing and Logistics from the Pennsylvania State University; and a Bachelor of Science from the State University of New York at Brockport. His research interests include the access, adequacy, and equity of educational resources for underrepresented populations. While in pursuit of his doctorate, leveraging 15+ years as a Finance, Sales, & Marketing Executive, Dr. Finley held the position of Graduate Assistant to the Chief Financial Officer of Prairie View A&M University. He is currently the Leadership Development and Organizational Officer, reporting to the Associate Vice President of Business Services. Dr. Finley leads with a commitment to a shared vision of excellence. He inspires the belief that all students can and will excel. He **Cares** more than others think is wise; **Risks** more than others think is safe, **Encourages** more than others think is plausible; **Expects** more than others think is possible; and **Dreams** more than others think is practical. He leads through a **CREED** of *Excellence*.

The Drs. Finley are co-founders of LeadershipHBCU™, a nonprofit organization focused on promoting organizational advancement through building, supporting, and maintaining learning environments within HBCUs, whereby knowledge sharing, idea development, collaborative decision making, learning from experiences—as well as mistakes, and holistic thinking are fostered as vital facets of organizations, their cultures, and their values.

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**THE DISCIPLINE GAP IN TEXAS: AN EXPLORATORY
ANALYSIS OF THE DISCRETIONARY ASSIGNMENT OF
DISCIPLINARY CONSEQUENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN
STUDENTS AND WHITE STUDENTS IN TEXAS WHO
VIOLATED LOCAL SCHOOL CODES**

Kriss Y. Kemp-Graham, Ph. D.
Texas AM University- Commerce
kriss.kemp-graham@tamuc.edu

Nathan R. Templeton, Ed. D.
Texas A&M University – Commerce
Nate.templeton@tamuc.edu

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine trends in the assignment of discretionary disciplinary consequences of African American and White students enrolled in public schools in Texas during the 2013-14 school year who violated Texas Education Agency disciplinary codes. The data from this research indicated that in all 20 Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs) in Texas, African American students were disproportionately assigned disciplinary consequences of In School Suspension (ISS) and Out of School Suspension (OSS). The findings of this research are in alignment with prior research on the disproportional overrepresentation of African American students in exclusionary school suspensions (Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Shirley & Cornell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2014). Recommendations from this research suggest a closer analysis of local school codes of conduct, including how they are written and interpreted to ensure that African American students attending public schools in the state of Texas are not unintentionally disproportionately impacted by these policies and practices due to their race.

INTRODUCTION

At state and national levels, African American students are more likely to be suspended from school and receive more serious penalties than their White peers for the same or similar infractions (Kinsler, 2011; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Shollenberger, 2015; Skiba, 2014; Smith & Harper, 2015; US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Nationwide, African American students are suspended at a rate of 3 times their White peers and this disproportionality has been documented as early as preschool. For example, in 2012, African American students represented 18% of preschool enrollment in the US, however they represented 48% of all preschool suspensions while White students represented 43% of preschool enrollment and 26% of school suspensions (US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

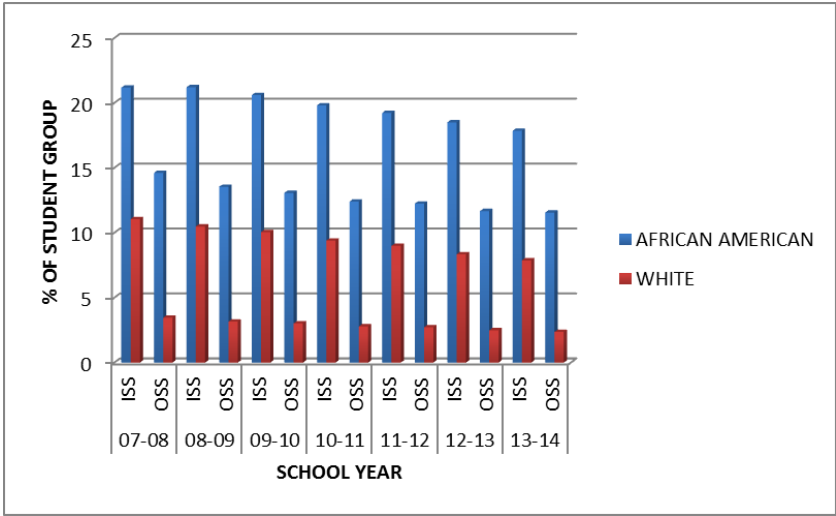
The historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision promised hope to African American parents of equal access to a quality education for their children. However, six decades post the *Brown* ruling, schools throughout the United States continue to engage in practices that prohibit African American students from equal access to a quality education as evidenced by the disproportionate rates by which they are assigned disciplinary consequences that result in missed instructional time (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Losen, 2011; Simson, 2013).

African American students in the state of Texas have been subjected to similar over-representation in the assignment of disciplinary consequences as their African American peers across the nation. Data publicly reported on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website indicated African American students in the state of Texas were disproportionately represented in the assignment of disciplinary consequences when compared to their White peers. More specifically, at the conclusion of the 2013-14 school year, African American students comprised 12.7% of the entire state population, but represented 23% of all in school suspensions (ISS) and 32% of all out of school suspensions (OSS). On the other hand, White students comprised 29.4% of the entire state population, but represented 23% of all ISS and 15% of all OSS disciplinary assignments.

A closer analysis of discipline data trends in the state of Texas indicated that from 2007-2014, higher percentages of African American students were assigned to ISS and OSS than their White peers (TEA, 2015). This 7-year trend is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Student Assignment to Exclusionary Disciplinary Consequences by Consequence, Student Ethnicity and Year: 2007-2014



The overrepresentation and disproportionality of African American student assignment of disciplinary consequences have far reaching implications for hundreds of thousands of marginalized African American students in Texas. The research in the area of exclusionary school disciplinary practices in US schools have been consistent and instructive in informing us that disciplinary actions that result in missed instructional times may contribute to diminished academic opportunities for students. More specifically, African American students who receive out of school suspensions, thus being excluded from classroom instruction are at risk for disengagement from schools, teachers and peers; academic failure; increased involvement with the Juvenile Justice System; truancy; and dropping out of high school (Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2015; Hoffman, 2014; Losen et al., 2015; NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc., 2006; Rausch & Skiba, 2004; Shollenberger, 2015).

In 2014, African American students in Texas had the highest high school dropout rate at 9.9%, compared to all other student ethnicities, followed by American Indians at 8.5%, Hispanics at 8.2%, and Whites at 3.5%. Similarly, African American students had the lowest graduation rate at 84.1%, compared to all other student ethnicities,

followed by Hispanics at 85.1%, American Indians at 85.8%, Whites at 93% and Asians at 93.8% (Texas Education Agency, 2015). Losen et al. (2015) warned that “if we ignore the **discipline gap**, we will be unable to close the **achievement gap**” (p. 4). With respect to the warnings of Losen et al. (2015) and other seminal researchers dedicated to the eradication of the discipline gap, the need to close both the achievement gap and the discipline gap in the State of Texas is of paramount importance for the success of African American students.

The impetus for the engagement in this research was directly related to the 2014 call to action by US Attorney General Eric Holder and US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan for the critical examination of the assignment of disciplinary consequences for African American students, to identify practices that may adversely impact historically marginalized students because of their race (US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division & US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). With this charge in mind, the purpose of the research presented here was threefold: (1) to examine the trends in the assignment of disciplinary action in the state of Texas; (2) to identify trends in the assignment of disciplinary consequences between African American and White students and; (3) to provide recommendations of where resources can be allocated to reduce or eliminate the discipline gap in Texas.

Related Research on the Disproportionality of Disciplinary Consequences of African American Students When Compared to White Students in the United States

The authors of this research would be remiss in failing to acknowledge that the majority of school disciplinary policies are developed with the intent to keep all students and school faculty safe, however policies that result in the assignment of exclusionary disciplinary consequences are far too frequently overused and have been proven to be ineffective (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003; American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Losen et al., 2015)

A succinct review of the literature has shown that long standing assumptions that African American students are disproportionately assigned disciplinary consequences when compared to their White peers because of their [student] own behaviors, zip code, or socioeconomic status have been refuted by decades of empirical research. Researchers using various quantitative and qualitative methodologies to conduct research in urban and suburban schools have consistently reported that

the disparity in suspensions based on the students' race, cannot be reasonably explained by differences in student behavior; that is African American students do not engage in more disruptive or violent behaviors in school when compared to their White peers (Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Gregory et al., 2010; Hoffman, 2014; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Furthermore, disparities in the assignment of disciplinary measures cannot be explained by poverty (Skiba et al., 2002; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). Although there are reported findings of correlations between socioeconomic status and suspension in the research, the disproportionality in the assignment of discipline consequences are not due to African American students being poor. In fact, one interesting study found that African American students are at greater risk of suspension when compared to White peers when they attend resource rich suburban schools where the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch is minimal when compared to urban schools (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).

Research on school discipline in the US have shown the use of exclusionary discipline to remove students from classrooms as a primary strategy in response to students' [*mis*]behaviors that may be deemed inappropriate or contrary to the norms and expectations held by teachers and schools is a common practice (Fenning & Rose, 2007). That is, teachers may refer students for disciplinary action because they *mis*interpret student behaviors as inappropriate or as behaviors that do not conform to their beliefs of how students should conduct themselves. For example, Skiba et al. (2002) discovered that African American students were more often sent to the office by classroom teachers to be disciplined because of **subjective** reasons such as *defiance*, *excessive noise* or *disrespect* and White students were sent to the office for discipline by teachers for **objective** reasons such as *smoking*, *vandalism*, *leaving without permission* or *obscene language*. The subjectivity in teachers' assessment of student behaviors that result in exclusionary disciplinary action may be grounded in teachers' acceptance of negative stereotypes or due to their [teachers] own lack of knowledge of cultures that differ from their own, which may contribute to the disproportionality in the assignment of disciplinary consequences experienced by African American students.

Absence of proof in the research that poor, underachieving African American students are more violent or are more prone to breaking school rules than their White peers, suggests a closer look at

classroom and school level contexts (Gregory et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2008; Wallace et al., 2008). For example, African American students may be differentially selected for disciplinary consequences by teachers and school leaders because of societal stereotypes, implicit bias, or cultural mismatch between teachers and African American students (Gregory et al., 2010; Tyler, Boykin, & Walton, 2006; Weinstein, Gregory, & Strambler, 2004).

Additionally, zero tolerance disciplinary policies that emerged after the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 and the 1999 Columbine school shootings, designed to provide uniform discipline for egregious behaviors that jeopardized school safety such as, the possession of guns and drugs on school grounds have morphed into broad disciplinary policies. Many school districts broadened their zero tolerance policies to include suspensions for less minor school infractions that did not threaten the safety of schools such as violations for disrespect and insubordination (Evans & Lester, 2012; Walker, 2014).

Texas Education Code and School Safety:An Overview of Chapter 37

Statutory laws (statutes) in the State of Texas relevant to education comprise the Texas Education Code. Constitutionally, the bicameral State Legislature meets every two years to introduce and pass legislation affecting all state agencies and institutions, including education (Ausbrooks, 2014). Texas Education Code Chapter 37 ensures safety and order in Texas schools by providing the statutory framework necessary for independent school districts to create local policies that provide methods and options for managing students in the classroom and on school grounds, disciplining students, prevention and intervention of student discipline problems. As amended by Senate Bill 1541 (SB 1541) of the 83rd Legislature (2013):

The board of trustees of an independent school district shall, with the advice of its district-level committee ... adopt a student code of conduct for the district. In addition to establishing standards for student conduct, the student code of conduct must (1) specify the circumstances ... under which a student may be removed from a classroom, campus, disciplinary alternative education program, or school bus; (2) specify conditions that authorize or require a principal or other appropriate administrator to transfer a student to a disciplinary alternative education program; (3) outline conditions under which a student may be suspended ... or expelled. (Texas Education Code § 37.001(a))

Historically, school discipline has been viewed as punitive in nature as the process often seeks to punish the student rather than the act committed by the student (Frydman & King, 2006). To this point, since 2007, Chapter 37 has afforded more options for school districts to adopt local policies to address alternative disciplinary techniques. Disciplinary offenses committed under Chapter 37 refer to offenses committed both on and off school campuses (Texas Association of Schools Boards, 2013). Disciplinary consequences for student offenses are either mandatory or discretionary. Mandatory disciplinary consequences are those dictated by law. By contrast, discretionary disciplinary consequences for student offenses are determined by local school policy in response to the requirements of Chapter 37. Further, Chapter 37 requires the district to define misconduct that may – or must – result in a range of specific disciplinary consequences, including removal from a regular classroom or campus, suspension (both in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative education program, or expulsion from school. Both types of placement must be enumerated in the district’s Student Code of Conduct (SCOC).

Mandatory disciplinary consequences are serious in nature and may result in expulsion, automatic placement in a district alternative education program (DAEP), or in a juvenile justice alternative placement program (JJAEP). For clarity, DAEP placement is appropriate for students who have been arrested for, or charged with a felony offense, and the school board or the board’s designee determines that the student’s presence in the regular classroom: threatens the safety of other students or teachers; will be detrimental to the educational process; or is not in the best interests of the district’s students. Moreover, JJAEP placement usually occurs when student conduct has been adjudicated through the judicial system. Examples of conduct requiring mandatory consequences are those punishable in the penal code as a felony, including (but not limited to): using, exhibiting or possessing a firearm, aggravated robbery, assault or another violent crime, kidnapping, possession, use or sale of controlled substances, and delivering/making a terroristic threat. Likewise, certain violations of the Texas Health and Safety Code also warrant mandatory consequences, including using a volatile chemical, destruction of or damage to school property, and breach of any computer network or system.

By contrast, discretionary consequences are stated in the Texas Education Code as what a district *may* do. Moreover, discretionary consequences rarely involve expulsion, and as an alternative, provide

options to educate the student in alternate settings. Examples of alternate settings include in school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), placement in a district alternative education program (DAEP), or other disciplinary measures as outlined in the SCOC. Infractions that may warrant discretionary placement are: possessing look-alike weapons or other dangerous objects, fights or scuffling, bullying or harassment, certain sexual misconduct, possession of tobacco products, non-felony criminal mischief, and other offenses as listed in the SCOC.

The final discretionary policy examined refers to student dress code. All standards of dress are written and approved as local policy. The purpose of such policy is to ensure common practices of modesty, cleanliness and neatness by requiring students to dress in a respectful manner within the acceptable standards of the community and in such a manner as to contribute to the academic atmosphere, not detract from it. Dress code typically applies to hair, clothing, accessories, symbols, jewelry or other paraphernalia. Students who fail to comply with the dress code as stated in the SCOC may be subject to disciplinary action.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions that guided this study are:

1. Was there a statistically significant difference in the rate that African American students when compared to White students were assigned ISS and OSS during the 2013-14 school year in the state of Texas?
2. Which student violations of the 59 TEA school disciplinary policies/codes were most frequently reported by schools to TEA that resulted in disciplinary assignment of students to ISS and OSS during the 2013-14 school year?
3. For the most frequently cited student violations of TEA disciplinary codes reported during the 2013-14 school year, was there a statistically significant difference in the rate that African American students when compared to White students were assigned an exclusionary disciplinary consequence?

METHOD

Participants

Subjects from this study were African American and White students (n=2,225,876) who attended a public school in the state of Texas during the 2013-14 school year.

The data reported herein were drawn from disciplinary records from the *Disciplinary Data Reports* reported on the Texas Education

Agency (TEA) website. All disciplinary actions that resulted in a student being removed from any part of their academic program were reported by TEA in one of five categories: In School Suspension (ISS), Out of School Suspension (OSS), Expulsion, Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP) or Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) (Texas Education Agency, 2015). Stratified student data for disciplinary violations and corresponding disciplinary assignments according to ethnicity and Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs) were provided via special request to TEA. Demographic and student achievement data for the State of Texas and its corresponding 20 ESCs were obtained via the TEA website.

Data Analysis

To determine the difference in the assignment of ISS and OSS for the proportion of African American students and White students in Texas, 2X2 Pearson chi-squared tests were conducted in SPSS v. 22 for ethnic category (African American and White) and ISS discipline assignment (yes, no); ethnic category (African American and White) and OSS disciplinary assignment (yes, no); ethnic category (African American and White) and violations of local school codes (yes, no).

Given that the disciplinary data in Texas were reported by actual student counts and not averages, the use of the Pearson's chi-squared statistical method was identified by the researchers as the best method to determine if a relationship existed between the two mutually exclusive categorical variables identified in this research: *student ethnicity* and *student disciplinary assignment*.

FINDINGS

Research Question #1

Was there a statistically significant difference in the rate that African American students when compared to White students were assigned ISS and OSS during the 2013-14 school year in the state of Texas?

In School Suspension (ISS). The Pearson chi-square test was conducted in SPSS v22 to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the proportion of African American students when compared to White students attending public schools in Texas assigned ISS as a disciplinary consequence. The chi-squared test yielded a statistically significant result, $\chi^2(1)=48282.48, p<.001$. The effect size of this finding, Cramer's *V* was strong, .14 (Rea & Parker, 2012). In the

2013-14 school year, African American students (17.85%) were assigned to ISS at significantly higher rates than White students (7.87%) during this same year. African American students represented 12.7% of this sample compared to White students representing 29.3% of this sample, however on average, in the state of Texas African American students were assigned to ISS 2.26 times the rate of their White peers.

Descriptive statistics of ISS student suspensions in Texas during the 2013-14 school year broken down by ethnicity (African American and White) are reported in Table 1. It is important to note similar results were found in all 20 ESCs in Texas. Depending on where African American students attended school they were 1.12 to 2.7 times more likely than their White peers to be assigned ISS as a disciplinary consequence. Demographic data and descriptive statistics of students assigned to ISS for all ESCs can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of Students Receiving In School Suspensions (ISS) During the 2013-14 School Year by Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	% Did not		% in Sample	χ^2
	Received ISS	Receive ISS		
State				48282.48*
African American	17.85	82.15	12.7	
White	7.87	92.13	29.3	

* $p < .001$

Source: TEA Website Discipline Data Products

Out of School Suspension (OSS). The Pearson chi-square test was conducted in SPSS v22 to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the proportion of African American students when compared to White students attending public schools in Texas assigned OSS as a disciplinary consequence. The chi-squared test yielded a statistically significant result, $\chi^2(1) = 81275.04$, $p < .001$. The effect size of this finding was strong, Cramer's $V = .19$ (Rea & Parker, 2012).

In the 2013-14 school year, the proportion of African American students (11.55%) assigned to OSS statewide was significantly higher

than the proportion of White students (3.94%) assigned to OSS during the same school year. African American students represented 12.7% of this sample compared to White students representing 29.3% of this sample, however on average in the state of Texas African American students were assigned to ISS 2.93 times the rate of their White peers. Descriptive statistics of OSS student suspension in Texas broken down by ethnicity (African American and White) are reported in Table 2. Similar statistically significant results were found in all ESCs in Texas. Depending on where African American students attended school, they were between 1.75 to 6.8 times more likely to be suspended out of school than their White peers. Demographic data and descriptive statistics of students assigned to OSS for all ESCs can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics of Students Receiving Out of School Suspensions (OSS) During the 2013-14 School Year by Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	% Received OSS	% Did not Receive OSS	% In Sample	χ^2
State				81275.0*
African American	11.55	88.45	12.7	
White	3.94	96.06	29.3	

* $p < .001$

Source: TEA Website Discipline Data Products

Research Question #2

Which student violations of the 59 TEA school disciplinary policies/codes were most frequently reported by schools to TEA that resulted in disciplinary assignment of students to ISS and OSS during the 2013-14 school year?

Of the 59 school discipline violations in the state of Texas, the most frequently cited violation of TEA school discipline policies by students in the state of Texas during the 2013-14 school was “*Violation of Local School Code.*” Seventy-seven percent of all TEA disciplinary violations were due to student violations of local school codes. Violations of the local school code were determined independently by each school district. Violations ranged from being disrespectful to an adult, not

adhering to school dress and grooming codes, tardiness to class, interrupting instruction or violating codes specifically listed in the Student Code of Conduct handbook.

Violation of Local School Codes

Research Question #3. For the most frequently cited student violations of TEA disciplinary codes reported during the 2013-14 school year, was there a statistically significant difference in the rate that African American students when compared to White students were assigned an exclusionary disciplinary consequence?

The Pearson chi-square test was conducted in SPSS v22 to determine whether a statistically significant difference in the rates by which African American students and White students were assigned a disciplinary action due to violations of local school codes in Texas. The chi-squared test yielded a statistically significant result, $\chi^2(1)=86418.92$, $p<.001$. The effect size of this finding, Cramer's V was strong, .19 (Rea & Parker, 2012). African American students represented 12.7% of the student population in Texas, and 24% of the students in the state of Texas that violated local school codes. Conversely White students comprised 29.3% of the students in the state of Texas and they represented 22% of students who violated local school codes. Similarly, in every ESC in Texas, the proportion of African American students suspended due to a violation of the local school code significantly differed from the proportion of White students suspended due to a violation of the local school code. Depending on where the student attended school in the state of Texas, African American students were 1.5 to 3 times more likely to be suspended due to a violation of the local school code than their White peers. Descriptive statistics of student suspensions due the *violation of the local school codes* based on ethnicity (African American and White) in each ESC reporting this infraction are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: *Violations of Local School Codes for All ESCs Reported by Ethnicity in the 2013-14 School Year.*

ESC	% of African American Students	% of White Students	Likelihood of African American Students being suspended due to Violation of Local School Codes
1	12%	8%	1.5
2	24%	12%	2.0
3	30%	13%	2.3
4	23%	8%	2.8
5	29%	12%	2.4
6	24%	10%	2.4
7	27%	12%	2.2
8	26%	10%	2.6
9	27%	10%	2.7
10	18%	7%	2.6
11	23%	8%	2.8
12	28%	11%	2.5
13	19%	6%	3.1
14	13%	6%	2.1
15	18%	9%	2.0
16	21%	8%	2.6
17	19%	7%	2.7
18	21%	9%	2.3
19	12%	7%	1.7
20	20%	9%	2.2

Source: TEA Website Discipline Data Products

DISCUSSION

In the state of Texas, disciplinary consequences for public school students are governed by the Texas Education Code as outlined in Chapter 37. There are two *discretionary* disciplinary assignments school leaders are permitted to use in responding to student violations of local school codes: *In School Suspension* (ISS) and *Out of School Suspension* (OSS). There are two mandatory assignments of disciplinary actions of which school leaders do not have discretion on its use: Disciplinary Alternative Education Placement (DAEP) and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Placement (JJAEP). DAEP and JJAEP assignments occur as a result of serious violations in school codes. For example students who have been arrested or charged with a felony offense resulting in the school board or the board's designee determining that the student's presence in the regular classroom threatens the safety of other students or teachers, are automatically assigned to placement in a district alternative education program (DAEP). Students assigned to a juvenile justice alternative placement (JJAEP) occur when a student's conduct has been adjudicated through the judicial system and JJAEP is mandated as the consequence.

The purpose of this study was to examine trends in violations of disciplinary codes by African American and White students in the state of Texas and the corresponding assignment of disciplinary assignment by school leaders. The findings of this research are in alignment with prior research presented in the research on the disproportional overrepresentation of African American students in exclusionary *discretionary* school suspensions (Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Shirley & Cornell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2014). In Texas during the 2013-14 school year, 9.91% of students who were disciplined received ISS and 4.58% were assigned OSS. African American students comprised only 12.7% of the student population; however on average they were assigned ISS at 2.26 times the rate of their White peers who comprised 29.3% of the student population. Similar findings for OSS were found in the data for this research, African American students were assigned OSS at 3 times the rate of their White peers. More interestingly, the data for this research indicated that the disproportionality greatly differed depending on where a student attended school. For example, in the assignment of ISS, depending on where the student attended school, he/she were 1.12 to 2.7 times more likely than their White peers to receive this disciplinary assignment and 1.75 to 6.8 times more likely to receive OSS. Despite decades of research on the ineffectiveness of OSS, African American

students were disproportionately more likely to be suspended out of school for violating the same or similar disciplinary codes as their White peers. The rates of ISS and OSS of African American students for each ESC in Texas when compared to the rates of suspension for their White peers are depicted in Figure 2.

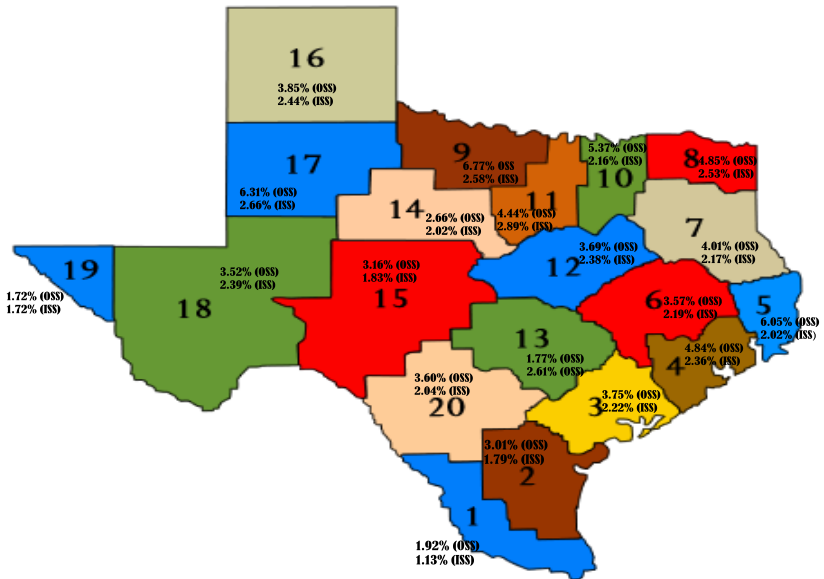


Figure 2. Risk Ratios of School (ISS) and Out of School (OSS) Suspensions of African American Students Compared to White Students During the 2013-2014 School Year for each ESC in Texas.

In examining the actual disciplinary codes that were violated by African American and White students during the 2013-14 school year, the data indicated that seventy-seven percent of all disciplinary actions were discretionary assignments as a result of students not adhering to local school policies (ie, dress code, disregard for authority, tardiness, failure to adhere to directives from teachers or administrators, using profanity and violations listed in Student Code of Conduct). As a result of violating the local school codes, 93% of students were assigned to ISS and 72% of students were assigned to OSS.

Given that the most frequently reported disciplinary violations

reported to TEA during the 2013-14 school year was the *violation of local school codes*, the second component of the research looked at the *discretionary* assignment of disciplinary consequences according to race. In 2013-14, African American students were assigned to ISS at 2.26 times the rate of their White peers and suspended out of school (OSS) at 3 times the rate of their White peers for violating local school codes.

The data from this research indicated that in all 20 ESCs representing urban, rural and suburban school districts in Texas, African American students are disproportionately assigned *discretionary* disciplinary consequences of ISS and OSS. Recognition of this phenomenon raises the possibility that a closer analysis of why students are referred for disciplinary consequences due to violations of local school codes should be considered. For example, White teachers represented over 62% of teachers in the state of Texas which may have resulted in a cultural mismatch between African American students and White teachers and may explain the disproportionality of disciplinary consequences assigned to African American students. For example, teachers who are prone to accepting stereotypes of African American children as being disruptive, loud and dangerous may overreact to minor situations and assess their behaviors as violations of the local school code (Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Skiba et al., 2002).

Further, the data reported here suggests that a closer analysis of the local school codes, how they are written and interpreted is also needed. Given that the local school codes are determined locally and depending on the specificity of the violation or infraction and its interpretation by teachers and school leaders, disproportionality in the discretionary assignment of discipline may result in subjective decisions that disproportionately impact African American students. In a guidance letter from Eric Holder and Arne Duncan, educational leaders were strongly advised to revisit their discipline policies to identify and modify practices that may unintentionally impact African American student overrepresentation in disciplinary consequences due to race. Concrete examples of ways in which student discipline can be deemed unlawful per the laws included in Title IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were provided in the guidance letter:

The administration of student discipline can result in unlawful discrimination based on race in two ways: first, if a student is subjected to different treatment based on one's race, and second, if a policy is neutral on its face – meaning that the policy itself does not mention race –

and is administered in an evenhanded manner but has a disparate impact, i.e., a disproportionate and unjustified effect on students of a particular race. (p 7)

Intentional discrimination also occurs when a school adopts a facially neutral policy with the intent to target students of a particular race for invidious reasons. This is so even if the school punishes students of other races under the policy. For example, if a school officials believed that students of a particular race were likely to wear a particular style of clothing, and then, as a means of penalizing students of that race, adopted a policy that made wearing that style of clothing a violation of the dress code the policy would constitute unlawful intentional discrimination. (p.8)

Recommendations from the top US officials in Education and Law Enforcement are in alignment with the recommendations from the research that urges us to examine more closely school district policies and ill-defined infraction categories as plausible explanations as to the disproportionality in suspensions of African American children (Losen, 2011; Skiba et al., 2014; Walker, 2014).

LIMITATIONS

The results of this study should be interpreted after careful consideration of the following limitations. First, the findings of this study do not constitute proof of racial discrimination of teachers or school leaders in the state of Texas in their assignment of discretionary disciplinary consequences to African American students. Further qualitative analysis of the specific reasons as to why individual students were assigned discretionary disciplinary consequences would be needed and demographic data of the teachers and school leaders involved with each violation would need to be identified and analyzed to identify a pattern of bias of which was not covered in this research. Second, this study examined disciplinary trends in the state of Texas and therefore may not be generalized to other states, whose policies, particularly those at the local level may not be determined by local school districts. Third, the statistical power of the data presented in this research relied very heavily on the accuracy of the discipline data that was publicly available.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Campus principals must reaffirm the vision for educating all students to thrive in the 21st century (Friedman, 2006). The institution of schooling must begin to divorce itself from high-stakes federal and state mandates which focus on various standards for teachers and administrators and instead begin to embrace the notion that all students can and will learn if fairly given the opportunity to maximize learning (Ravitch & Kohn, 2014). Further, discretionary policies that bear more credence to the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law often deprive students of color of this opportunity. Specifically, discretionary policies that take students away from the learning environment are not the appropriate response.

Likewise, policy initiatives must be grounded in research-based programs with key components: collaboration between the home and school, collaboration with community service providers, a comprehensive approach that accounts for the multiple factors that contribute to misbehaviors, and tiered interventions that use removal from class as a last resort. Additionally, conversations to engage and collaborate with local experts, mentors, and apprenticeships must be considered. Quite simply, policy makers must reconsider what schools and learners need in the 21st century. As Schrum & Levin (2012) recommended, educators should:

- Enable students to reach their potential by increasing access to resources and personnel that will extend learning beyond the classroom.
- Engage students in meaningful learning experiences that develop deeper connections; promote creativity, and heighten critical thinking skills.
- Empower students to assume responsibility for their own learning by encouraging curiosity, the exploration of knowledge, and life-long learning

Finally, Chapter 37 requires principals to attend professional development training at least once every three years regarding discretionary applications to discipline management techniques. While this training is absolutely necessary, principals and classroom teachers must be better trained to understand the culture and norms of the students they serve and be sensitive to the biases that exist for children of color (Kemp-Graham, 2015; Ballenger & Kemp-Graham, 2014). Further, educators should be strongly discouraged in the overuse of classifying student behaviors as – *“disruptive to the educational environment”* to

justify arbitrary disciplinary decisions that may adversely impact students of color.

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APPENDIX A

Descriptive Statistics of Students Receiving In School Suspensions (ISS) During the 2013-14 School Year by Ethnicity and ESC

ESC	% Receiv ed ISS	% Did not Receive ISS	% in Sample	χ^2	ESC	% Receive d ISS	% Did not Receive ISS	% in Sample	χ^2
State				48282.48*					
Black/AA	17.85	82.15	12.7						
White	7.87	92.13	29.3						
Region 1				964.00	Region 11				6953.00*
Black/AA	7.62	92.28	.002		Black/AA	16.99	83.01	14.5	
White	6.75	93.25	.016		White	7.26	92.74	42.3	
Region 2				18488.00*	Region 12				3544.51*

Kemp-Graham & Templeton.

Black/AA	19.5	80.5	2.6		Black/AA	23.61	76.39	19.6
White	10.67	89.23	21		White	9.91	90.09	41.3
Region 3				658.50*	Region 13			3276.44*
Black/AA	26.14	73.86	9.0		Black/AA	15.40	84.60	7.2
White	11.76	80.24	32.9		White	5.91	94.09	39
Region 4				12431.99*	Region 14			208.90*
Black/AA	18.18	81.82	19.2		Black/AA	9.61	90.39	8
White	7.71	92.29	22.8		White	4.75	95.25	52.6
Region 5				1561.30*	Region 15			
Black/AA	23.12	76.88	27		Black/AA	14.80	85.20	2
White	11.43	88.57	50		White	8.10	91.90	38
Region 6				2116.85*	Region 16			643.37*
Black/AA	20.22	79.78	11		Black/AA	19.29	80.71	5
White	9.24	90.76	50.7		White	7.90	92.10	43.6
Region 7				3206.44*	Region 17			693.05*
Black/AA	23.73	76.27	17.5		Black/AA	15.78	84.22	6.9

The Discipline Gap

White	10.93	89.07	52.2		White	5.93	94.07	32.7
Region 8				1520.64*	Region 18			433.74*
Black/AA	22.79	77.21	20.3		Black/AA	16.71	83.29	4.5
White	9.00	91	55		White	6.98	93.02	26.5
Region 9				599.82*	Region 19			90.20*
Black/AA	23.22	76.78	7.8		Black/AA	9.49	90.51	2.6
White	9.0	91	60		White	5.51	94.49	6.7
Region 10				6149.78*	Region 20			1530.27*
Black/AA	13.66	86.34	18.7		Black/AA	15.33	84.67	6.1
White	6.33	93.67	29.6		White	9.61	93.39	18.9

* $p < .001$

Source: TEA Website Discipline Data Products

APPENDIX B

Descriptive Statistics of Students Receiving Out of School Suspensions (OSS) During the 2013-14 School Year by Ethnicity and ESC

Kemp-Graham & Templeton.

ESC	% Received OSS	% Did not Receive OSS	% in Sample	χ^2	ESC	% Received OSS	% Did not Receive OSS	% in Sample	χ^2
State				81275.04*	Region 10				13830.80*
Black/AA	11.55	88.45	12.7		Black/AA	10.42	89.58	18.7	
White	3.94	96.06	29.3		White	1.94	98.06	29.6	
Region 1				16.685*	Region 11				11708.34*
Black/AA	5.04	94.96	.002		Black/AA	11.63	88.37	14.5	
White	2.30	97.70	.016		White	2.41	97.59	42.3	
Region 2				286.94*	Region 12				2724.32*
Black/AA	9.54	90.46	2.6		Black/AA	10.59	89.41	19.6	
White	3.01	96.99	21		White	2.87	97.23	41.3	
Region 3				600.67*	Region 13				4542.73*
Black/AA	11.18	88.82	9.0		Black/AA	8.49	91.51	7.2	

The Discipline Gap

White	5.65	94.35	32.9		White	1.59	98.41	39	
Region 4				19323.37*	Region 14				155.42*
Black/AA	13.08	86.92	19.2		Black/AA	3.97	96.03	8	
White	4.66	95.34	22.8		White	1.49	98.51	52.6	
Region 5				4055.41*	Region 15				61.51*
Black/AA	16.45	83.55	27		Black/AA	3.79	96.21	2	
White	4.46	95.54	50		White	1.20	98.80	38	
Region 6				2157.94*	Region 16				1376.10*
Black/AA	9.36	89.64	11		Black/AA	9.20	90.80	5	
White	2.62	97.38	50.7		White	2.39	97.61	43.6	
Region 7				3449.93*	Region 17				1056.80*
Black/AA	10.84	89.16	17.5		Black/AA	8.77	91.23	6.9	
White	2.70	97.30	52.2		White	1.39	98.61	32.7	
Region 8				1072.04*	Region 18				618.49*
Black/AA	7.81	92.19	20.3		Black/AA	12.61	87.39	4.5	

Kemp-Graham & Templeton.

White	1.61	98.39	55		White	3.58	96.42	26.5	
Region 9				817.69*	Region 19				49.43*
Black/AA	9.55	90.45	7.8		Black/AA	5.33	94.67	2.6	
White	1.41	98.59	60		White	3.09	96.91	6.7	
Region 10				13830.80*	Region 20				2345*
Black/AA	9.17	90.83	6.1		Black/AA	9.17	90.83	6.1	
White	2.55	97.45	18.9		White	2.55	97.45	18.9	

* $p < .001$

Source: TEA Website Discipline Data Products

**THE IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND MUSIC
PARTICIPATION ON THE READING ACHIEVEMENT OF
SECONDARY STUDENTS**

Chetonya Landry Ed. D.

Educational Administration and Foundations
Texas Southern University, Counselor Fort Bend ISD

Lacey Reynolds Ed. D.

Associate Professor, Health and Kinesiology,
Texas Southern University

Danita Bailey-Perry, Ed. D.

Professor Educational Administration and Foundations
Texas Southern University

Dwalah Fisher, Ed. D.

Associate Professor. Health and Kinesiology,
Texas Southern University

Ingrid Haynes-Mayes, Ph. D.

Associate Professor, Curriculum and Instruction,
Texas Southern University

Delila Davis, Ed. D.

Assistant Professor, Curriculum and Instruction,
Texas Southern University

Debborah Dianna Ligon

Ed. D., Klein ISD, Curriculum and Instruction,
Texas Southern University

Hope Luster-Calhoun, Ed. D.

Klein ISD, Curriculum and Instruction,
Texas Southern University

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of music participation on the combined reading achievement scores (Basic Understanding, Literary Elements and Techniques, Analysis and Evaluation, and Revising and Editing) of secondary students. Additionally, this study investigated the impact of the variables gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status on the combined reading achievement scores (Basic Understanding, Literary Elements and Techniques, and Analysis and Evaluation) of secondary students.

This study provides empirical evidence regarding the positive influence of music participation on reading achievement. As policy makers, superintendents, and administrators seek effective means of enhancing student achievement, data collected from this study can provide evidence regarding the influence of music on cognitive learning among eleventh grade students in academic content areas. The content validity procedure was used to validate the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) examination. This type of validity was established by developing test items which correlated directly with the statewide curriculum. To ensure excellent content validity, the process of aligning TAKS to the curriculum was carefully conducted and included numerous committees that consisted of teachers, Texas Education Agency staff members, and a test development specialist.

INTRODUCTION

Reading has been a part of the American educational structure since the 17th century (Rippa, 1997). Initially, reading was taught for the primary purpose of sharing Christian beliefs and values. There was little joy in reading; instead, reading was viewed as a time for enlightenment. It was mainly the determination and hope to be accepted in the eyes of God that made education of primary concern for the new American settlers (Rippa, 1997). As America became an increasingly print-filled society, coupled with the birth of the compulsory school law, the teaching of reading instruction became of utmost importance.

Education was reserved for upper class or privileged children in colonial days and included reading, writing, simple math, poems, and prayers. The church furnished schooling on a charity basis only to the children of those settlers who could not afford to pay for it (Rippa, 1997). Education was a private matter and not of public concern; therefore, many children of poor families received little or no formal education. The

apprenticeship system marked the first legal attempt by the colonies to enforce a child's education (Rippa, 1997).

Ethnicity also played a major role in education during the 17th century. A plantation system attended by African American slaves dominated most of the southern colonies. Children, in both the North and South, were taught from an early age that mankind was divided naturally by race, each race having certain physical and mental characteristics which had remained fundamentally unchanged throughout history (Pruitt, 1987). Since settling in America, mankind has been divided into a racial hierarchy with the White race at the top of the hierarchy (referred to as the "Normal" or "Typical" race) and the Black race at the bottom (Cheek, 2013). The quest for knowledge could not be thwarted although it would be another 100 years before equal rights in education would be legislated throughout the nation (Cheek, 2013).

Historically, just as financial stability and ethnicity played a major role in learning to read, so did gender. The structure of education during colonial America was modeled after the European tradition. In general, the purpose of women's education in colonial America was to become skilled at household duties and chores in order to find a suitable husband (National Women's History Museum, 2007). Copied from England, the dame schools provided the first instruction for boys and sometimes the only schooling for girls (Rippa, 1997). The education of African American slaves, both male and female, was forbidden in many of the American colonies. In most of the South during colonial times, the education of slaves was strictly forbidden (National Women's History Museum, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Music Education

While the world of music education experienced great gains, it also faced many obstacles. Some of the obstacles included The Great Depression of 1929, The Back-To-The Basics Education Movement in the 1970s and 1980s, and The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The swaying of public opinion in favor of music education has not been an easy task. In contemporary America, music education in the public schools has often been regarded as an extracurricular activity without a significant relationship to academic performance.

Despite the fact that quite a number of research studies reported a positive correlation between music participation and academic success, many schools continued to reduce or eliminate funding for school music

programs. In numerous cases, music programs were not judged as a high priority when compared to reading, writing, and mathematics. Music programs were frequently sacrificed when school budgets became strained. In recent years, many lawmakers have placed a strong emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education while the music departments at many schools are beginning to shrink (Czarnecki, 2015).

Numerous studies indicated that music participation has a positive impact on academic achievement (Babo, 2004). However, not all schools have access to music education. Many school districts are cutting music education programs as they seek to reduce expenditures or reallocate funds. Instead, of investing in fine arts programs, school districts tend to spend funds on tested subjects that are measured. According to a new study, the annual cost for a comprehensive K-12 music education program is only about \$187 per student annually (Parker, 2012).

Secondary Level Reading Achievement

According to Bottoms (2004), over the past five years more than 15 million high school students have graduated from high school reading below the basic level. In a report by the Anne E. Casey Foundation, one out of three fourth grade students scored below basic level on the 2009 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Reading Test. According to the 2013 Nation's Report Card, reading scores were higher in 2013 in comparison to all previous assessments at grade 8, and all but the 2011 assessment at grade 4. In an effort to combat poor academic achievement, U. S. President Barack Obama, along with members of his administrative team, implemented several academic incentives in recent years. Race to the Top is one of the many educational reforms implemented by the Obama administration.

Through the years, there have been a number of changes made in the systems for teaching reading in an attempt to make learning to read easier (Brown, 2011). There remains a great debate of whether to teach whole word, whole language, or phonics. The whole word approach appears to produce young children who learn to read quickly; however, many equate this method to an illusion of reading. The whole language method encourages children to memorize words rapidly.

Nelson-Royes and Reglin (2011) affirmed that the problem with reading is that many urban secondary level students have poor reading skills and do not perform well on standardized tests. Musi-Rao and Carledge (2004) posited that numerous students across the United States are having difficulty with reading and failure to read has severe consequences for students, which include lack of confidence and

motivation to learn. Reading achievement is the underpinning of all learning and a major component to achieving success in other content areas (Nelson-Royes & Reglin, 2011).

Socioeconomic Status and Reading Achievement

Socioeconomic status and reading achievement are both a national and international concern. In a 2012 State of the Union Address, President Barack Obama summarized bold education proposals intended to grow the middle class by increasing access to high-quality education. President Obama discussed (1) making quality education accessible to every child (2) taming the spiraling cost of college and (3) redesigning the country's high schools to meet the needs of the real world. One key issue in American public education (K-12) is the academic achievement gap and a continual inconsistency among low-income minority students and their advantaged White peers (Ladson-Billings, 2006). In 2011, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study results indicated that students from schools with lower proportions of free lunch eligibility scored higher, on average, than students from schools with higher proportions of free lunch eligibility.

Reading Achievement

There have been numerous successful research-based paradigms and models to approaching students with reading difficulties. The intervention programs on the lower grade levels include individual and small group support programs, school-based support programs, and formal interventions, such as reading recovery. Wanzek and Kent (2012) reviewed the research base on reading interventions and identified key context and content. This review focused on effective interventions for students with reading difficulties in fourth and fifth grade, which located 24 studies, and 14 published studies for students with learning disabilities in the upper elementary grades. The content areas of the interventions were word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and multi-component interventions (Wanzek & Kent, 2012).

Music Participation and Academic Achievement

Johnson and Memmott (2006) investigated the relationship between standardized test scores and participation in contrasting school music programs. The researchers examined relationships among standardized test results and students participating in high or low quality school music programs in different regions across the United States. One component of the study explored the relationship among third and fourth grade students' academic achievement at schools that were comparable in

socioeconomic status, size, and other issues, but had music programs that were differentiated as deficient or exemplary quality.

The results revealed that school with high quality music programs on the West coast had English test scores lower than those schools whose music programs were believed inferior. All four elementary schools with high-quality music programs scored better than those whose programs were considered to be of lower quality. The middle schools with outstanding music programs normally performed better on standardized tests than students attending schools with lower quality music programs. Students attending schools with poorer instrumental programs outscored the students who had no music at all, and the students who participated in poor choral programs scored the worst in every region. Johnson and Memmott (2006) asserted that one should address whether other variables particularly socioeconomic status might have perplexed the results.

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of music participation on the combined reading achievement scores (Basic Understanding, Literary Elements and Techniques, Analysis and Evaluation, and Revising and Editing) of secondary students. Additionally, this study investigated the impact of the variables gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status on the combined reading achievement scores of secondary students.

Research Questions

Answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. Does music participation influence the combined reading achievement scores (Basic Understanding, Literary Elements and Techniques, Analysis and Evaluation, and Revising and Editing) of secondary students?
2. Does gender influence the combined reading achievement scores (Basic Understanding, Literary Elements and Techniques, Analysis and Evaluation, and Revising and Editing) of secondary students?
3. Does ethnicity influence the combined reading achievement scores (Basic Understanding, Literary Elements and Techniques, Analysis and Evaluation, and Revising and Editing) of secondary students?
4. Does socioeconomic status influence the combined reading achievement scores (Basic Understanding, Literary Elements and Techniques, Analysis and Evaluation, and Revising and Editing) of secondary students?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated from the research hypotheses and tested in this investigation:

- HO₁: There will be no statistically significant difference between the combined reading achievement scores (Basic Understanding, Literary Elements and Techniques, Analysis and Evaluation, and Revising and Editing) of 11th grade high school students who are exposed to music participation and those who are not.
- HO₂: There will be no statistically significant difference between the combined reading achievement scores (Basic Understanding, Literary Elements and Techniques, Analysis and Evaluation, and Revising and Editing) of 11th grade high school students by gender.
- HO₃: There will be no statistically significant difference between the combined reading achievement scores (Basic Understanding, Literary Elements and Techniques, Analysis and Evaluation, and Revising and Editing) of 11th grade high school students by ethnicity.
- HO₄: There will be no statistically significant difference between the combined reading achievement scores (Basic Understanding, Literary Elements and Techniques, Analysis and Evaluation, and Revising and Editing) of 11th grade high school students by socio-economic status.

Instrumentation

The standardized test used in the study is entitled “The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)”. This test was used to measure the academic achievement of students in Mathematics, English, Science, Reading and Social Science. Students in the third through eleventh grades were required to take the TAKS examination.

More specifically, this study focused on student reading achievement. Eleventh grade students were assessed in the areas of basic understanding, literary elements and techniques, analysis and evaluation, and revising and editing. The assessment consisted of a total of eight basic understanding items, eleven literary elements and technique items, thirteen analysis and evaluation items, and twenty revising and editing items.

RESULTS

There were 778 eleventh grade students who participated in this empirical investigation. Participants from nine high schools were randomly selected. Below, the participants are described descriptively according to their gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and music participation.

Gender

As depicted in Table 1, there were 395 (or 50.8%) male eleventh grade students who participated in the study. By contrast, 383 (or 49.2%) female eleventh grade students were involved in the study.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of the Participants by Gender

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	395	50.8
Female	383	49.2
Total	778	100.0

Ethnicity

As shown in Table 2, the ethnicity variable was categorized into five distinct groups for this study. There were 163 (or 21%) eleventh grade students who identified themselves as Black and 299 (or 38.4%) of them reported their ethnicity as White. On the other hand, 113 (or 14.5%) students indicated their ethnic identity as Hispanic and 181 (or 23.3%) as Asian. Finally, 22 (or 2.8%) eleventh grade students revealed their ethnicity as “Other.”

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of the Participants by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Black	163	21.0
White	299	38.4
Hispanic	113	14.5
Asian	181	23.3
Other	22	2.8
Total	778	100.0

Socioeconomic Status

As showcased in Table 3, the socioeconomic status of the eleventh grade student participants was classified into two categories. There were 612 (or 78.7%) eleventh grade students who were not eligible for free or reduced lunch. In comparison, there were 166 (or 21.3%) of the participants who were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of the Participants by SES

SES	Number	Percent
No	612	78.7
Yes	166	21.3
Total	778	100.0

Music Participation

As highlighted in Table 4, there were 386 (or 49.6%) eleventh grade students who participated in the band. Likewise, there were 392 students (or 50.4%) who did not participate in the band.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of the Participants by Music Status

Music	Number	Percent
Participated	386	49.6
Did not Participate	392	50.4
Total	778	100.0

Summary of All Hypotheses

There were four statistical hypotheses tested in this investigation. All the hypotheses were tested for differences between the four components of reading achievement of eleventh grade students across gender, ethnicity, SES and music participation.

In hypothesis one, the variable music participation was found to have a statistically significant effect on the combined reading scores of basic understanding, and as well as revising and editing of eleventh grade students. In addition, male and female students were found to differ with regard to their reading achievement scores with respect to revising and editing.

Moreover, in hypothesis three, ethnicity was found to have a significant impact on the combined reading scores of basic understanding, literary elements and techniques, analysis and evaluation and revising and editing. Finally, hypothesis four revealed that the combined reading

scores were different across socioeconomic status for basic understanding, literary elements and techniques, and analysis and evaluation (See Table 5).

Table 5: Summary of All Hypotheses

Null Hypotheses	Pillai's Value	F Value	DF	P	Conclusion
HO ₁	.025	4.885	4/773	.001***	Significant
HO ₂	.014	2.698	4/773	.030*	Significant
HO ₃	.044	2.143	16/3092	.005**	Significant
HO ₄	.040	8.127	4/773	.000***	Significant

*Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at the .01 level

***Significant at the .001 level

CONCLUSION

One of the most significant findings of the present study was the influence of music participation on the reading performance of secondary (11th grade) students with regard to basic understanding, literary elements and techniques, analysis and evaluation and revising and editing. Specifically, eleventh grade students who participated in the band performed better in reading than those who did not participate in the band, especially in the areas of basic understanding and revising and editing.

The present findings are consistent with those of Johnson and Memmott (2006) and Southgate and Roscigne (2009). These researchers found that students who participated in some aspects of music performed better academically than those who do not participate in music. A plausible explanation for these findings might be that students who are engaged in music are exposed to teaching strategies which emphasize reinforcement. Because of this, music students tend to use the repeating process until they gradually achieve their academic goal, in this case, their reading performance.

Another interesting finding, of the current study, was the significant impact that the variable gender had on the reading performance of eleventh grade students. To be sure, female eleventh grade students outperformed their male counterparts in reading, particularly in the area of revising and editing. These findings parallel

those of Conrad-Curry (2010) and Topping, Samuels, and Paul (2008). The above researchers found that female students performed better in reading than male students.

On the other hand, the present findings are not consistent with those of Prado and Plourde (2011). These researchers found that the posttest reading scores of male students were higher than those of their female peers. Additionally, in their study, Topping, Samuels, and Paul (2008) found that in some instances male students scored higher in reading than female students, but overall females did better. A reasonable explanation for gender differences in reading probably can be explained by grade level, type of reading materials, reading strategy implemented, and teaching styles.

Finally, another significant finding of this study pertains to the effect that socioeconomic status had on the reading performance of eleventh grade high school students. Particularly, eleventh grade high school students who were not eligible for free or reduced lunch performed better in reading than those who were eligible for free or reduced lunch in the areas of basic understanding, literary elements and techniques, and analysis and evaluation.

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**EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL
FACTORS ON AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN
DISCIPLINARY ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

James E. Thomas, EdD
Training Apparatus Consulting

Jennifer T. Butcher, PhD
Associate Professor, Lamar University

Freddie Titus, EdD
Assistant Professor, Lamar University

ABSTRACT

Ensuring the quality education of adolescent African American males is important for any school that educates this population of students. The purpose of this phenomenological narrative study was to examine the influence of environmental factors on adolescent African-American males in Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP). The study explored the influence of the domestic environment, educational atmosphere, and the community in which these students lived, as well as the impact this had on the educational wellbeing of the student. The study also identified positive elements of the lived experiences of the African American adolescent and ways to help reinforce positive behavior. A phenomenological narrative method was used to relay the results of the study, involving the ideas of five voluntary participants to answer questions that encompassed the common themes of the African American adolescent attending a DAEP. Based on collective data of all participants, three recurring themes emerged: environmental factors have impacted the domestic life of African American students, environmental factors have impacted the school atmosphere of African American students, and environmental factors have impacted the community life of African American students.

INTRODUCTION

Unity is the great need of the hour – the great need of this hour. Not because it sounds pleasant or because it makes us feel good, but because it's the only way we can overcome the essential deficit that exists in this country. I'm not talking about a budget deficit. I'm not talking about a trade deficit. I'm not talking about a deficit of good ideas or new plans. I'm talking about a moral deficit. I'm talking about an empathy deficit. I'm talking about an inability to recognize ourselves in one another; to understand that we are our brother's keeper; we are our sister's keeper; that, in the words of Dr. King, we are all tied together in a single garment of destiny. We have an empathy deficit when we're still sending our children down corridors of shame – schools in the forgotten corners of America where the color of your skin still affects the content of your education.

—President Barack Obama, then Senator Obama speaking at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta Georgia, 2008 (The Ebenezer Sermon, 2008)

Recognized first by the Children's Defense Fund in 1975, Gregory and Thompson (2010) noticed that the intersection of race and discipline have been documented for decades. A number of possible hypotheses have been proposed as mechanisms to account for rates of disciplinary disparity by race and ethnicity, including poverty, differential rates of inappropriate or disruptive behavior in school settings, and cultural mismatch or racial stereotyping (Skiba et al., 2011). Skiba, Eckes, and Brown (2009/2010) thought it was disturbing that although *Brown v. Board of Education* 1954 changed the laws, there was not a legal remedy to rectify the challenges still faced by African American students that would call to bear those issues that created the most disparate circumstances for this population of Americans. Skiba et al. (2009/2010) noted that educational administrators were not faced with trying to determine if they have the right to address school issues related to discipline, but their dilemma comes in trying to figure out how. Researchers also suggested that Blacks received harsher penalties for offenses committed at school than do their White counterparts that commit the same offenses (Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009). Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) suggested that early experimentation with sexual activity, drug usage, violence and crime, and dropout rates are issues that plague the African American adolescent community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the relationship among problems in children and how their early manifestation affects development is important for preventing poor outcomes in adolescents that includes delinquency, violence, substance use, teenage pregnancy, and school dropout (Montague, Enders, Cavendish, & Castro, 2011). The researchers noted that many schools have faced an increasing dropout rate, low performance on standardized tests, and questioning from administrators of whether or not teachers are prepared to face these challenges. Farmer (2010) found that year after year, students graduate without the socio-moral skills necessary to negotiate moral decision-making, which is at the heart of moral formation. Farmer also stated that schools, which deny their role as moral transmitter, become blind to their own influence on youth.

School Environmental Factors

According to Farmer (2010), schools provide a context or moral space for youth to develop their identity; however, with the racialized ideology, language, and practices that promote Black youth criminality, criminalized schools become a racialized, classed, and gendered moral space that feeds into the school-to-prison pipeline. Farmer suggested that a portion of Black youth would end up in prison because of what they encountered while attending and developing in an educational environment. Farmer stated the following:

The criminalization of schools referred to a combination of reactive disciplinary policies, surveillance, metal detectors, unwarranted searching and lockdowns that reflected the contemporary criminal justice system within the school environment; the combination of policies send youth on a trajectory that lead to prison. (p. 367)

African Americans and disproportionate discipline. Wald and Losen (2003) indicated that Black students are more likely than their White counterparts to be sanctioned by schools. Black students face the concern of being reprimanded more severely and more often than their counterparts. Even more, this population of students represents a higher percentage of those sanctioned by educational institutions. Nationally, in 2003, Black students were suspended at a rate 2.6 times higher than White students. They also added that even as the number of suspensions had increased for Blacks over time, the overall disparities between those groups have also continued to increase. Walden and Losen (2003) stated that between 1972 and 2000, the percentage of white students suspended

annually for more than a day rose from 3.1 percent to 5.09 percent. During the same period, the percentage for black students rose from 6.0 percent to 13.2 percent. Although suspensions are disproportionately distributed amongst students of color, the students sanctioned by new laws are just as surprising (Walden & Losen, 2003).

Thompson (2011) believed one must challenge the view that society takes as it relates to the most alienated of this world from every socio-economic perspective: domestic, work, and school. Skiba et al. (2011) declared that a number of possible hypotheses could account for the disproportionate rates of disciplinary disparity African American adolescents faced. The researchers believed one such cause of disproportionality is poverty and low socioeconomic status. Minority students also have high rates of stress because of their representation and relationship with poverty. Countless investigations into African Americans and school behavior have consistently showed that there is not any evidence to justify the rates of school discipline. Skiba et al. also mentioned that some evidence existed that teachers made decisions about a student's ability to achieve based on racial factors.

Domestic Environmental Factors

There were a multitude of problems that affected an individual's ability to function properly while in an educational setting (Lundberg, 2006). One current means of addressing the persistent achievement gap and improving school environment in urban communities has been to focus on increased parent involvement (Hayes, 2011). The researcher looked at parental involvement as a means of addressing the gap between African American and white students because of the patterns of student success that persisted with parental engagement.

Parental involvement. Many of those factors may be related to the value education was given in the home or how the parents encouraged their children about attaining a quality education at school and creating an avenue for future ambitions (Hayes, 2011). The researcher also believed that a parent being involved with interventions is more helpful in allowing a child to achieve a sense of independence, especially when engaging others. Hayes revealed that the more education a parent has the more involved they are in the educational process of their children. Parental involvement was important in predicting the involvement of

parents in school and domestic activities. This was a strong predictor in showing that schools involving parents would help children experience a more involved parent as it relates to education. Hayes (2011) stated the following:

With educational aspirations contributing to parents' level of home and school involvement with their high school adolescents, school counselors, school psychologists, and other highly trained school personnel can assist both low and high SES urban African-American parents by empowering them to set, maintain, and communicate high educational aspirations to their high school adolescents. (p. 163)

Unquestionably, the greater the parents' educational expectation was for the child, the more likely that child was to excel in education (Hayes, 2011). Hayes noted that African American homes have always viewed education as a means of mobility and the higher the expectation were for individual children, and the more parental involvement, the associations for independence increased as well as academic accomplishment. Hayes added that the socioeconomic status of the parent did not have to be high in order for there to be high expectations for the child. Regardless of what schools profess, Hayes believed parents should stay connected with their children and keep high expectations for their children's academic involvement from all facets of education because it was important for the success of the child.

Adult involvement in a child's life. The thrust of an individual child's life cannot be predicted; however, the ability to have a dependable adult in their life greatly improved upon that child's ability to succeed (Kirp, 2011). The researcher noted that in order for a child to be successful, the adult love, caring, and acuteness to detail had to be there for a long period of time. Kirp found that students who were most susceptible to crime were those without a stable foundation or adult in their lives. The researcher indicated that the most important aspect of a child's life is having a caring adult in their life, and adults should seek out kids who would be most at risk and then work on providing a considerably stable platform from which to stand.

Undeniably, involvements with responsible adults and accountability to home and school environments had positive impacts on students as communities sought to reduce violence (Pickens, 2011). Oravec, Osteen, Sharpe, and Randolph (2011) believed more research was needed to explore the community factors that were associated with the child's social competence. The researchers believed that witnessing or being the victim of community violence may lead to parents feeling

distressed and largely overwhelmed, thus prohibiting them from providing children with an environment that provided safety and security.

Community Environmental Factors

Martin et al. (2011) showed the effects of structural racism, poor economic factors, the overall makeup of the surrounding community, and the cultural responses contributing to the crime that has plagued the Black community. The researchers suggested that Black Americans have a greater association with crime because of their exposure to the environmental conditions that surround crime infested areas. Mixing communities caused scholars to propose that communities of Blacks and Whites would look much the same along the lines of race if Blacks lived in communities that resembled their counterparts (Martin et al., 2011).

Crime associations related to community factors. Farmer (2010) noticed that media fed into the societal perception of black youth and caused society to respond to the negative stigma that was created. The decade from 1985-1994 negatively defined black youth with a large number of juvenile homicides combined with growing media coverage of negative events. This is important to note since Farmer believed the adolescent years were a period that helped to define the identity of individuals from a socioeconomic and a psychological perspective. Farmer noted that adolescents were positioned in a stage of life that preoccupied them with attempting to find out who they were; thusly, making an environment conducive to affirming or confirming the stages of the adolescents' identity. This is important, because the lack of social capital lends way to youth having maladaptive behaviors (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007).

The Black Church. Barnes (2011) spoke of the plight of African American communities in times of turmoil and economic demise and how the Black Church helped those communities to survive. The survival strategy that was spoken of by Barnes dealt with bearing the responsibility of the community together and sharing experiences while awaiting the better times to come. In contrast to that thought, liberation strategy allows for blacks to see a way out of the economic oppression and to seek empowerment through economic education that allows them to thrive and not just survive (Barnes, 2011). This model also mentioned by Barnes gave face to improving the community through Church-based strategies. Furthermore, it allowed the individuals facing poverty to excel through climbing the ladder of equality and financial stability along with self-efficacy.

Barnes (2011) indicated that one way to positively impact the Black community is for Black churches to create credit unions that can

respond rapidly when communities were impacted negatively due to economic challenges. The researcher also mentioned the need for empowerment in the Black community should not be a focus that was placed solely on the Black church, but should be placed on the shoulders of the broader society to address.

Positive relationships and the impact on youth. Powell and Marshall (2011) found that positive relationships had particular impact on the academic success of students of low socioeconomic status and those with Hispanic and African American backgrounds. Moreover, the mentoring relationships that were created were valuable to organizations such as the Big Brothers and Big Sisters and served to assist the developmental and emotional needs of the youth participants (Anda, 2001). Fullan (2007) gave an example of the direction to look when viewing learning. The first recognition that must be taken into account is that the road to change has been very difficult and it is getting tougher. Secondly, those involved must be willing to explore the field and dive into the deep forces involved with teachers and their ability to teach in diverse working conditions that challenge the intellectual capacity of the students' ability to engage in learning (Fullan, 2007).

PURPOSE STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological narrative study was to determine the influence of environmental factors on African-American males in disciplinary alternative education programs (DAEP). Three specific research questions were used as a guide for this study:

1. How does the home environment influence adolescent African American males' classroom performance?
2. What challenges or barriers have adolescent African American males experienced in the community that contributed to their classroom performance?
3. What student-specific interventions do adolescent African American males find the most and least effective?

METHODOLOGY

The design of this research was qualitative and used phenomenological narrative methodology. Creswell (2013) stated that narrative stories look at the individual and then shed light on how that individual views themselves by telling of the individual experiences. Creswell noted that qualitative research allowed the major characteristics to be seen at different stages through exploring a problem by outlining a specific understanding of the phenomenon. A phenomenological study examines the meaning of a group of individuals and the lived experiences

of a particular phenomenon. The individuals in the study may look at their lives as a chronology. They may take the approach of viewing themselves as they once were, what they are, or how they want to be (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Participants and Setting

The participants for this study involved a former African American male DAEP student, a parent of an African American male who attended a DAEP, an interventionist, a teacher, and an administrator. The participants came from three large districts located near a large metropolitan area in Texas and each had a diverse demographic of students. The largest school district was largely Hispanic, and according to 2009-2010 data from the Texas Education Agency website, African Americans make up 27.1%, Hispanics 61.6%, and Caucasians 7.9% of the student population. According to the same data, 79.2% of the district was economically disadvantaged. The district had 202,773 students in the 2009-2010 academic year (TEA, 2010).

The second largest school district in this study was largely Caucasian, and according to 2009-2010 data from the Texas Education Agency website, African Americans make up 6.8%, Hispanics 28.1%, and Caucasians 60.8% of the student population. According to the same data, 35.8% of the district was economically disadvantaged. The district had 49,629 students in the 2009-2010 academic year (TEA, 2010). The smallest school district in this study was largely Hispanic, and according to 2009-2010 data from the Texas Education Agency website, African Americans make up 17.9%, Hispanics 52.5%, and Caucasians 27.9% of the student population. According to the same data, 63.0% of the district was economically disadvantaged. The district had 20,954 students in the 2009-2010 academic year (TEA, 2010).

DATA COLLECTION

Creswell (2013) suggested that the researcher must be willing to use rigorous data collection during the study and “also frames the study within the assumptions and characteristics of the qualitative approach to research” (p. 53). Creswell also noted that the researcher starts the study with a single focus then employs methods, data collection, data analysis, and report writing. During this process, the researcher asks study specific questions and depends on the participants to give meaning behind their experiences. Once this process is complete, the researcher analyzes all the data and reports the findings. In the current study, the researchers collected data by audio recording the interviews that were conducted in person and through the use of electronic communications. The interviews

were scripted and each interviewee was asked a guided set of questions. The audiotape recordings were later transcribed into field texts.

FINDINGS

The major findings of this study are summarized in relation to the research questions. Research question one explored how the home environment influences the adolescent African American males' classroom performance. The authors found that there were two major influences on the adolescent African American male behavioral classroom performance: the lack of guidance at home and no positive male role model in the home.

With respect to research question two, which investigated the challenges or barriers adolescent African American males experienced in the community that attributed to their behavioral classroom performance, the authors found that gang involvement and no community support were challenges the African American male had to overcome. The third research question investigated the student specific interventions adolescent African American males found the most and the least effective. The authors found that race matters and the prevalence of the school to prison pipeline impacted adolescent African-American males.

CONCLUSIONS

This qualitative study investigated the influence of environmental factors on the behavior of adolescent African American males at a disciplinary alternative education program. During this study, it was evident that there were factors in the environment that impacted the lives of adolescent African American males. Based on the findings from each individual interview, the conclusions are discussed in reference to the research questions that guided the study.

Research question one. How does the home environment influence adolescent African American males' classroom performance? It can be concluded that the lack of a positive male role model in the home made it difficult for these males to determine what decisions to make and how to analyze the decision from the perspective of being a positive and productive male. The research suggests that a large population of students that end up in alternative education programs are products of a single parent household, often times being raised by a mother that is absent from the home due to the need of having two jobs. The absence of the mother because of her need to work and support the family leads to a lack of guidance at home. Thusly, leaving the adolescent African American child to find other avenues in which to learn how to make decisions and many times those other avenues are not

healthy and conducive to the overall benefit of the child. Hayes (2011) stated that parental involvement with the child has a direct impact on how that child views education and behavior at school.

Research question two. What challenges or barriers have adolescent African American males experienced in the community that attributed to their classroom performance? Based on the findings of the research, the presence of gangs or cliques in the communities in which the children are raised continued to be a barrier for them to overcome. These negative influences in the lives of these children are present in the schools and communities these students live in. The research suggested that schools are perpetuating the cycle by continuing to send students that are already prone to enter gangs to alternative campuses where their behavior is only continuing to grow more violent because these children are being allowed to congregate on one campus that funnels children into a school-to-prison pipeline. Many of the students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and live in urban communities that have a low prospect of jobs and are infested with drugs and crimes, many of which are violent crimes. Relatedly, Hatt (2011) stated that this population of children place a higher emphasis on their ability to become effective drug dealers than on their ability to receive a quality education that will lead to meaningful employment. Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, and Valentine (2009) believed the environment in these schools had a significant impact on adolescent African-Americans contact with the juvenile justice system.

Research question three. What student specific interventions do adolescent African American males find the most and the least effective? Some of the participants in this study were adamant that race was a factor when considering the adolescent African American child and their treatment at a disciplinary alternative education program. They believed the lack of cultural understanding of the African American child coupled with a lack of socioeconomic understanding of his circumstances led to the racial factors affecting the decisions made by faculty in relation to the student. They also believed the school-to-prison pipeline was a reinforced aspect of the school. The similarity of the school mimicking that of a penal institution was always a reminder for the African American student that attended a disciplinary alternative education program. Powell and Marshall (2011) noted that the nurturing of positive relationships had a significant impact on the academic outcomes of African American adolescent students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study provide disciplinary alternative education program faculty and staff with a sound understanding of what environmental factors influenced adolescent African American males attending these campuses. They also provided information to what these children face each and every day of their lives. Suggestions to implement for practice include the following:

1. Provide information about understanding and educating adolescent African American males that can extend beyond the disciplinary alternative education program and into the main classroom.
2. Provide educational training to teachers and staff on the importance of culturally understanding African American children and the environmental factors that influence their lives.
3. Create programs that focus on the following three areas: preventing, shaping, and sustaining a successful measure of academic success for adolescent African American males. These programs must involve the parent, the child, the school, and the community. The program should serve as a constant reinforcement of positive, socially acceptable behavior. The aforementioned program must have metrics designed to track performance and progress on the part of all interested parties.
4. Provide detailed training to school personnel, parents and guardians, and community leaders on the impact of gangs, drugs, violence, and crime on the adolescent African American male community.
5. Constantly encourage adult education for the parents in order that they may be able to improve their socioeconomic conditions so that they can provide a greater quality of life for their families.
6. Provide positive peer-to-peer interactions for these students to engage in.
7. Develop programs that focus on preventing negative relationships between the adolescent African American male and the community. The program would also focus on shaping the African American student into a productive member of the community by encouraging that child to engage in social activism, charitable giving, to include the giving of time and emotional capital. Finally, encourage the child to understand that the fostering of positive relationships between adolescent African American males with schools, businesses, parents, and

- community leaders causes the entire community to experience a victory that has a multi-generational impact.
8. Provide positive African American male role models for these children to observe daily.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study gave some insight into the lives of five individuals who believed the factors that affect adolescent African American males are worth understanding. The process of meeting and interviewing the individuals allowed the authors to be forever changed by their insight into what happens to children once they are subjected to a disciplinary alternative education program. It was apparent that these children are worth understanding and the schools have a responsibility to teach them with the same level of dignity and respect that other children with different circumstances are afforded. With the right support, the problems plaguing adolescent African American males can be corrected and the positive self-worth of the child can be exposed.

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**I AIN'T GOT NO PENCIL: USING DIALOGUE JOURNAL
WRITING TO IMPROVE AFRICAN AMERICAN SCHOOL-
AGED CHILDREN'S WRITING FLUENCY**

Ingrid Haynes, Ph. D.,

Associate Professor and Chairperson
Texas Southern University

Delilah Davis, Ed. D.,

Assistant Professor
Texas Southern University

Lacey Reynolds, Ed. D.,

Associate Professor
Texas Southern University

Summer Pannell, Ph.D.,

Assistant Professor
Texas Southern University

Dwalah Fisher, Ed. D.,

Associate Professor
Texas Southern University

ABSTRACT

This study looked at Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW) as a method to improve African American students' understanding of the formal English needed to be successful in school and in the business world. Forty-six 4th-grade students in a rural school participated in this study. Students were required to write two journal entries per week over a twelve-week period. The data included students' journal entries, open-ended questions, interviews, and the results of the pre- and post-study questionnaires and the pre- and posttests on writing performance. The findings showed that the DJW project improved the students' writing fluency and reduced the number of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) grammatical features on the post-writing project. The teachers and students exhibited positive attitudes towards the project and confirmed that DJW was an effective tool for self-understanding and development of student's writing skills. Students indicated that DJW allowed them to see deviations in their own writing and reflect on revisions consistent with Standard American English, which strengthened their confidence in writing. Further, students explained that it enhanced their self-confidence in understanding their own language features in a nonthreatening environment. Research on the instructional practices for improving the writing and speaking skills of African American students who speak AAVE is needed to further deepen our understanding of it and its influence on student achievement. This paper reports the results of a study examining the effects of dialogue journal writing (DJW) on students in terms of the quality of their words written. However, we were trying to determine their level of usage on specific AAVE features in their writing.

INTRODUCTION

"I ain't got no pencil" is a phrase that many teachers have probably heard minority children in schools say on a regular basis. It is a vernacular phrase that clearly explains that the student does not have a pencil and needs for the teachers to provide him/her with a writing utensil in order to do their work. The different dialects children bring to the school environment and how schools deal with these differences has been a polarizing topic among educators. Many educators have been trained on Cultural Sensitivity, Multicultural Education and diversity in the classroom; however, there is a lack of training in the area of language diversity. With the exception of students who are learning English as a second language, all students come to school with language patterns that

may not be considered standard, especially African American students (Champion, Cobb-Roberts, & Bland-Stewart, 2012).

Champion, Cobb-Roberts, and Bland-Stewart (2012) conducted a study on teachers' perception of AAVE. The participants were 136 undergraduate, pre-service education majors. The instrument used was a modified version of the Language Attitude Scale (LAS) and the results indicated that European pre-service teachers had a negative view of AAVE; however, African American and Hispanic pre-service teachers viewed the language variations more positively. Numerous studies have addressed the beliefs, attitudes, and expectations toward AAVE and the results indicate views are often perceived as negative. McClendon (2014) conducted a study on Principal's perception of AAVE in their schools. In this research, the participants confirmed the undesirable usage of AAVE amongst their students. Conversely, the investigations revealed when the principals developed a clearer understanding of the use of AAVE, they were better able to promote instructional strategies with the teachers to ensure successful bimodality in both written and oral language with students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Based on our collective experiences as researchers, practitioners and school administrators we concur that perception is negative when principals and teachers lack the understanding of the language variations and culture that these children bring to school. The ability to speak and write Standard American English (SAE) is critical to the advancement and success of students both in school and in society. However, one's home language is equally important, which supports the notion that language is pragmatic or situational. The idea of addressing AAVE in the classroom is a concept that is widely controversial among educators. Many linguists have argued the degree to which AAVE plays a role in language development but suggest that features are a part of a language population of American children from certain environments (Baugh 1979; Labov, Cohen, Robins and Lewis 1968; Fasold 1972; Labov 1972; Mitchell-Kerman 1969; Wolfram 1969).

Labov (2012) reported that many students in schools today speak some form of vernacular English and are often told they speak 'wrong' or 'bad' English. He claimed that the perception of most people is that Standard English equals "good grammar," and this belief is embedded in institutions, especially in educational settings and in the business world. Because Standard American English is used as the main form of communication in America, this particular dialect is firmly associated with public life. These issues directly affect the academic

achievement of African American students. For the last decade, there has been renewed focus on improving the instruction of children at risk in reading and writing. In previous years, "at risk" was a label given to students who were considered to be non-readers; today, the term at risk refers to the students' environment, which hinders the student from learning (O'Brian, 2000; Walker & Golly, 1999).

Labov (2012) further explained that many instructional programs have produced disappointing results in teaching African American students to read and write. He also claims that many have even complicated the process for the struggling learners by offering approaches that are philosophically different from those offered in the classroom.

Many linguists suggest that there is a need for school curriculums that focus on language variations and dialect (Norton & Toohey, 2004). This particular curriculum would provide socially accepted approaches for teaching students from various dialects; however, there are still many who question whether AAVE has a place in the classroom. The question then becomes, should we accept all dialects, except AAVE? This particular study specifically investigates the effectiveness of an English Language Learner (ELL) methodology, dialogue journal writing (Peyton & Staton, 1993), on African American students writing skills.

Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW)

The researchers wanted to implement an ELL technique that allows students to practice and improve writing skills in a nonthreatening environment. Peyton and Staton (1993) reported the first dialogue journal study began in 1979 as a classic research project. It was a shared vision between the teacher and researcher with regard to the theory and effects of personal journal writing. Leslee Reed was a sixth-grade teacher in Los Angeles who wrote back and forth in personal journals to her students who were from diverse backgrounds each day for one school year. The researcher had heard of Reed's technique and became very interested in studying Reed's classroom. Reed was not initially interested as much in Staton's agenda as she was in finding out if the dialogue journal had been helpful to Eduardo, a struggling student in her class. Eduardo had moved up from first-grade reading level to sixth-grade reading level in six months, and his behavior had improved. Reed's own personal theory for Eduardo's improvement was based on two assumptions: (1) structure- the student knew the routine and the routine was consistent, and (2) support – the student could write about anything in his journal, and it allowed him to express himself and get immediate feedback from the teacher.

Directly addressing the variations of language in a non-threatening manner has proven to be an effective method for improving language and writing skills among second language learners. DJW has the potential to provide a non-threatening context where students and teachers can communicate in order to improve students' reading and writing skills of formal English. DJW is a written conversation in which ELLs and their teacher communicate regularly. Students write as much as they want on any topic, and the teacher writes back in language that is appropriate for the individual learner's proficiency level, thus increasing the likelihood of comprehension. In the beginning, students who have limited vocabulary and poor writing skills often write only a few sentences, while students who have a large vocabulary and greater command of Standard American English often write several sentences on a given topic. Students who lack the knowledge of Standard American English and who have limited vocabulary may not attempt to respond to the prompts or may elect to draw pictures to clarify the meaning of their message. DJW focuses on meaning rather than form and provides a method for developing students' linguistic competence, their understanding of course content and the ability to communicate in written English" (Peyton, 2000). In short, students and their teacher become engaged in meaningful, non-threatening dialogue through the written page.

What is African American Vernacular English (AAVE)?

All ethnic groups have a language and/or dialect that are germane to that population. AAVE is a dialect spoken by many African Americans living in North America. The usage of AAVE crosses all socioeconomic status (SES) levels; however, it is more prevalent among individuals who are categorized as being a part of a lower SES. The AAVE dialect is a derivative of Standard English and is a regular, systematic language variety that contrasts with other dialects in terms of its grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary (Baugh & Cable, 1993; Labov 1970, 2001; Rickford & Rickford, 2007). Social and political influences have caused the evolution of the term(s) given to the languages and dialects of African Americans. The voice of Black America has been variously labeled as Black English (BE), Black Dialect, Black English Vernacular (BEV), African American English (AAE) and recently, Ebonics by non-linguists (Baugh, 1993; Dillard, 1973; Hunt, 1978). Under the umbrella of AAVE, there are three subcategories: Earlier AAVE (19th century), Rural AAVE, and Urban AAVE (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002). Terms such as "broken English" and "slang" have often been used as synonyms to describe AAVE; however these adjectives

carry a negative stigma and do not depict the same language structures that are present in AAVE.

Often individuals who show evidence of AAVE in their oral and written communication skills are perceived as unintelligent and or ignorant. The AAVE usage is not a measure of an individual's intellectual ability; rather a language variation that has historical criticism of its speakers. Smitherman (2000) referred to AAVE as "a communication system that functioned both as a resistance language and a linguistic bond of cultural and racial solidarity for those born under the lash". She further explained that AAVE speakers have a distinct speech with linguistic rules and sociolinguist norms and of interactions (p. 272). Wolfram (2004) explained that the roots of contemporary African American Vernacular English (AAVE) were no doubt established in the rural South, and its twentieth century development as a sociocultural variety is strongly associated with its use in non-Southern urban areas. **Table 1** shows the description of grammatical features of AAVE that were the focus of this study.

Table 1: Grammatical Features of AAVE

Major Structures	Grammatical Category	Grammatical Features	Examples
Verb Phrase	Copula/Auxiliary Absence	Copula and auxiliary absence involving forms of the verb “to be”	<i>She nice for She is nice</i>
	Invariant Be	The use of habitual be	<i>Sometime my ears be itching</i>
	Completive Done	use of done with the past tense of the verb	<i>She done did it; They done gone</i>
	Sequential Be done	Combination of be and done in a sentence together	<i>My ice cream be done melted by the time we get there</i>
	Remote Been	Use of been past tense form of the verb	<i>I been ate it</i>
	Simple Past Had + Verb	The use of “been” to mark an action that took place or a state that began a long time ago and is still relevant.	<i>You been paid your dues a long time ago</i>
	Irregular Verbs	Past for participle	<i>I had went</i>
		Participle for past	<i>I seen it</i>
		Bare root past form	<i>Yesterday I ran fast</i>
		Regularized past form	<i>I know it</i>

	Subject-Verb Agreement	Absence of the-s in third person singular-of simple	<i>She walk for She walks</i>
		Present of the verb Plural-s absence in the general class of noun plurals	<i>Four girl for Four girls</i>
		Generalization of is and was	<i>We is here</i>
			<i>We was watching television</i>
Negation		Multiple Negation-Absence of third Person singular 's	<i>She don't believe nothing I tell her.</i>
Nominal		Absence of possessive morpheme[s], [z], or [ez]	<i>Jack car for Jack's car</i>

(Bailey & Thomas, 1998; Hinton & Pollock, 2000; Fasold, 1972 in Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1998; Rickford, 1999; Wolfram, 1974, 2004).

The issue of African American students' language in school is a critical variable in learning because school success is largely dependent on competent usage of the language. However, we do not believe that the use of AAVE affects only African American students. The difficulty that African Americans experience in regards to language use is slowly starting to be seen in other racial groups as well. Because of the popularity of this highly marketed so-called hip-hop culture, many teens of different backgrounds and languages are trying to imitate it.

Many African American students feel that hip-hop is a part of their culture and view it as positive no matter how harsh the words are in the songs or how threatening the performers. Ibrahim (1999) focused on this very issue of students becoming Black and being Black. He conducted an ethnographic study that was based on a methodological approach called *ethnographic of performance*. This approach is the process in which the learner tries to identify with a language and its culture through body gestures, modes of dress and style, and attitudes, performing acts of desire to identify with the target language. He examined the process of students learning AAVE as a second language, Black English as a Second Language (BESL) and their process of becoming black. The subjects used in his study were a group of continental Francophone African male and female youths in a French language high school in southwestern Ontario, Canada. Most of the students were considered to be trilingual, speaking English, French and their native language. Many experienced peer pressure to learn the language because most wanted to belong or fit in with the many activities in and out of school. Ibrahim claimed that the youths were experiencing a social imagery, which was the implication in how and with whom they identified. This in turn influenced what they linguistically and culturally learned, as well as how they learned it. The students were learning Black Stylized English (BSE), which they acquired through African American popular culture.

In previous articles concerning the language barriers affecting student achievement in public schools, Labov (1995) reported on a reading program, *The Bridge Program*, in which researchers were focusing on improving the reading skills of African American students by combining cultural and linguist approaches through instructional delivery and material. The results of the *Bridge Program* proved to be very successful; however, the researcher and developers faced much opposition due to the lack of cultural acceptance, respect and language use in the classroom in teaching African American Children (Simpkins, Holt & Simpkins, 1977).

METHODS

Setting and Participants

This study took place in a small, rural school district. There were three 4th grade classrooms, so the classes were randomly selected based on a coin toss. One class was the experimental group and one class was the control group. The classes were grouped heterogeneously, consisting of children with varying academic abilities and ethnicities.

The participants of this study were 46 African American fourth graders. Of the 46 students in the experimental group, there were fourteen boys and ten girls. In the control group there were nine boys and sixteen girls. All students were between the ages of ten and eleven years of age.

Both teachers in the study were African American and had some knowledge of AAVE. In the experimental class, the teacher was trained to effectively implement the Dialogue Journal Writing instructional method. The teacher used the methodology in conjunction with her Language Arts textbooks and worksheets as instructional tools. Students were given notebooks in which to write their daily journal entries.

Procedures for Dialogue Journal Writing Sessions

The class met once a week on Wednesday for 60 minutes over twelve weeks during one academic year. Students were given notebooks in which to write their daily journal entries. Students wrote on the top-half of the page and the teacher responded on the bottom-half of the page. During the 60 minutes, students would free write based on the dialogue generated by the teacher and student. The remaining 50 minutes of instruction would focus on grammatical features noted in the student's journals. The teacher would place their sentences on the board and then have the students identify the grammatical errors based on the standard grammatical structures of English. For example the teacher would write, "Marcus and I was walking down the street". Students would review the sentence together and discuss the rule for plural subject and verb agreement. The researchers observed that the students appeared to enjoy coming to the front of the class and correcting their sentences.

The experimental and control group instruction were monitored weekly by the researcher to ensure that the treatment was being delivered in accordance with the plan. Teachers in the experimental and control classrooms were required to keep a portfolio, log, and recordings of the students' oral communication and written communication.

RESULTS

Students were given a writing prompt at the beginning of the study and then given the same prompt in at the end of April. The students were evaluated based on two criteria: (1) the frequency of AAVE in their writing, and (2) the student's quality of writing. Two rubrics were used to assess the students' writing ability. The AAVE rubric score ranged from 1 to 4. A score of 1 suggests that the student was unable to respond to the writing prompt. A score of 4 suggested that the student showed no evidence of dialectal features reported by the researchers. However, the rubric used to evaluate the student's overall score was very different. In this particular rubric the score ranged from 1 to 4, in which the score of 4 suggested that the students used Standard American English (SAE), and the paper was well organized, contained complete sentences, remained focused on the topic, and included several details that supported the topic. All students observed had been exposed to AAVE; however, the researchers were trying to determine their levels of usage of specific AAVE features in their writing.

Means and standard deviations of the groups are presented in Table 2 and 3. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also conducted on the posttest means. Results of the ANOVA, shown in Table 4, yielded no significant difference in the results, $F(1, 43) = .256, p = .616$ for Quality Score and $F(1, 43) = 3, 520, p = .067$ for the AAVE score.

It was important to the researchers to determine if the daily DJW helped reduce AAVE features in the student's writing in the experimental group over the three-month period. The control group's mean pretest significantly exceeded the mean of the experimental pretest results. In using the AAVE's writing rubric, the students in the control group averaged a score of 3 on their writing samples, which suggested that students used some features of AAVE in their writing. However, the experimental group averaged a 2.7, which suggested a high frequency of features in their writing. A dependent sample *t*-test was conducted to assess significance of mean gain between females and males in their quality score of writing as well as the AAVE score in writing between the two groups. Table 5 indicates that there was no significant difference in quality score between females and males participating in the daily dialogue journal writing, $t = .489, p = .627$.

When looking at gender differences, the *t*-test indicated that there was no significant difference in the AAVE score between females and males participating in the dialog journal writing, $t = .409, p = .702$. Although some of the students did not show any evidence of AAVE

features in their paper, their quality score was a good representation of their writing ability set forth by the State. There was no significant statistical difference among groups with regard to their writing based on the two criteria. However, it is clearly seen in their writing samples of the experimental group that the journal writing helped to improve their overall writing performance.

Table 2: Mean Posttest Scores by Group
Writing Pretest Data (Quality Score of the Student Writing- QW)

Group	Pretest			Posttest		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Control	2.31	.9455	22	2.22	1.0660	22
Experimental	2.00	1.0215	24	2.12	1.0759	24

Table 3: Mean Posttest Scores of Group
Writing Pretest Data (AAVE Score of the Student Writing)

Group	Pretest			Posttest		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Control	3.27	.7673	22	3.36	.7267	22
Experimental	2.75	.6757	24	3.54	.5882	24

Table 4: ANOVA of Posttest Scores (AAVE Score/ Quality Score)

School	Sum of Square	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Significance of <i>F</i>	Eta Squared
AAVE Score	2.847	1	2.847	7.556	.009	.149
Group	1.326	1	1.326	3.520	.067	.076
Error	16.202	43	.377	49		
Quality - Score	21.619	1	21.619	32.201	.000	.428
Group	.172	1	.172	.256	.616	.006
Error	28.869	43	.671			

Table 5: Mean(*M*) and Standard Deviation(*SD*) and *t*-test for Quality Score and AAVE Score Writing for female and males

Variable	F	Sig.	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	M	SD
Quality Score	.002	.967	-.489	.627		
AAVE Score	.695	.409	-.409	.702		
					3.2083	1.4136
Gender Male						
Gender					3.2273	1.2318
Female						

CONCLUSION

This study did not show statistically significant improvement in students writing. However, students who participated in the experimental group reduced AAVE features and developed a positive attitude toward writing and learning about their language. In conclusion, DJW not only opened a new channel of communication, but it also provided another context for language and literacy development.

One of the major challenges of the study was the development of an instructional guide that was culturally sensitive to the teachers as well as the students. Secondly, finding the time to integrate the experimental instructional treatment in the classroom posed a challenge for the teachers due to curriculum mandates by the district. Although teachers (i.e., experimental group classroom teacher and control group classroom teacher) had the commitment to participate in study, they struggled to understand how to address AAVE grammatical variations personally and professionally. Non-African American teachers, who were not involved in the study, found the instructional method to be valuable and implemented it in their own classroom. The overall topic was a very sensitive matter in the school; however, the principal and teachers showed interest in how to address the language features that many were struggling to understand and correct.

The study demonstrates that daily dialogue journal writing is effective in improving African American fourth-grade students' writing skills. This improvement is based on the student's ability to reduce many of the AAVE features in their writings. Further, it is the direct and constant model of the teacher's response of Standard American English (SAE) in the journal that proves to be very instrumental. These beneficial outcomes were obtained even though the experimental conditions were not significantly different on measure of instructional procedures and implementation.

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PURPLE ALERT: HELPING EDUCATORS UNDERSTAND THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF ADOLESCENTS WITH MILITARY AND VETERANS PARENTS

Natalie Williamson
Doctoral Candidate
Prairie View A&M University
nwilliamson@pvamu.edu

Dr. Lucian Yates, II
Professor
Prairie View A&M University
lyates@pvamu.edu

ABSTRACT

When military service members dedicate their services to protect our great nation, they sometimes leave behind their children, move with their family, or return home physical or psychologically different which cause tensions on the children. Researches have shown that the impacts of having military parents on children are numerous and evident. The review of literature studies adolescents with military parents and the impact of age development, deployment, relocation, reintegration, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder on their well-being and specifically their educationally. There is also a focus on the double effects of missing parents on African American children. Single parents raise 67% of African American children. Of this number, parents serve their country in military roles to take care of these children. However, the mal effects are noticeable. The paper also presents recommendations for educators to understand the unique needs of adolescents of our brave service men and women and minimize the effects of the dilemma they face, so they can be successful in school.

Keywords: Adolescents, Military Parents, Age Development, Deployment, Relocation, Reintegration, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Well-being, Academic Success

INTRODUCTION

Purple Alert: Helping Educators Understand the Unique Needs of Adolescents with Military and Veteran Parents

The ultimate goal of educators is to help students reach success academically, regardless of their family background, ways of learning, socioeconomic status, parents and/or any other way that they differ from each other. According to the U.S Department of Education (2015) virtually all school districts educate children whose parents are serving or have served in the Armed Forces. Therefore, educators working with active duty military and veteran-parented children should be aware of students' unique needs to improve the quality of education and offer support when required.

Currently, 2,266,883 officers serve in the military (US Census Bureau, 2015). The 2000 census counted 208.1 million civilians 18 years and older of which 24.8 million (12.7%) were veterans (US Census Bureau, 2015). The combination of these service men and women has an approximate 1.2 million school-aged children. Eighty percent (80%) of this number attend public schools, while 20% attend private school or are home-schooled (U.S Department of Education, 2015).

There is always a need for persons to serve in the military. Hence, it is important for educators to understand how to best engage the student with military parents. Members who serve in the military have children attending public and private school in all school districts around the nation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Challenges of the Adolescent Years

“Adolescence is characterized by significant neurological, cognitive and socio-psychological development” (Moretti & Peled, 2004, p.551). The authors contended that during these adolescent years, adolescent-parent attachment has profound effects on cognitive, social, and emotional functioning. The need for secure attachment is associated with less engagement in high risk behaviors, fewer mental health problems, and enhanced social skills and coping strategies.

With these biological limitations along with school adjustment have created a combination that impedes young adolescents' transition to high school to become a potential source of stress. This stress is intense enough to make adolescents vulnerable and predisposed to psychosocial functioning problems (Duchesne & Larose, 2007).

Adding to the biological struggles faced by adolescents, are the impacts of having military parents deployed to war, continuous uprooting of the family to immigrate to new cities to accommodate their parents' military assignments, reintegration and the problems associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) of active military and veteran (Duchesne & Larose, 2007; Flake, Davis, Johnson, & Middleton, 2009; 2009; Kelley, Hock, Smith, Jarvis, Bonney & Gaffney, 2001; Aronson, Caldwell, Perkins & Pasch, 2011; Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, Jaycox, Tanielian, Burns, Ruder, & Bing, 2010).

Deployment and Children with Active Military Parents

Deployment of military members as combatants or as peacekeepers globally is becoming more frequent and longer due to the war against terrorism (Sheppard, Malatras, & Israel, 2010). Since 911, over 2 million men and women have been deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in Iraq and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan, with over 793,000 service members being deployed multiple times (Tan, 2009), thus, separating the parents from the rest of the family (Sheppard, Malatras, & Israel, 2010). Children with a parent being deployed may exhibit added anxiety, withdrawal, anger, nonconformity, along with other emotional or behavior problems in a greater extent than children whose parents are not deployed (Flake, Davis, Johnson, & Middleton, 2009; Kelley, Hock, Smith, Jarvis, Bonney & Gaffney, 2001). These behaviors are noticeably up to a year after deployment ends (Lester & Flake, 2013). Children with deployed parents also have greater academic problems (Lester & Flake, 2013).

Researchers of Adolescent-parent attachment posit that fundamental bond between a parent and child is essential to survival and development (Moretti & Peled, 2004; Duchesne & Larose, 2007). During this phase, the child seeks comfort or nurturance from an attachment figure (Louie & Cromer, 2014). This comfort and nurturing promotes high self-esteem, feeling of competence, perceived social support, and a sense of being able to manipulate, understand their own world (Moretti & Peled, 2004) and psychological well-being (Nada Raja, McGee, & Stanton, 1992). Langton and Berger (2011) suggested that adolescents in most family types are inclined to have poorer outcomes- physical health, behavior, and emotional well-being- than those of their peers in two-biological-parent families.

Chandra, et al. (2010) conducted research to describe the health and well-being of children from military families from the perspectives of the child and non-deployed parent. The authors analyzed data obtained from a computer-assisted telephone interview with military children, aged

11 to 17 years, and non-deployed caregivers totaling 1507 to assess child well-being and difficulties with deployment. The authors concluded that overall, caregivers and children from military families reported child emotional difficulties at higher levels than have been observed in the general US population. Chandra, et al. (2010) also postulated that the larger the total months of deployment of a parent, the greater the stressors of preserving a healthy home life. For example, the authors pointed out, the longer the deployment; the more children had problems with household and school responsibilities.

Relocation of Families

Members of the military at any given time pack and relocate for duty on command. This change can result in a myriad of problems for both the adults and children (Gomez & Ybanez, 2012) and sometimes result in a feeling of alienation in the newly established home community (Kain, 1973). Children now leave behind the schools they are accustomed to, their friends, teachers and activities they had once been a part of to take on challenges of starting over in a new community. The separation from friends and extended family members can be a stressful life event for both parents and children (Aronson, Caldwell, Perkins & Pasch, 2011).

Wood and Halfon (1993) in a research carried out on a nationally represented sample of 9915 children, age ranging from six to seventeen years, to identify the impact of frequent family moves on reported rates of delay in growth or development, learning disorders, school failure, and frequent behavioral problems in US school-age children. The authors concluded that frequent relocation associates with higher rates of all measures of child dysfunction-repeated grades and behavioral problems. However, there was no association with delays in growth or development or a learning disorder.

Mao, Whitsett, and Mellor (1998) analyzed data from the Texas Public Education Information Management System and the files of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills of 6000 students in Texas to clarify the relationships between mobility and academic performance. The authors found that there are significant relationships between student mobility, academic performance, and school accountability. They further explained that mobile students scored lower on the state-required tests than their peers who were stable.

Reintegration

After spending months away on active duty, whether out of the country or in another state, military member return home to pick up

where they left off bonding with their loved ones. Currie, Day and Kelloway (2011) defined reintegration as the method of transitioning back to previous personal and organizational roles after deployment. Unfortunately, it does not always work that simple. Members of the military and family members sometimes have a hard time readjusting and functioning in the family system and subsystems and usually do not return to the particular state that was preceding deployment (Louie & Cromer, 2014; Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

Returning parents face the stresses of reintegration into the family which includes reacquainting with children and restoration (Williams, 2013). Doyle and Peterson (2005) expressed that this period of reintegration is specifically challenging in areas of role and boundary negotiations and reestablishment of relationships. Riggs and Riggs (2011) added that this experience of reintegration, although firstly brings on excitement families are reunited after long periods, can be frustrating and unsettling for all parties involved. Eventually, the authors added, the physical and psychological injuries experienced by these service personnel challenge their ability to reintegrate. This is most likely to cause marital problems, family dysfunction, emotional and behavioral disturbance in spouse and children. Marital conflicts, Jenkins, Simpson, Dunn, Rasbash, & O'Connor (2005) suggested, are associated with a wide range internalizing, such as depression, and particularly externalizing such as aggression outcomes in children.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Scott, Matt, Wrocklage, Crnich, Jordan, Southwick and Schweinsburg (2015) defined posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as “a common, often debilitating psychiatric disorder that is triggered by an extreme stressor involving threat of death or serious injury” (p. 106). The global war on terror has left the U.S. military and veterans with direct and indirect trauma exposure. This trauma causes reduced family cohesion, decreased interpersonal expressiveness, greater interpersonal conflict, and reduced problem solving ability (Cozza, 2005).

Lambert, Holzer, and Hasbun (2014) conducted a meta-analysis on the correlation between parents' PTSD symptom severity and children's psychological status. The authors included 42 studies that comprised parent assessed for PTSD, child assessed for distress or behavioral problems, associations between parent PTSD and child status. The authors compared effect sizes for studies where only the parent exposure to a potentially traumatic event to studies and a combination of both parents and children exposure. The authors provided indication that parental PTSD is associated with child distress and behavioral problems.

Glenn, Beckham, Feldman, Kirby, Hertzberg, and Moore (2002) studied the motional-behavioral functioning of a small sample of Vietnam veterans with combat-related posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), their partners, and older adolescent and adult children. A randomly recruited group of thirty-one (31) veteran-spouse pairs from an outpatient PTSD clinic between 1996 and 1999 with a mean age of 49.3 years made up the sample. It was resolved that hostility and violent behavior among children positively correlated to Veterans' combat exposure. Furthermore, veterans' reports of PTSD symptoms positively related with accounts of hostility and violence among children. Additionally, Moore (2002) reported that veterans' violent behavior also positively correlated with children's violent behavior.

African-American Children with Parents in the Military

Approximately 67% of African American youths live in single-parent household at some point during childhood and/or adolescence compared to 23% of youth in the general U.S. population (Sterrett, Kincaid, Ness, Gonzalez, McKee, & Jones, 2015). The authors affirmed that African American youths and those from single-mother homes, ages 10–19 show higher risk of displaying problems paralleled to European American adolescents and their peers from two-parent homes.

U.S. military fighting force is comprised of 17% African Americans, while encompassing only 13.60% of the total U.S. population (Johnson & Johnson, 2013). This signaled that a large percentage of African American adults at some point in their lives were a part of the military or armed forces. Some of these service providers are also parents of 1.2 million school-aged children (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

With a combination of having single parents, parents missing due to military responsibilities, the pressures of the adolescent life, relocation and other contributing factors, students with military parents face a plethora of challenges when they go to school each day. African American children, with a higher percentage of single parents watch their only active parent painstakingly leave them to protect the country through their unique services. Some of these children's new homes become that of family members and sometimes friends. These children endure a lot of problems including abuse and other maltreatment that lead to students' misconduct and low academic performance in school (Poehlmann, Park, Bouffiou, Abrahams, Shlafer, & Hahn, 2008; Mallett, 2012).

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS OF ADOLESCENTS WITH MILITARY PARENTS

It is increasingly imperative that educators be aware of the sensitive nature of dealing with children whose parents are actively involved in the military or have become veterans. No longer should we ignore the emotional, psychological, and behavioral impact of deployment, constant relocation, reintegration, and PTSD on the families and specifically the children. To do so effectively educators and peers should actively participate in making students feel appreciated and welcomed in the school.

Selection of military personnel for relocation can come at any time. The family therefore moves with that person to a new community. This event can be stressful and disorienting for the family and especially the children. The school they have come to know as their own is no longer the one they will attend. This means they will have a new teacher, see new classmates, and must become adjusted to new setting. Schools should be aware and prepared to handle this integration as smoothly as possible. Slow adjustment could cause a gap in the child's educational development. The quicker the child feels adjusted in the new environment the quicker he or she will be able to grow educationally. Law, Cuskelly, & Carroll (2013) stated that non-familial social environments can positively impact a child's emotional functioning. Hence, school should also integrate the following six preventative care tasks to foster military and veteran students' wellbeing.

Teachers Being Proactive

Classroom teachers have to play an important role in fostering a positive relationship with military and veteran children. Jing, Wenbin, and Jianxin (2011) noted that positive interpersonal relationships between teachers and students is essential to student success and have powerful and lasting effects on the lives of the students. When the teachers stimulate an emotionally warm relationship between the military or veteran child, it creates a sense of security in the school environment for the child. This security is not always present at home where a parent may be missing for long periods due to work assignments such as deployment or in situations where the family relocates.

The teacher's effort will ignite well-being in the child. This in turn opens the avenue for child comfort and promotes creative exploration in the learning environment. To do this educators should incorporate six initiatives in the schools' structures: Teachers being proactive, establish routine, develop welcome committees, devise a

buddy system, train teachers, nurses and counselors, and working adopt systems.

Establish Routines

After relocations, children have so much going on in their minds. They are familiarizing themselves with the buildings, roads, buses, and a myriad of things. One way that a school can lessen the impact is by offering an established routine for these children. This means that they will know what to do at given times during the course of a day.

Welcome Committee

The welcome committee is a set of teachers and students who volunteers to greet new students and support them emotionally, and encourage them in the new school. This committee will see to it that the child understands the routine and helps them to familiarize themselves with the building and the expectations of the school. The committee will also introduce the child to the extra-curricular activities that the school provides and help him or her find the one of interest.

Buddy System

The buddy system is as an extension of the welcome committee. The new student, paired with a peer, will have lunch, share free time, become even more familiar with the campus and also be a study and support partner. This system can be made entirely of military students or supported by civilian students. This could also blossom into a support group or social group, supported by teachers, where all the members could meet socially.

Train Teachers, Nurses, and Counselors

Workshops and staff development will be done with teachers, nurses, and counselors to familiarize them with the needs of a military and veteran child. Often, we omit the resources of the nurse in the regular running of the school. However, this initiative solicits the aid of the nurse as he or she understands the psychological/mental impact certain events have on a child. Hence, they are included to provide professional medical guidance.

Adopt Systems

There are systems in place that states schools have assimilated into their programs to help military students' progress in schools. One of which is the Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children.

It provides guidelines for school districts to aid in removing barriers in school transition for military students that relocate in school districts so that they can graduate on time and through a smooth process (Gomez & Ybanez, 2012).

Contacting military bases is always a good source of support. Military members can be invited to be a part of the social group on the campus and other school events. They can also provide support and resources to the schools through their military liaison counselors.

The military also provides services through the Military Impacted Schools Association (MISA) is a national organization of school superintendents which with local school districts and commanders to highlight best practices and partnerships that can further meet the needs of military families. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is a civilian agency of the United States Department of Defense that manages all schools for military children and teenagers in the United States and also overseas at American military bases worldwide (Department of Public Instruction, 2015).

Adolescent students of military personnel require special educational care. They struggle through the age development process, the stresses of deployment, relocation, reintegration, parental PTSD. When the appropriate resources and care are not afforded at school, educators are not doing their part in addressing all aspects of a child's educational well-being. The major objective in facilitating adolescents in school is to reduce anxiety, withdrawal, anger, and non-conformity, along with other emotional or behavior problems, physical health, emotional well-being, and educationally deprivation. Adolescents with military parents deserve the best schooling necessary for them to achieve academic success and reach their full potential. Educators must play their role in education the nation's children regardless of their background.

Faith-Based Institutions/Community Involvement

According to Barnes (2014) religion occupies a significant sphere of the lives of Americans in general and African Americans in particular. Consequently, schools should establish partnership with the communities and faith-based institutions to help students to see the connection between the school and real life experiences. African-American students especially, value relationships. Hence, getting the community and faith-based institutions to foster a connection will help them to build relationships. Faith-based institutions bring to the table a familiar place for students. This will help them to develop bonds so learning can take place. This bond from the community extends to educators a myriad of resources to aid in strengthening the students'

social wellbeing that eroded through separation from their parents, families, or from their original communities.

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF STUDENTS' SENSE OF ACADEMIC ENTITLEMENT, LOCUS OF CONTROL, AND OTHER VARIABLES AT AN HBCU

Dr. Lucian Yates, III,
Professor
Prairie View A&M University

Brian E. Rowland,
Doctoral Candidate
Prairie View A&M University

Mathias Vairez,
Doctoral Candidate
Prairie View A&M University

ABSTRACT

The paper explored the intersection of students' academic entitlement beliefs (Kopp's Academic Entitlement Questionnaire) and locus of control (Levenson's Multidimensional Locus of Control Scale) and several demographic factors e.g., gender, family arrangement, first generation college student and college major at an HBCU. Statistically significant results were found.

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, education has been and will always be the route to achieving the American Dream of respect, financial security, and social justice. This is most true for African Americans and other marginalized peoples. However, education is an elusive endeavor for many African American students. The disparity is most evident when one considers college graduation rates. For instance, the 2011 graduation rate for full-time, first-time undergraduate students who began their bachelor's degree at a four year degree granting institution in the fall of 2005 was 59 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). For Whites the graduation rate was 61.85 percent; for African Americans, the

graduation rate was 39.2 percent; for Hispanics the graduation rate was 51 percent, and for American Indian/Alaska Natives it was 39.7 percent. The racial and gender break down of these data are listed in the chart below. Notice that African American males were out-performed by males in every racial category; and African American females were out-performed by two of the three racial groups.

2011 Six Year Graduation Rate by Race and Gender

Race	Gender	Graduation Rate
White	Males	59.5
White	Females	64.2
AA	Males	35.2
AA	Females	43.2
Hispanic	Males	47.5
Hispanic	Females	53.7
Native American	Males	38.9
Native American	Females	40.5

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Statistics (2013). *The Condition of Education 2013* (NCES 2013-037), Institutional Retention and Graduation Rates for Undergraduate Students.

In a study for black college graduation rates, *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2005) reported that the most important explanation for the large dropout rate at HBCUs was the lack of strong academic preparation and study habits. Further, research shows that some students who matriculate believe they are entitled to passing grades and degrees without expending sufficient effort to obtain the same (Steil, McGann, & Kahn, 2001). This thought process is called academic entitlement and has become an interest for educational researchers. Chowning and Campbell (2009) defined academic entitlement (AE) as, “the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without a sense of personal responsibility for achieving that success” (p. 982). They concluded that “beyond course evaluations, academic entitlement may have important implications for student retention, success, and graduation. Students who attribute their performance to their courses or instructors, may fail to self-correct or develop adaptive strategies to succeed in college” (Chowning & Campbell, 2009, p. 995).

A search of the extant literature on academic entitlement uncovered no research specifically conducted with African American students situated on historically black university or college (HBCU) campuses. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify, using AE and Locus of Control (LOC), and other selected demographic variables (race, gender, major, GPA, classification, family structure, and first generational college status the extent to which students on HBCU campuses feel entitled. AE has become a construct of interest in mainstream educational research with today's college students (Achacoso, 2002; Chowning, & Campbell, 2009; Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2008; Greenberger, Lassard, Chen and Farruggia, 2008; Kopp, Zinn, Finney & Jurich, 2011; & Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2011). Post-secondary students are more selfish, superficial, and narcissistic than ever before (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004; Emmonds (1987); Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003; Menon and Sharland, 2011; and Pryor, Miller, and Gaughan, 2008). The AE concept is frequently associated with college students born into Generation X, or more commonly, Millennials (Jeffres, Barclay, & Stolte, 2014). Professors at universities across the country are encountering students who feel they should receive high grades with minimal effort, students who are contesting the low grades they earn, students who are baffled or disappointed with lower-than-expected grades, and students who feel entitled to an "A" (Boswell, 2012; Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2008; and Morrow (1984). Because there is no research specifically associated with African American students at an HBCU, this current study was undertaken to investigate demographic traits related to AE, locus of control—academic major, age, race, family structure, and gender—with students attending an HBCU.

Theoretical Framework

This quantitative explorative study is grounded in constructivist theory. According to Jean Piaget (1977), learning occurs as a result of an interaction between an individual's experiences and his or her ideas. He suggests that learners construct new knowledge through processes of accommodation and assimilation. Accommodation is the process of reframing one's understanding of the external world to fit new experiences (Piaget, 1976). When one's expectations of how the external world operates is not met, one usually reframes his or her expectation of the how the external world operates. Consequently, learning occurs. By contrast, assimilation is the process of adding new experiences to an existing schema without changing the schema (Piaget, 1976). Home environments, elementary education institutions, and secondary education

institutions can establish schemas for individuals in which academic mediocrity is accepted and, at times, rewarded. Over time, an individual's existing schema with regard to academic achievement becomes one in which the individual feels entitled to good grades despite mediocre effort and quality. When said individual enrolls in an institution of higher learning, he or she incorporates the higher expectations of colleges and universities into the existing schema of accepted and rewarded mediocrity. As a result, the individual develops a sense of academic entitlement, insisting that he or she receive good grades for subpar work.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research methodology. Namely, students were asked to complete 1. A demographic profile sheet; 2. Academic Entitlement Questionnaire; and 3. The Locus of Control Questionnaire. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), survey should be used when an opinion of a large group is sought. In this study, students will be asked to relate the extent to which they feel entitled. The following research questions and null hypotheses guided this study:

1. What is the relationship of each demographic variable (academic major, GPA, age, race, gender, family structure, first generation status) and academic entitlement?

H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between each demographic variable (academic major, GPA, age, race, gender, family structure, first generation status) and academic entitlement.

2. What are the interaction effects of demographic variables (academic major, GPA, age, race, gender, family structure, first generation status) and academic entitlement?

H02: There are no statistically significant interaction effects between demographic variables (academic major, GPA, age, race, gender, family structure, first generation status) and academic entitlement.

Participants

Participants consisted of 88 African American undergraduates (50 females (57%) and 38 males (43%)) from a public HBCU in the Southwest, who were enrolled in at least one developmental education course in the spring semester of 2014. Each was invited to participate and

once the consent form was signed, the administration of the instruments began.

Procedures

Once permission was granted to conduct the study, each student was asked to complete:

Demographic Profile Sheet. This sheet contained self-report items such as: Race, gender, classification, college of major, grade point average, family arrangement, and first generation college status. These data were collected to ascertain if any of these factors led to a heightened sense of academic entitlement.

In an attempt to determine family arrangements and first generation college student data, student were asked to answer the following questions:

1. With whom did you live for the majority of your life?
Choices were: mother and father, mother only, father only, grandparents, other. Thirty six (41%) reported that they lived with mother and father; 44 (50%) indicated that they lived with mother only; two (2%) reported to live with father only; six (7%) indicated that they lived with grandparents and none reported to have lived with other.
2. Are you the first in your family to attend college?
Seventy (80%) of the participants were not first generation college students and 18 (20%) were first generation college students.

Kopp's Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (Kopp et al., 2011).

Participants were asked to complete the Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ) (Kopp, Finney, & Jurich, 2011). The AEQ is an eight-item, seven point Likert scale (ranging from 1=*strongly disagree* to 7=*strongly agree*). This self-report measure was designed to ascertain the extent to which students believe that they deserve positive outcomes regardless of their academic performance. Sample questions were: "It is the professors' responsibility to make it easy for me to succeed"; and "If I cannot learn the material for a class from the lecture alone, then it is the professor's fault when I fail the test." Kopp, et al. (2011) conducted studies to establish substantive, structural and external aspect of validity of the AEQ. The initial checks for reliability using coefficient omega indicated no problems with the scale. In fact, Kopp, et al. (2011) stated, R^2 values ranged from .22-.60. In addition, there were no large covariance residuals between any of the eight items, suggesting that the entitlement factor accounts for most of the covariance

between items. Omega was .84, suggesting adequate reliability across two samples. (p.121)

Levenson's Multidimensional Locus of Control Scale (Levenson, 1973). Participants were asked to complete the Levenson's Multidimensional Locus of Control Scale (1973), The Multidimensional Locus of Control, affectionately called IPC is a twenty four-item, six point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree). This self-report measure was designed "out of a need to distinguish multiple dimensions within the external side of the Locus of Control continuum." (Halpert & Hill, 2011, p. 13) Sample questions were: Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability; When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work; I have often found that what is going to happen will happen; When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work; Often there is no chance of protecting my personal interests from bad luck happening; and When I get what I want, it's usually because I am lucky. Levenson (1972) conducted a study to establish validity of the IPC and "found that participants who rated high on the C scale shared traits that could not be distinguished by the I or P scales, thus confirming the usefulness of the multidimensional approach" (Halpert & Hill, 2011, p. 13). Further, Levenson (1973) while studying anti-pollution activism, found the student group Kuder-Richardson reliabilities are in the mid .60's and high .70's and for the adult sample the Spearman-Brown all were in the mid .60's. Student test-retest reliabilities for a one-week period were in the .60's and .70's (Levenson, 1973, p. 2).

Data Collection and Analysis

The items from Kopp's AEQ, Levenson's IPC, and the demographic sheet were collected and coded in Microsoft Excel. The AEQ score for each participant was calculated by computing the average of the eight items. The Academic Entitlement Binned (AEB) score was categorized into two groups based on the participant's average--Low AE ranging from 1 to 3.5 and High AE ranging from 3.6 to 7. SPSS was used to analyze the data. Data analysis was completed in two stages. Initially, descriptive statistics crosstabs were used to disaggregate the demographic variables by the AE and IPC categories. Then, exploratory correlation analyses were conducted using SPSS to determine any significant relationships and the direction of the relationships between the demographic variables, AE score, and IPC score.

RESULTS

The following research questions and null hypotheses guided this study:

1. What is the relationship of demographic variables and academic entitlement?

H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between demographic variables and academic entitlement.

2. What is the relationship between academic entitlement and locus of control?

H02: There is no statistically significant relationship between academic entitlement and locus of control.

Demographics

Participants consisted of 88 African American undergraduates (50 females (57%) and 38 males (43%)) from a public HBCU in the Southwest, who were enrolled in at least one developmental education (see Table 1).

The majority of the participants were freshman 62 (71%), nineteen were sophomores (22%) and seven (8%) were either juniors or seniors (see Table 2). Students were asked to self-report GPAs and 75 (84%) reported GPAs greater than 2.0 and 16 (18%) had GPAs greater than 3.0 (see Table 3).

The participants were asked to supply the college of their majors and those results can be found in Table 4. Note that the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Juvenile Justice and Psychology had the largest number of majors, with 24% and 22%, respectively and the other college percentages hovered between 7-13%.

Additionally, the researchers tried to ascertain with whom the participants lived for the majority of their lives and if they were first generation college students (see Table 9). One half of the participants (N=44) lived with mother only, 36 (41%) lived with both parents, two (2%) lived with father only, six (7%) lived with grandparents, and none lived with others. Only 21% of the students were first generation college students and approximately 80% were not the first in their families to attend college (see Table 8).

Table 5 indicates the cross tabulation of the AEB by college or school of major choice. Most students majoring in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields exhibited high academic entitlement. For instance, 57 percent of all majors in the College of Arts and Science had a high degree of academic entitlement. Engineering majors possessed a 78 percent sense of academic entitlement; nursing and agriculture majors were approximately the same with a 67 percent sense of academic entitlement. However, students majoring in the Colleges of Business, Education, and Juvenile Justice and Psychology had low academic entitlement. In particular, 85 percent of the students from the College of Business expressed low academic entitlement.

There was a shift in academic entitlement based on grade classification as shown in Table 6. Forty- five percent of the freshmen expressed high academic entitlement. Although the numbers in this sample went down in subsequent grade levels, the percentage of high academic entitlement increased. For instance, sophomores had a 58 percent academic entitlement score, juniors had 68 percent and one hundred percent of the seniors had a high sense of academic entitlement (although there was only one student classified as senior).

Table 7 shows the breakdown of students who expressed AE by grade point average. The data showed that 44 percent of the students with grade point averages below 3.0 had a high academic entitlement level. On the other hand, only 6 percent of the students with grade point averages at a 3.0 or above had a high academic entitlement level.

Family dynamics offer an interesting note on academic entitlement. First generation college students were no more likely to possess a high sense of academic entitlement than non-first generation college students (see Table 8). Ciani et al. (2008) confirmed this fact when they concluded that AE was unrelated to parents' education level. Students who were raised in a father only household (although the N=2 was low) did not possess a sense of academic entitlement. Students raised by grandparents were evenly divided between a low sense and high sense of academic entitlement. However, students who were raised by mothers only were 1.5 times more likely to possess a high sense of academic entitlement than were those students raised by both parents (see Table 9). An explanation for this phenomenon is ripe for exploration.

To answer Research Question One: *What is the relationship between academic entitlement and demographic variables?* a Chi-Square Test was run to ascertain if statistically significant relationships existed between academic entitlement and the demographic factors. There was no statistically significant relationship found between academic entitlement and race, gender, GPA, classification, family structure, and first

generation status. However a statistically significant relationship was found between academic entitlement and college major ($r=.36$ and $p=.049$). To further explore this relationship, an ANOVA was run to ascertain the direction and strength of the relationships (see Table 10). These data suggest students majoring in STEM-related disciplines (Arts and Sciences, engineering, nursing, and agriculture) tend to possess a higher degree of academic entitlement than those students majoring in social science-type majors, i.e., business, education, and juvenile justice and psychology. More studies should be conducted to further interrogate this finding.

Therefore, since there was one area of significance between academic entitlement and demographic factors (college of major), the researchers failed to accept the null hypothesis that there was no statistically significant difference between academic entitlement and the demographic factors and conclude that there was a statistically significance difference between AE and college of major.

To answer Research Question Two: *What is the relationship between academic entitlement and locus of control?* A Pearson's r Correlation was run to ascertain the relationships between academic entitlement and the Locus of Control. Levenson's Locus of Control is divided into three categories: Internal, Powerful Others, and Chance. This reconceptualization of Rotter's Scale was made to include Internal Locus of Control, but to divide the external scale between powerful others (Powerful Others Scale), and chance or fate (Change Scale) (Levenson, 1981). A high internal construct score means that a person believes they have control over their own life. Conversely, a low score in the internal construct means that one does not feel that one has control over one's own life. Sample questions from the IPC are: "My life is determined by my own actions; I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life; and Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on how good a driver I am" (Levenson, 1981, p. 57-58).

A high "Powerful Others" construct score means a person believes others have control over their life. Conversely, a low score in the powerful others construct means one does not feel that others have control over one's life. Sample questions from the IPC are: "Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on the other driver; I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people; Getting what I want requires pleasing those people above me" (Levenson, 1981, p. 57-58).

A high chance construct score means that a person believes one's life is controlled by chance or fate. Conversely, a low score in the chance construct means one does not feel ones' life is controlled by

chance or fate. Sample questions from the IPC are: “To a great extent my life is controlled by accidental happenings; It’s not always wise for me to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune; Whether or not I get to be a leader depends on whether I’m lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time” (Levenson, 1981, p. 57-58).

The Bivariate correlation (Pearson’s r Correlation) was conducted to determine the levels of significant and the direction of the relationship between the academic entitlement score and the three measures on the Locus of Control (see Table 11). The test revealed that Academic entitlement is statistically significantly correlated with all three constructs (Internal, Powerful Others, and Chance) of Levenson’s Locus of Control Scale at the 0.01 level of significance. The r value for Internal was .313, Powerful Others was .447, and for Chance, .492.

DISCUSSION

To change the dismal graduation statistics at HBCU campuses, more empirical studies must be conducted to interrogate the impact of non-cognitive variables on college going, matriculation, and graduation rates. This study was undertaken to interrogate the interplay between academic entitlement, locus of control, and other demographic variables on a sample of African American students at an HBCU in the southwest. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the relationship of demographic variables and academic entitlement?
2. What is the relationship between academic entitlement and locus of control?

Both questions were tested in the null.

Demographic Factors

Gender and Race. No significance was found between AE or LOC and the demographic factors measured by these researchers. We attempted to explore whether AE or LOC was more prevalent in one gender or the other. In a study by Levenson (1972), it was found that males scored higher on the P Scale than did their female counterparts. The findings of an unpublished study by Freischlag found “significantly higher perception of control by powerful others among male high school and college students than among their female counterparts” (Levenson, 1981, p. 28). How males acquire this notion that powerful others control their destiny is a field rich for further exploration.

Relative to academic entitlement, Hartman (2012) found significant differences by gender in that males had consistently higher entitlement scores than females ($p=0.006$) (Hartman, 2012). Ciani, et al. (2008), in an examination of the relationship between gender and entitlement across 18 classrooms found that men reported significantly more entitlement expectations than women ($M=2.04, SE=0.05$).

According to several researchers (Desmarais and Curtis 2001; Hill and Fischer 2001; Hogue, Yoder, & Singleton, 2007; Pryor, Miller, & Gaughan, 2008), men reported a greater sense of entitlement than women. Again the genesis for these beliefs is a field rich for further exploration.

A body of research posits African Americans have a higher self-esteem than their white counterparts (Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000). Further, Twenge and Crocker (2002) performed a meta-analysis of self-esteem among Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and American Indians and found that African American reported the highest self-esteem, followed by Whites. Hispanics, Asians, and American Indians reported the lowest self-esteem.

In this current study of 88 African American students at an HBCU in the southwest, it was found there was no difference in gender for both academic entitlement and LOC. Perhaps a larger sample size could have produced a different result more consistent with the prevalent research.

GPA. Seventy five students (85%) reported GPAs greater than 2.0 and 16 (18%) had GPAs greater than 3.0. The researchers interrogated the notion of GPA to determine whether students with lower GPAs were more prone to possess a high sense of academic entitlement than those students with higher GPAs or vice versa. Statistical tests were conducted to ascertain the correlations and none were found. Therefore, we conclude that GPA is not a predictor of academic entitlement or LOC.

Family Structure. The researchers attempted to ascertain if family structure (the parent/s or guardian with whom the participant spent the majority of his/her life) was a mediating factor in AE or LOC. The data are clear as to the magnitude of this construct. Vespa, Lewis, & Kreider (2013) posited that Black children (55 percent) and Hispanic children (31 percent) were more likely to live with one parent than non-Hispanic White children (21 percent) or Asian children (13 percent). A similar study conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2011) found that 25.8 percent of American children are raised by a single parent, a number high above the 14.9 percent average seen in the other 26 countries surveyed. Among African-

Americans the rate nearly tripled, with 72 percent of black children relying on a single parent.

In this sample, 69 percent (N=52) of the participants lived in a non-nuclear family, i.e., with either a mother, father, or grandparents; and 50% lived with mother only. Although none of the interactions were significant, an interesting phenomenon occurred. Students who were raised by mothers only were 1.5 times more likely to possess a high sense of academic entitlement than those students raised by both parents (see Table 9). Thus, this study further confirms the work of Ciani, et al. (2008) which confirmed that AE was unrelated to parents' education (first generation college student) level and a heightened sense of entitlement to academic success. Twenge and Campbell (2003) on the other hand suggested that parenting practices that lead to inflated self-esteem may encourage entitled attitudes and behavior.

AE and LOC. In this study, AE and LOC are positively correlated with students with majors in the STEM areas. A review of the literature has not revealed similar findings. It was noticed that students in the Colleges of Engineering, Nursing, Arts and Sciences, and Agriculture possessed a higher sense of academic entitlement than did students in the Colleges of Education, Business, and Juvenile Justice and Psychology. This area is ripe for further exploration and study.

CONCLUSION

It is interesting to note that although nuggets of new information has been discovered in this study, much more needs to be done to determine how the non-cognitive variables impact the college going, matriculation, and graduation rates of African American students at both HBCUs and PWIs. This study, with its relatively small sample (N=88) needs to be replicated with many more participants to ascertain if the findings are stable with large groups of students at HBCUs.

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Table 1

Gender Frequency

	Frequency	Percen
Valid Female	50	56.8
Male	38	43.2
Total	88	100.0

Table 2

Classification Frequency

	Frequency	Percen
Valid Freshman	62	70.5
Sophomore	19	21.6
Junior	6	6.8
Senior	1	1.1
Total	88	100.0

Table 3

Grade Point Average Frequency

	Frequency	Percen
Valid Less than 2.0	13	14.8
2.1 - 2.9	58	65.9
3.0 - 3.5	15	17.0
Greater than 3.5	1	1.1
Total	87	98.9
Missing System	1	1.1
Total	88	100.0

Table 4

College of Major Frequency

		Frequency	Percen
Valid	Arts and Sciences	21	23.9
	Engineering	9	10.2
	Education	11	12.5
	Juvenile Justice and Psychology	19	21.6
	Nursing	9	10.2
	Agriculture	6	6.8
	Business	10	11.4
	Total	85	96.6
Missing System		3	3.4
Total		88	100.0

Table 5: College of Major * Academic Entitlement (Binned) Crosstabulation

			Academic Entitlement (Binned)		Total
			<= 3.5 (Low)	3.6 - 7.0 (High)	
College of Major	Arts and Sciences	Count	9	12	21
		% within College of Major	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
		% of Total	10.6%	14.1%	24.7%
	Engineering	Count	2	7	9
		% within College of Major	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%
		% of Total	2.4%	8.2%	10.6%
	Education	Count	6	5	11
		% within College of Major	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
		% of Total	7.1%	5.9%	12.9%
	Juvenile Justice and Psychology	Count	12	7	19
		% within College of Major	63.2%	36.8%	100.0%
		% of Total	14.1%	8.2%	22.4%
	Nursing	Count	3	6	9
		% within College of Major	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
		% of Total	3.5%	7.1%	10.6%
	Agriculture	Count	2	4	6

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	% within College of Major	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	% of Total	2.4%	4.7%	7.1%
Business	Count	9	1	10
	% within College of Major	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	10.6%	1.2%	11.8%
Total	Count	43	42	85
	% within College of Major	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%
	% of Total	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%

Table 6: Classification * Academic Entitlement (Binned) Crosstabulation

			Academic Entitlement (Binned)		Total
			<= 3.5 (Low)	3.6 - 7.0 (High)	
Classification	Freshman	Count	34	28	62
		% within Classification	54.8%	45.2%	100.0%
		% of Total	38.6%	31.8%	70.5%
	Sophomore	Count	8	11	19
		% within Classification	42.1%	57.9%	100.0%
		% of Total	9.1%	12.5%	21.6%
	Junior	Count	2	4	6
		% within Classification	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
		% of Total	2.3%	4.5%	6.8%
	Senior	Count	0	1	1
		% within Classification	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	.0%	1.1%	1.1%
Total		Count	44	44	88
		% within Classification	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 7: Grade Point Average * Academic Entitlement (Binned) Crosstabulation

			Academic Entitlement (Binned)		Total
			<= 3.5 (Low)	3.6 - 7.0 (High)	
Grade Point Average	Less than 2.0	Count	5	8	13
		% within Grade Point Average	38.5%	61.5%	100.0%
		% of Total	5.7%	9.2%	14.9%
	2.1 - 2.9	Count	28	30	58
		% within Grade Point Average	48.3%	51.7%	100.0%
		% of Total	32.2%	34.5%	66.7%
	3.0 - 3.5	Count	11	4	15
		% within Grade Point Average	73.3%	26.7%	100.0%
		% of Total	12.6%	4.6%	17.2%
	Greater than 3.5	Count	0	1	1
		% within Grade Point Average	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	.0%	1.1%	1.1%
Total		Count	44	43	87
		% within Grade Point Average	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%
		% of Total	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%

Table 8: First in family to go to college? * Academic Entitlement (Binned) Crosstabulation

		Academic Entitlement (Binned)		Total
		<= 3.5 (Low)	3.6 - 7.0 (High)	
First in family to go to college? No	Count	35	35	70
	% within First in family to go to college?	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	39.8%	39.8%	79.5%
Yes	Count	9	9	18
	% within First in family to go to college?	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	10.2%	10.2%	20.5%
Total	Count	44	44	88
	% within First in family to go to college?	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 9: Lived most of life with * Academic Entitlement (Binned) Crosstabulation

		Academic Entitlement (Binned)		Total	
		<= 3.5 (Low)	3.6 - 7.0 (High)		
Lived most of Mother and Father life with...	Count	19	17	36	
	% within Lived most of life with...	52.8%	47.2%	100.0%	
	% of Total	21.6%	19.3%	40.9%	
	Mother only	Count	20	24	44
	% within Lived most of life with...	45.5%	54.5%	100.0%	
	% of Total	22.7%	27.3%	50.0%	
	Father only	Count	2	0	2
	% within Lived most of life with...	100.0%	.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	2.3%	.0%	2.3%	
	Grandparents	Count	3	3	6
	% within Lived most of life with...	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	3.4%	3.4%	6.8%	
Total	Count	44	44	88	
	% within Lived most of life with...	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%	

Table 10: Multiple Comparisons Academic Entitlement LSD

(I) College of Major	(J) College of Major	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Arts and Sciences	Engineering	-.6317	.5294	.236	-1.686	.422
	Education	.6905	.4945	.167	-.294	1.675
	Juvenile Justice and Psychology	.3221	.4207	.446	-.515	1.160
	Nursing	-.3984	.5294	.454	-1.452	.655
	Agriculture	-.3429	.6151	.579	-1.567	.882
	Business	1.1605 [*]	.5105	.026	.144	2.177
Engineering	Arts and Sciences	.6317	.5294	.236	-.422	1.686
	Education	1.3222 [*]	.5972	.030	.133	2.511
	Juvenile Justice and Psychology	.9538	.5376	.080	-.117	2.024
	Nursing	.2333	.6263	.711	-1.014	1.480

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	Agriculture	.2889	.7003	.681	-1.105	1.683
	Business	1.7922*	.6105	.004	.577	3.008
Nursing	Arts and Sciences	.3984	.5294	.454	-.655	1.452
	Engineering	-.2333	.6263	.711	-1.480	1.014
	Education	1.0889	.5972	.072	-.100	2.278
	Juvenile Justice and Psychology	.7205	.5376	.184	-.350	1.791
	Agriculture	.0556	.7003	.937	-1.339	1.450
	Business	1.5589*	.6105	.013	.344	2.774
Agriculture	Arts and Sciences	.3429	.6151	.579	-.882	1.567
	Engineering	-.2889	.7003	.681	-1.683	1.105
	Education	1.0333	.6743	.129	-.309	2.376
	Juvenile Justice and Psychology	.6649	.6222	.289	-.574	1.904
	Nursing	-.0556	.7003	.937	-1.450	1.339
	Business	1.5033*	.6861	.031	.137	2.869

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 11: *Correlation Matrix: Academic Entitlement by LOC*

		Academic Entitlement	Internal LOC	External (Power Others) LOC	Chance LOC
Academic Entitlement	Pearson	1	.313**	.477**	.492**
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003	.000	.000
N		88	88	88	88

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).