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Academic Achievement Gaps of Students in Private School Settings as Compared To Their Counterparts in Regular Public Educational Settings

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by
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An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by April Yelani Ferguson under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Statement of Original Work

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April Yelani Ferguson
Name

July 30, 2018
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Abstract

Academic Achievement Gaps of Students in Private School Settings as Compared To Their Counterparts in Regular Public Educational Settings. April Yelani Ferguson, 2018: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. Keywords: databases, internet, media selection, high schools, and teacher education

This applied dissertation was designed to provide the effectiveness of promoting change management through historical findings of closing reading comprehension (i.e., vocabulary) achievement gaps with black and white 9th and 10th grade students in a private school and 66 participants in this study. Achievement gaps in education refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students (Ansell, 2011). The achievement gap shows up in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates and among other success measures. Achievement gaps occur when one group of students such as, students grouped by race/ethnicity, gender outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant that is, larger than the margin of error (National Assessment in Educational Progress, 2015).

On the contrary, the new federal education law, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), provides a powerful opportunity for educators, administrators, school leaders, parents and families, and everyone who works on behalf of our children's future, to ensure excellence and equity in our public schools—and to reclaim the promise of a truly high- quality, well-rounded education for every student (Taber, 2016). With that being stated, the potential cause of deficiencies in reading comprehension (i.e., vocabulary) were a lack of student practice and poor motivation as it pertains to reading (Binotti et al, 2001).

An analysis of the data revealed that in reading that the average black student in 12th grade placed in the 13th percentile of the score distribution, meaning that 87th percent of white students in 12th grade scored ahead of the average black 12th grader. The Coleman Report also known as the "Equality of Education Opportunity," is a breakthrough report on education equity written by James Coleman (Camera, 2016).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The following section introduces the foundation for the background research of the introduction. Studies indicate that academic achievement gaps in high schools are prominent within low-socio economic urban private schools. The first NAEP assessments from the early 1970s, documented a substantial gap in test performance in reading and math between Black students and White students (Miksic, 2014). Minority students have continuously experienced obstacles in pursuing educational goals since the "Brown vs. Topeka, Kansas Board of Education" ruling in 1954 (Johnson, 2015). However, if people from poverty were exactly the same cognitively, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally as those from the middle class, then the exact same teaching provided to both middle-class students and students from poverty would bring the exact same results (Jensen, 2013). The focus of the proposed study will be on reading comprehension achievement gaps of students, and on teacher's perceptions and attitudes in low-socio economic urban private school settings as compared to their counterparts in regular public educational settings.

A private school is an educational setting designed to accommodate the educational, behavioral, and/or medical needs of children and adolescents who cannot be adequately addressed in a traditional school environment (Encyclopedia of Children's Health, 2016). Private school education was not created to reform students but, to facilitate, to teach, and to motivate students to get an education.

The research problem. Achievement gaps in reading are an area of concern. For many years, private school students have been ignored due to, their low performance in

reading, resulting in academic achievement gaps. Private school students are given the opportunity to get an education. In schools across the nation, the common complaints among teachers relate to are motivating students to stay in school, economic disadvantages, shortage of student performance, and lack of parental involvement. The problem is students in private school settings have achievement gaps as compared to their counterparts in regular public educational settings. With that being stated, schools located in high-poverty neighborhoods have private school students because the students have slight parental involvement within the home. Over the last 40 years, parental involvement in the educational pursuits of their children has profoundly influenced young people's academic success (Malone, 2017). Unfortunately, some families who want to participate in their child's schooling are challenged by potential barriers to their involvement (Malone, 2017).

Background and justification. This paper examines the effectiveness of promoting change management through historical findings of closing reading comprehension (i.e., vocabulary) achievement gaps with black and white 9th and 10th grade students in a private school. Achievement gaps in education refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students (Ansell, 2011). The achievement gap shows up in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates and among other success measures. Achievement gaps occur when one group of students such as, students grouped by race/ethnicity, gender outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant that is, larger than the margin of error (National Assessment in Educational Progress, 2015). The Florida Department of Education reported in grades 3-

10, the percentage of students who passed the English language arts (also known as reading) Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) increased by 2 points (WFLA, 2017). As an illustration, in spring 2016 to spring 2017 the FSA English Language Arts % Level 3 or above in 2016 was 50% and in 2017 was 51%.

On the contrary, the new federal education law, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), provides a powerful opportunity for educators, administrators, school leaders, parents and families, and everyone who works on behalf of our children's future, to ensure excellence and equity in our public schools—and to reclaim the promise of a truly high- quality, well-rounded education for every student (Taber, 2016).

With that being stated, the potential cause of deficiencies in reading comprehension (i.e., vocabulary) were a lack of student practice and poor motivation as it pertains to reading (Binotti et al, 2001). As an illustration, the first NAEP assessments from the early 1970s, documented a substantial gap in test performance in reading between Black students and White students (Miksic, 2014). In lieu of this, the Coleman Report found in reading that the average black student in 12th grade placed in the 13th percentile of the score distribution, meaning that 87th percent of white students in 12th grade scored ahead of the average black 12th grader. The Coleman Report also known as the "Equality of Education Opportunity," is a breakthrough report on education equity written by James Coleman (Camera, 2016). The report was mandated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which tasked the Department of Education with examining the inequality of educational opportunities in elementary and secondary education across the United States, and especially in the South, to gauge the differences between schools attended by white students and black students.

Deficiencies in the evidence. Breadan (2008) argued that achievement gaps show up in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates, among other success measures. Achievement gaps are most often used to describe the performance gaps between African-American and Hispanic students at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic, White peers. A similar academic disparity exists between students from low-income families and those who are better off (Breadan, 2008). Traditionally, scholars and policymakers have begun to focus increasing attention on other achievement gaps, such as those based on sex, English-language proficiency, and learning disabilities.

Audience. The focus of this study will be on administrators, and teachers who are responsible for instruction of the student population. Administrators and teachers in private schools will learn about the findings of academic achievement gaps within low-socio-economic schools by disaggregating the reading test scores to determine students' academic achievement levels (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2014). For instance, teachers and administrators can use data to understand the academic achievement gaps of low-achieving students, frequent assessments of students, attend professional development on analyzing low-performing student data, and tips on comprehensive instructional strategies. The student study consists of low-socio-economic neighborhoods with students, in Grades 9-12, ranging from ages 16- 18 years old.

Setting of the Study

The study will take place in schools.

Purpose of the Study

This summarizes the introduction which will hopefully provide the reader with

the necessary background on this topic. The purpose of this study is to explore factors that contribute to private school students' academic achievement gaps. The focus of the proposed study will be on reading comprehension achievement gaps of students and on teachers' perceptions and attitudes in low-socio-economic private school settings as compared to their counterparts in regular public educational settings. Also, the proposed study will concentrate on hypothesizing that achievement gaps within reading comprehension occur, because teachers in private settings have perceptions and attitudes that differ from teachers in regular public education settings.

Definition of Terms

The following items are definitions of terms:

Achievement gaps. According to Breadan (2008), the achievement gap shows up in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates, among other success measures. It is most often used to describe the troubling performance gaps between African-American and Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic, White peers, and the similar academic disparity between students from low-income families and those who are better off. In the past decade, though, scholars and policymakers have begun to focus increasing attention on other achievement gaps, such as those based on sex, English-language proficiency and learning disabilities.

Adolescent engagement. Refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (Hidden Curriculum, 2014, p.1).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following section will introduce the background research of the literature review. Studies indicate that an academic achievement gaps in high schools are prominent and an ethical problem within low-socio economic urban private schools. The first NAEP assessments from the early 1970s, documented a substantial gap in test performance in reading and math between Black students and White students (Miksic, 2014). Minority students have continuously experienced obstacles in pursuing educational goals since the "Brown vs. Topeka, Kansas Board of Education" ruling in 1954 (Johnson, 2015). However, if people from poverty were exactly the same cognitively, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally as those from the middle class, then the exact same teaching provided to both middle-class students and students from poverty would bring the exact same results (Jensen, 2013). The focus of the proposed study will be on reading comprehension achievement gaps of students, and on teacher's perceptions and attitudes in low-socio economic urban private school settings as compared to their counterparts in regular public educational settings.

Historically, low-income students as a group have performed less well than high-income students on most measures of academic success—including standardized test scores, grades, high school completion rates, and college enrollment and completion rates (Reardon, 2011). Countless studies have documented these disparities and investigated the many underlying reasons for them. But no research had systematically investigated whether these income related achievement gaps have narrowed or widened over time.

Theoretical Perspective

The focus of the ethical issues will be on administrators, and teachers who are responsible for instruction of the private school student population. Administrators and teachers in private schools will learn about the findings of academic achievement gaps within low-socio-economic schools by disaggregating the math and reading test scores to determine students' academic achievement levels (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2014). For instance, teachers and administrators can use data to understand the academic achievement gaps of low-achieving students, frequent assessments of students, attend professional development on analyzing low-performing student data, and tips on comprehensive instructional strategies. The private school student study consists of low-socio-economic neighborhoods with students, in Grades 9-12, ranging from ages 16- 18 years old.

Academic achievement gaps are an area of concern. For many years, private school students have been ignored due to, their consistent weak motivation to learn or complete class assignments, resulting in academic achievement gaps. Private school students are given the opportunity to get an education. Nonetheless, private school students do not take advantage of the opportunity and drop out or do not graduate. In schools across the nation, the common complaints among teachers relate to are motivating students to stay in school, economic disadvantages, shortage of student performance, and lack of parental involvement. The problem is students in private school settings have achievement gaps as compared to their counterparts in regular public educational settings. With that being stated, schools located in high-poverty neighborhoods have private school students because the students are malnourished and

no parental involvement within the home. Over the last 40 years, parental involvement in the educational pursuits of their children has profoundly influenced young people's academic success (Malone, 2017). Unfortunately, some families who want to participate in their child's schooling are challenged by potential barriers to their involvement.

Breadan (2008) argued that achievement gaps show up in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates, among other success measures. Achievement gaps are most often used to describe the performance gaps between African-American and Hispanic students at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic, White peers. A similar academic disparity exists between students from low-income families and those who are better off. Traditionally, scholars and policymakers have begun to focus increasing attention on other achievement gaps, such as those based on sex, English-language proficiency, and learning disabilities.

Context of Study

Achievement gaps have become greater in recent years for schools that are in low socio-economic neighborhoods (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2011). To close the achievement gaps, administrators in low socio-economic schools have to develop a strategic plan that can assist with academic success within urban education. Educators have to research best practice strategies to promote cognitive and conducive learning environments within urban schools. Li and Hasan (2010) suggested that teachers should develop a plan that is effective, gear students to comprehend and ultimately have learning gains. The authors believed that learning is centered on student achievement.

Private school students are experiencing achievement gaps with male and female students in urban education is grounded in the academic success of minority students is important because the nation cannot successfully compete in a global market when a considerable portion of its school population is under-educated (Nan & Zia, 2010). This theory was originally developed by Nan & Zia, 2010, and was primarily used to study Closing the achievement gap: Strategies for ensuring the success of minority students (Gollnick, & Chinn, 2005).The theory of Closing the achievement gap: Strategies for ensuring the success of minority students indicates that public schools across the nation continue to struggle with persistent achievement gaps and this challenge becomes even greater for schools with high poverty and high-minority populations (Dillon, 2005; Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 2004; Li, 2005; Valentine, 2005). Longitudinal data reveals that Hispanic and African-American students have lower literacy scores than other ethnic groups. For instance, one in four Hispanic teens and one in five African-American teens respectively read below the basic reading levels (NAEP, 2005).

Hanselman (2014), referenced that achievement gaps are the central issue of private school students are falling behind because of attendance issues which may inadvertently cause a severe disconnection by nonattendance of particular peer groups. This problem can cause students to feel there favoritism embedded in the organizational culture. Absenteeism with private school students can change their outlook toward school and can change the teacher's attitude toward students who are consistently absent. Schools can make changes to rectify this connection. Most absent for reasons endorsed by the school culture in actuality have limitless excused absences.

Synthesis of the Findings

  With this ethical issues, the author mention strategies for ensuring academic achievement in middle and high school (Mayer 2010). However, in order to have high academic achievement, an issue needs to be addressed which student attendance. Attendance policies make a delicate difference connecting the social groups by developing policies around students and excusing those students who are just burned out. Student Burn-outs may view their reasons for absences as justifiable for example, playing in a basketball game, yet most school attendance policies do not uphold their views. Students who are absent for reasons other than involvement in school functions have to pay the penalty as laid out in school policy, while those attending school are excused. Though these latter absences are legitimized by the system, the students' learning is however, reduced to makeup work and outside projects. On the contrary, students who do not participate in school associated absences may have valid reasons for missing but, students should make an effort to attend if not this will turn in to low achievement gaps due to high rates of absenteeism.

Identification of Gaps

  Within closing the achievement gaps, private schools have to develop a strategic plan that can assist with academic success within urban education. Therefore, the foundation finding why academic achievements gaps exist, how teachers have to research best practice strategies to promote cognitive and conducive learning environments within urban schools. In addition, the ensuing study should be quantitatively oriented. Creswell (2015) states: A qualitative research study is a research problem through a description of trends or a need for an explanation of the relationship among variables that provide a

major role for the literature through suggesting the research questions to be asked and justifying the research problem and creating a need for the direction of study, in which is exhibited in this literature review.

There are discussions among critics and even supporters of the law about how "proficiency" is defined and whether or not it is an attainable goal (ESSA, 2015). In the study, "Proficiency for All: An Oxymoron," Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder (2006) stated that the goal of proficiency for all cannot be reached primarily because there is too little time between now and 2014 for schools to improve sufficiently. Furthermore, the study suggests that the problem is more fundamental than an underestimate of how long it might take for all students to achieve proficiency (ESSA, 2015). The researchers contend that proficiency for all is an oxymoron, as the term is commonly understood and improperly used .The new law, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) builds on key areas of progress in recent years, made possible by the efforts of educators, communities, parents, and students across the country. For instance, today, high school graduation rates are at all-time highs. Dropout rates are at historic lows. And more students are going to college than ever before. These achievements provide a firm foundation for further work to expand educational opportunity and improve student outcomes under ESSA.

In an effort to reduce the achievement gap and alleviate the derogatory labels often assigned to private school students, stakeholders should create best practice education strategies to eliminate academic achievement gaps. On Dec. 10, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law. ESSA is the most recent version of the federal government's biggest K-12 law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which came into effect in 1965. ESSA contains a number of meaningful

levers that education leaders, parents, members of the business and civil rights communities, and advocates can use to advance education equity (The Education Trust, 2016). These levers, covered in detail on the following pages, include: Consistent, state-adopted standards for all students that are aligned with the demands of postsecondary education and work; Statewide annual assessments aligned with statewide standards; Clear requirements that statewide accountability systems must expect more progress for the groups of students who have been behind, base school ratings on the progress of all groups of students, and expect action when any group of students is consistently underperforming; Richer public reporting on academic outcomes and opportunities to learn for all groups of students, including, for the first time, school-level per-pupil spending and access to rigorous coursework; Resources to support teachers and leaders, and a demand that states and districts report on and address inequities in the rates at which low-income students and students of color are assigned to ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers; and Continued targeting of federal funding to the highest poverty schools and districts.

The most discussed gap – and the one the term "the achievement gap" usually references – is between the test scores of minority and/or low-income students and the test scores of their White and Asian peers. But there are many gaps in test scores. Some groups may trail at particular points (NEA, 2017). Differences between the scores of students with different backgrounds (e.g., ethnic, racial, gender, disability, and income) are evident on large-scale standardized tests. Test score gaps often lead to longer term gaps, including high school and college completion and the kinds of jobs students secure as adults. Student Groups Experiencing Achievement Gaps: racial and ethnic minorities,

English language learners, students with disabilities and boys/girls. The indicators of

achievement gaps: performance on tests (e.g., statewide tests, Scholastic Aptitude Test

[SAT]), access to key opportunities (e.g., advanced mathematics, physics, higher

education), and attainments (e.g., high school diploma, college degree, employment).

Before turning to the discussion questions that will help identify the gaps that

exist locally, for instance, some indicators of gaps in performance on tests, students'

access to key opportunities, and important attainments. Some, or all of these, indicators

may exist locally. The students' academic performance: scores for white, Asian, and

Pacific Islander students were higher, on average, than for Black, Hispanic, and

American Indian students at grades 4 and 8 on the 2003 National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP). Hispanic students scored higher, on average, than Black

students on the 2003 NAEP, 17-year-old Black and Latino students, on average, read and

complete math at the 13-year-old level on NAEP.

Discussion of Past Studies

Centering on solving the problem of achievement gap, school choice has been a

popular reform approach since the 1980s to improve public school quality and give

parents more freedom in choosing schools for their children (Haifeng & Cowen 2009).

Across the nation, a series of school choice reform programs such as intra-district and

inter-district open enrollment, charter schools and magnet schools, have been

implemented in many states and metropolitan areas. For instance, the delivery of

instruction is not just standing in front of the classroom and reading word for word but

teaching and aiding students to comprehend what is taught. Therefore, the educator must

distinguish and identify their student's individual academic needs. Educational

information can be obtained through the reading of Individual Education Plans (IEP), and

collaborative planning with other teachers, parents, and students. A formal assessment

such as a baseline assessment, is useful in determining the student's academic level (The

National Foundation for Educational Research, 2017). Once information is obtained then

it is necessary to use a choice of techniques to deliver instruction. A successful teacher

monitors the effectiveness of the lessons delivery and modifies the strategies by one-on-

one instruction, peer instruction, differentiated instruction, and scaffolding

     Mayer and Tucker (2010) identified that students need student proximity,

immediate corrective feedback and counseling. Also, students need a support system

other than their parents to intervene and to show interest in their children. In contrast,

teachers are considered as parents, counselors, and advisors with the students. Mayer and

Tucker (2010) stated that students need to receive ongoing immediate corrective

feedback. For instance, when a teacher introduces a new lesson he or she needs to do

immediate corrective feedback with students to see if the students understand the concept

by giving a formative assessment.

     The major themes and the primary results of the findings are past research reveals

that achievement gaps become greater in recent years for schools that are in low socio-

economic neighborhoods. Within closing the achievement gaps, the private schools have

to develop a strategic plan that can assist with academic success within urban education.

Therefore, the foundation for the presentation of a purpose statement and research

questions are that teachers have to research best practice strategies to promote cognitive

and conducive learning environments within urban schools. In addition, the ensuing study

should be quantitatively oriented. Creswell (2015) states: A qualitative research study is a

research problem through a description of trends or a need for an explanation of the relationship among variables that provide a major role for the literature through suggesting the research questions to be asked and justifying the research problem and creating a need for the direction of study, in which is exhibited in this literature review.

Achievement gaps have become greater in recent years for schools that are in low socio-economic neighborhoods (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2011). To close the achievement gaps, administrators in low socio-economic schools have to develop a strategic plan that can assist with academic success within urban education. Educators have to research best practice strategies to promote cognitive and conducive learning environments within urban schools. Li and Hasan (2010) suggested that teachers should develop a plan that is effective, gear students to comprehend and ultimately have learning gains. The authors believed that learning is centered on student achievement.

Hedden (2011), identified that the influence of students labeled as private school students are considered as intellectually inferior, incompetent, lacking effort, or attempting to cheat or use unfair advantages when accommodations. The occurrence of being misunderstood occurs both interpersonally as well as interpersonally leading to reduction and marginalization. When private school students feel that the system (teachers and administrators) are supporting them, they begin to be disconnected. Often times, general education students connect with their teachers when they have that support system however, private school students are a bit stubborn and they misbehave to avoid doing their assignment, then the attention of the misbehavior is the focus instead of the learning.

Centering on solving the problem of achievement gap, school choice has been a popular reform approach since the 1980s to improve public school quality and give parents more freedom in choosing schools for their children (Haifeng & Cowen 2009). Across the nation, a series of school choice reform programs such as intra-district and inter-district open enrollment, charter schools and magnet schools, have been implemented in many states and metropolitan areas. For instance, the delivery of instruction is not just standing in front of the classroom and reading word for word but teaching and aiding students to comprehend what is taught. Therefore, the educator must distinguish and identify their student's individual academic needs. Educational information can be obtained through the reading of Individual Education Plans (IEP), and collaborative planning with other teachers, parents, and students. A formal assessment such as a baseline assessment, is useful in determining the student's academic level (The National Foundation for Educational Research, 2017). Once information is obtained then it is necessary to use a choice of techniques to deliver instruction. A successful teacher monitors the effectiveness of the lessons delivery and modifies the strategies by one-on-one instruction, peer instruction, differentiated instruction, and scaffolding.

Mayer and Tucker (2010) identified that students need student proximity, immediate corrective feedback and counseling. Also, students need a support system other than their parents to intervene and to show interest in their children. In contrast, teachers are considered as parents, counselors, and advisors with the students. Mayer and Tucker (2010) stated that students need to receive ongoing immediate corrective feedback. For instance, when a teacher introduces a new lesson he or she needs to do

immediate corrective feedback with students to see if the students understand the concept by giving a formative assessment.

Contributions

Academic achievement, as measured by standardized test scores, is not the only education outcome for which disparities between high-income and low-income students have been growing (Reardon, 2011). The college-completion rate among children from high-income families has grown sharply in the last few decades, whereas the completion rate for students from low-income families has barely moved (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). Moreover, high income students make up an increasing share of the enrollment at the most selective colleges and universities (Reardon, Baker, & Klasik, 2012)—even when compared with low-income students with similar test scores and academic records (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). A related trend during the last 20 years is the growing social-class gap in other important measures of adolescents' "soft skills" and behaviors related to civic engagement, such as participating in extracurricular activities, sports, and academic clubs; volunteering and participating in community life; and self-reports of social trust (Putnam, Frederick, & Snellman, 2012).

Popular notions of what constitutes education success have changed. In the last few decades, test scores have become increasingly central to our idea of what schools are supposed to produce (Reardon, 2011). As test scores have played a more dominant role in education policy over the last decade (and have become more important in college admissions), they have become increasingly salient to parents concerned with their children's education success. Fifth, American families have changed in several important ways in the last four decades. Children in high-income families are increasingly likely to

be raised by two parents, both with college degrees, whereas low-income children are more likely than ever to be raised by a single mother with a low level of education (McLanahan, 2004; Schwartz & Mare, 2005). This means that family income has become increasingly correlated to other family characteristics and resources that are important for children's development. The combination of these broad social trends has had important consequences for children's academic success. Increased uncertainty about children's likelihood of upward social mobility, coupled with the increased importance of education for career security, has made parents increasingly anxious about their children's education. This has led to greater competition among families for their children's academic success. In summary, the growth in income inequality and in the correlation of income with other family resources means that family resources have become increasingly unequal at the same time that families are increasingly focused on their children's education, a constellation of trends that has led to a rapidly growing disparity in the extent to which families invest their time and money in their children's education. Indeed, high-income families now spend nearly 7 times as much on their children's development as low-income families, up from a ratio of 4 times as much in 1972 (Kornrich & Furstenberg, 2013).

United States of America schools have historically been thought of as the great equalizer—the social institution best suited to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to learn, develop, and thrive (Reardon, 2011). It is unrealistic, however, to think that school-based strategies alone will eliminate today's stark disparities in academic success. Economic policies that reduce inequality; family support policies that ensure children grow up in stable, secure homes and neighborhoods; and early-childhood

education policies that promote cognitive and social development should all be part of a comprehensive strategy to close the economic achievement gap. Nonetheless, schools do have a key role to play in the efforts to reduce this gap. Among the school-based strategies that might be most effective, I suggest three specific areas. First, states and school districts could devote a greater share of their resources and efforts to the earliest grades, including kindergarten and preschool. Because achievement gaps are self-perpetuating, the earlier we intervene to reduce them, the more effective we will be at eliminating them in the long run. Second, growing evidence suggests that more time in school (for example, extending the school day or year or providing after-school or summer-school programs) may help to narrow academic achievement gaps—if the added time is used effectively (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; National Center on Time and Learning, 2012). Although the evidence is far from conclusive at this point, it appears to be a strategy worth pursuing. Third, states and school districts can do more to ensure that all students have equal access to high-quality teachers, stimulating curriculum and instruction, and adequate school resources (computers, libraries, and the like). The United States has grown more residentially segregated by income over the last four decades (Reardon & Bischoff, 2011), meaning that schools have, in many places, become increasingly segregated by income as well. School districts can work against this growing segregation by developing student assignment systems that promote socioeconomic diversity within schools.

The widening income achievement gap is a symptom of a confluence of trends that have accompanied and exacerbated widening income inequality in the United States over the last four decades (Reardon, 2011).But it is a symptom with real and important

consequences. If we do not find ways to reduce the growing inequality in education outcomes, we are in danger of bequeathing our children a society in which the American Dream—the promise that one can rise, through education and hard work, to any position in society is no longer a reality. Our schools cannot be expected to solve this problem on their own, but they must be part of the solution.

Fisher (2015), identified eight great ways to inspire educational gains among students who need them most: The following items are: use evidence-based instruction-one of the keys to helping students who are struggling, or not making consistent progress, is the use of a supplemental, evidenced-based intervention program to aid learning. The cycle from formative assessment to instruction enables the teacher to observe students' responses to targeted interventions and to proceed with instruction supported by ongoing performance data. Provide a rigorous curriculum: ample evidence shows that almost all students can achieve at high levels if they are taught at high levels. The curriculum should feature balanced instruction, emphasizing basic skills for increasing comprehension. Increase instructional time: struggling students often need more instructional time coupled with an increased intensity of instruction in small groups and more repetitions or doses of instruction. For example, instruction offered to struggling readers needs to be clear and explicit, provide scaffolding, and target their individual needs. Introduce supplemental instruction: supplemental instruction is intended to fill in students' learning gaps as quickly as possible and return them to core instruction. Instruction should typically be delivered at least three times per week in small-group settings in addition to regular classroom instruction. Monitor progress, ideally monthly: teachers need to know exactly what students are doing well and precisely where

they need to focus their attention. Using formative assessments, teachers can pinpoint where students have gaps and intervene accordingly. Motivate and engage: when tasks are not matched to students and they are asked to perform skills they do not have, their motivation and engagement decrease. Use of theme, technology, choice, and differentiation enhances motivation and engagement. Deepen professional development: a well-designed and clearly communicated teacher development process is essential for driving measurable and lasting learning for students. Link school and home: close cooperation between schools, parents, and the community is one keys to closing achievement gaps. Parent involvement has a strong, direct impact on student achievement.

Factors that contribute to achievement gaps within school control are: low expectations for student achievement; lack of rigor in the curriculum; large class size; tracking groups of students into a less demanding curriculum; unsafe schools; culturally unfriendly environments; and poor, or no, instructional leadership (NEA, 2017). Factors in the local community economic opportunity for students' families; access to health and social services; community safety; access to libraries, museums, and other institutions that support students' development; and access to child care and after-school programs and facilities. Teacher- and teaching-related factors, uncertified and inexperienced teachers; insensitivity to different cultures; poor teacher preparation; low expectations of students; and inadequate materials, equipment, and resources, including technology-based resources. Students' background families' income level; students' birth weight; students' diet and nutrition at home; students' mobility; and students' primary language (if other than English). Student-related factors students' interest in school; students' level of

effort; students' feeling that they are, in part, responsible for their learning. Education funding shortfalls: state budget deficits; unfunded federal mandates; and inequities in funding among school districts. Family support of students' learning family participation in school activities; family skills to support and reinforce learning; and students' TV watching and at-home reading. Family support of students' learning time family members are able to devote to support and reinforce learning. Other factors societal bias (racial, ethnic, poverty and class).

     Closing achievement gaps is complex and challenging (NEA, 2017). A variety of strategies are needed to address the many factors that contribute to the gaps. District- and School-Based Strategies that Can Help Close Achievement Gaps: The following items are: engage students' families-family play a significant role in ensuring that students are ready to learn and in supporting learning throughout school. Family support is essential to community support. Outreach to families is culturally and linguistically sensitive. Intervene early-early learning experiences help students enter school ready to learn. Students gain these experiences at home and in child care, pre-K, and kindergarten programs. Early screening identifies children needing medical or social services to succeed at school. Target current resources, and seek adequate funding. Targeting resources on closing achievement gaps focuses schools' efforts. Adequate funding supports students with achievement gaps. Achievement gaps often increase over time at under-funded schools. District- and school-based strategies that can help close achievement gaps**.** Provide comprehensive support to students. Social and health services meet student needs that affect learning. Role models expose students to successful

individuals. Student mentors provide personal support and direction for students. Peer tutoring provides students with additional instructional support.

Build a school environment that supports learning. The school is safe, orderly, focused on academics, and sensitive to students' diversity. The entire staff shares responsibility for closing achievement gaps. Extended learning opportunities, such as after-school sessions, are provided. Test and other performance data help the school identify achievement gaps and close them. Faculty and staff have time during the school day to plan, participate in professional development, and operate as a professional learning community.

Build classroom environments that support learning. Students have access to qualified teachers. Teachers provide instruction that results in breadth of learning and depth of understanding. Instructional time is free of interruptions. Reduced class size leads to high-quality instruction and individual attention

Historically, we have not agreed on what U.S. students should learn at each grade level—or on what kind of work is good enough (Haycock, 2012). These decisions have been left to individual schools and teachers. The result is a system that, by and large, doesn't ask much of most of its students. And we don't have to go far to find that out: Ask the nearest teenager. In survey after survey, young people tell us that they are not challenged in school. The situation is worse in high-poverty and high-minority schools. For the past six years, our staff at the Education Trust has worked with teachers who are trying to improve the achievement levels of their students. But while we've been observing these high-poverty classrooms, we've also looked carefully at what happens there—what kinds of assignments teachers give, for example—compared to what happens in other classrooms.

Clear and public standards for what students should learn at benchmark grade levels are a crucial part of solving the problem (Haycock, 2012). They are a guide—for teachers, administrators, parents, and students themselves—to what knowledge and skills students must master. Kentucky was the first state to embrace standards-based reform. Ten years ago, the Kentucky legislature put out an ambitious set of learning goals and had the audacity to declare that all of its children—even the poorest—would meet those goals. Leaders in Kentucky are the first to acknowledge that they are not there yet. But their progress is clear and compelling. And poor children are, in fact, learning in all subjects. For example, in reading, 7 of the 20 top-performing elementary schools are high-poverty; in math, 8 of the top 20 are high-poverty; in writing, 13 of the top 20 are high-poverty.

Standards would not make much of a difference, though, if they are not accompanied by a rigorous curriculum that is aligned with those standards (Haycock, 2012). Yet, in too many schools, some students are taught a high-level curriculum, whereas other students continue to be taught a low-level curriculum that is aligned with jobs that no longer exist.

Current patterns are clearest in high schools, where students who take more-rigorous coursework learn more and perform better on tests. Indeed, the more-rigorous courses they take, the better they do. The reverse is true of watered-down, traditional "vocational" courses. The more vocational education courses students take, the lower their performance on the NAEP. Although, some of these differences are clearly attributable to the fact that higher-scoring students are often assigned to tougher classes, careful

research shows the positive impact of more-rigorous coursework even on formerly low-achieving students.

Almost three-quarters of high school graduates go on to higher education, but only about half of them complete even a mid-level college-preparatory curriculum (four years of English and three years each of math, science, and social studies) (Haycock, 2012). If we also include two years of a foreign language and a semester of computer science, the numbers drop to about 12 percent. The numbers are worse for African Americans, Latinos, and low-income students.

Ample evidence shows that almost all students can achieve at high levels if they are taught at high levels (Haycock, 2012).But equally clear is that some students require more time and more instruction. One of the most frequent questions we are asked by stressed-out middle and high school teachers is "How am I supposed to get my students ready to pass the (fill-in-the-blank) grade test when they enter with 3rd grade reading skills and I have only my 35-minute period each day?" When students are behind in foundational skills like reading and mathematics, we need to double or even triple the amount and quality of instruction that they get.

This summarizes the literature review which will hopefully provide the reader with the necessary background on this topic. If students are going to be held to high standards, they need teachers who know the subjects and know how to teach the subjects (Haycock, 2012). Yet large numbers of students, especially those who are poor or are members of minority groups, are taught by teachers who do not have strong backgrounds in the subjects they teach. In every subject area, students in high-poverty schools are more likely than other students to be taught by teachers without even a minor in the

subjects they teach. The differences are often greater in predominantly minority high schools. In math and science, for example, only about half the teachers in schools with 90 percent or greater minority enrollments meet even their states' minimum requirements to teach those subjects—far fewer than in predominantly white schools. The patterns are similar regardless of the measure of teacher qualifications—experience, certification, academic preparation, or performance on licensure tests. We take the students who most depend on their teachers for subject-matter learning and assign them teachers with the weakest academic foundations.

Research Questions

Three research questions will guide this study:

1. What are the perceptions and attitudes of teachers of students' successes that are shared widely within a school setting?

2. What are the perceptions and attitudes of teachers in public school settings regarding school leaders to promote the school as a caring and culturally inclusive community?

The purpose of this study is to explore factors that contribute to private school students' academic achievement gaps. The focus of the proposed study will be on reading comprehension achievement gaps of students and on teachers' perceptions and attitudes in low-socio-economic private school settings as compared to their counterparts in regular public educational settings. Also, the proposed study will concentrate on hypothesizing that achievement gaps within reading comprehension occur, because teachers in private settings have perceptions and attitudes that differ from teachers in regular public education settings.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore factors that contribute to private school students' academic achievement gaps. The focus of the proposed study was on reading comprehension achievement gaps of students and on teachers' perceptions and attitudes in low-socio-economic private school settings as compared to their counterparts in regular public educational settings.

The chapter defines the methodology employed in this study. The chapter included participants, procedure, design, instruments, method for data analysis and limitations of the study. As a qualitative design, academic research occurred in multicultural education, an educational approach that encourages diversity and equality: the instruction of students from different backgrounds, the study of ethnic and other cultural groups, the development of critical thinking skills, and focused on human relations (E-Notes.com, 2018). The achievement gap in education referred to systematic variances in the ability to learn between students from majority populations and students from minority populations. As a result, efforts were made to raise student achievement across the board and close achievement gaps.

Participants

The target population of the study were students in low-socio economic urban private school. The focus of this study were on administrators, and teachers who was responsible for instruction of the private school student population. The statement of the problem studies indicated that academic achievement gaps in high schools were prominent within low-socio economic urban private schools. The participants of this study was 95% African American and 5% Hispanic, male and female teachers within

low-socio economic urban private school. The private school students study consisted of

students in grades 9-12, ranging from ages 15- 18 years old. Participants in this study

were high school teachers. The sampling method was a non-probability sampling.

Instruments

The following data collection instruments was used: Wellbeing at School Teacher

Survey (WSTS) (Wellbeing at School Teacher Survey, 2018).The WSTS is a survey that

explores how well schools promotes a safe and caring social climate. The survey asks

questions about: school-wide leadership, climate, policies, and practices; how teachers

teach, and what happens in classrooms; student culture and behavior, and how

connections were made with the school community.

Procedures

Design. The current investigation utilized a quantitative methodology and was

descriptive in nature. The specific design was a cross-sectional design found under the

survey approach. The surveyor secured a formal approval from the director of a private

school. A formal letter explained the implication and applicability of the study to the

current educational environment with specifics on the administration of the survey, the

format of the survey, the time-limit of the survey, and the supervision of the

administration survey at the private school. The survey was a brief form letter that asked

teachers to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. The director of private

school assisted with the survey. The principal met with teachers to encourage

participation in the survey by the faculty. The teachers were notified about the survey

through the director. The survey took place after school hours and did not interrupt

instructional time. The survey took between 10-15 minutes. The survey was organized by

the researcher, with an effort that complied with the director of private the school. The surveys were completed in a timely and non-disruptive manner.

Data analysis. For the purposes of this data analysis research, in depth interviews were implemented. In depth interviews were considered as: personal and informal interviews, that aimed to identify participant's emotions, feelings, and opinions which regarded a particular research subject (Gill, 2008). The main advantage of personal interviews was that they involved personal and direct contact between interviewers and interviewees, as well as eliminated non-response rates, but interviewers developed the necessary skills to successfully carry an interview (Fisher, 2005 & Wilson, 2003). What is more, informal interviews offered flexibility in terms of the flow of the interview, thereby left the room for the generation of conclusions that were not initially derived regarding a research subject. However, there was a risk that the interview may deviated from the pre-specified research aims and objectives (Gill & Johnson, 2002).

The Coleman Report found, among many other things that in both math and reading the average black student in grade 12 placed in the 13th percentile of the score distribution meaning that 87 percent of white students in grade 12 scored ahead of the average black twelfth grade students (Camera, 2016). However, 50 years later, that gap has barely narrowed, Hanushek's analysis shows. The average twelfth grade black student, according to data from the 2013 National Assessment for Educational Progress, placed only in the nineteenth percentile. In reading, the achievement gap has improved slightly more than in math, but after a half century, the average black student scores at just the twenty-second percentile. The largest gains in both math and reading were found in the Southern states, where the larger gaps observed in 1965 were brought in line with

the rest of the nation by 2013, Hanushek's analysis shows. Generally, however, there was slow improvement in much of the rest of the country, including an expanded reading gap in the Midwest.

Limitations

The limitation advantages in face-to-face interviews is that there is no significant time delay between question and answer; the interviewer and interviewee can directly react on what the other says or does (Opdenakker, 2006). An additional advantage of this synchronous communication is that the answer of the interviewee is more spontaneous, without a lengthy reflection. But, due to this synchronous character of the medium, the interviewer must concentrate much more on the questions ask and the answers will be given. Especially when an informal or semi-formal interview list is used, and the interviewer has to formulate questions as a result of the interactive nature of communication. Asynchronous communication of place can be a limitation disadvantage, because the interviewer has no view on the situation in which the interviewee will be there. Because of this, the interviewer will have less possibilities to create a good interview ambience. Another limitation disadvantage with a small group of teachers as comparing to individual interviews focus groups were not as efficient in covering maximum depth on a particular issue (Writing, 2017). A particular disadvantage of a focus group is the possibility that the members may not express their honest and personal opinions about the topic at hand. Teachers may be hesitant to express their thoughts, especially when their thoughts oppose the views of another participant.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The following results below will display 66 participants' data survey responses

which consisted of: the number and percentage of respondents that chose strongly agree,

agree, disagree and strongly disagree that contributed to private school students'

academic achievement gaps. The focus of the proposed study was on reading

comprehension achievement gaps of students and on teachers' perceptions and attitudes

in low-socio-economic private school settings as compared to their counterparts in

regular public educational settings. In order to address the stated problem of the current

investigation, the researcher posed the following Wellbeing at School Teacher Survey 21

questions.

The survey data was compiled and entered into Survey Monkey for the Wellbeing

at School Teacher Survey for analysis. The research participants of the current study were

sixty-four professional teachers. This section presents the results of this analysis using

inferential evidence based on the following three research questions:

Research Question 1. What are the perceptions and attitudes of teachers of

students' successes that are shared widely within a school setting? The survey analysis

indicated 23.08% and 15 teachers strongly agreed, 72.31% and 47 teachers agreed, 3.08%

and 2 teachers disagreed and 1.54% and 1 teacher strongly disagreed that student

successes were shared widely within a school setting.

Research Question 2. What are the perceptions and attitudes of teachers in a

public school settings regarding school leaders to promote the school as a caring and

culturally inclusive community? The survey analysis displayed 23.82% and 21 teachers

strongly agreed, 57.58% and 38 teachers agreed, 7.58% and 5 teachers disagreed and 3.03% and 2 teachers strongly disagreed that school leaders promote the school as a caring and culturally inclusive community.

Survey Data

The results from each item are presented below. For the first item, staff share a strong collective vision. The results indicated 34.38% and 22 teachers strongly agreed, 51.56% and 33 teachers agreed, 14.06% and 9 teachers disagreed and 0.00% and 0 teachers strongly disagreed. School leaders promote the school as a caring and culturally inclusive community. The results indicated 31.82% and 21 teachers strongly agreed, 57.58% and 38 teachers agreed, 7.58% and 5 teachers disagreed and 3.03% and 2 teachers strongly disagreed. The leadership teams work collaboratively with staff to set school directions. The results indicated 29.23% and 19 teachers strongly agreed, 53.85% and 35 teachers agreed, 15.38% and 10 teachers disagreed and 1.54% and 1 teacher strongly disagreed. School leaders encourage staff to share ideas rather than compete with each other. The results indicated 30.30% and 20 teachers strongly agreed, 59.09% and 39 teachers agreed, 9.09% and 6 teachers disagreed and 1.52% and 1 teacher strongly disagree. Staff respect and care about students. The results indicated 31.82% and 21 teachers strongly agreed, 63.64% and 42 teachers agreed, 4.55% and 3 teachers disagreed and 0.00% and 0 teachers strongly disagreed. Staff always behave how they would like students to behave. The results indicated 16.92% and 11 teachers strongly agreed, 58.46% and 38 teachers agreed, 21.54% and 14 teachers disagreed and 3.08% and 2 teachers strongly disagreed. Staff treat each other with respect. The results indicated 20.00% and 13 teachers strongly agreed, 72.31% and 47 teachers agreed, 7.69% and 5

teachers disagreed and 0.00% and 0 teachers strongly disagreed. Staff consider students'

wellbeing to be a priority. The results indicated 23.08% and 15 teachers strongly agreed,

64.62% and 42 teachers agreed, 10.77% and 7 teachers disagreed and 1.54% and 1

teacher strongly disagreed. Staff have a strong sense of belonging. The results indicated

13.85% and 9 teachers strongly agreed, 66.15% and 43 teachers agreed, 18.46% and 12

teachers disagreed and 1.54% and 1 teacher strongly disagreed. Staff and students are

committed to the school values (e.g., respect for others). The results indicated 21.21%

and 14 teachers strongly agreed, 60.61% and 40 teachers agreed, 15.15% and 10 teachers

disagreed and 3.03% and 2 teachers strongly disagreed. Students' successes are shared

widely (e.g., at assemblies, during staff meetings, in newsletters). The results indicated

23.08% and 15 teachers strongly agreed, 72.31% and 47 teachers agreed, 3.08% and 2

teachers disagreed and 1.54% and 1 teacher strongly disagreed. Staff recognize and

acknowledge students' caring and helpful behaviors (e.g., in classrooms, on duty, at

assembly). The results indicated 15.38% and 10 teachers strongly agreed, 81.54% and 53

teachers agreed, 3.08% and 2 teachers disagreed and 0.00% and 0 teachers strongly

disagreed. We have effective ways of celebrating students who demonstrate care and

concern for others. The results indicated 10.61% and 7 teachers strongly agreed, 77.27%

and 51 teachers agreed, 12.12% and 8 teachers disagreed and 0.00% and 0 teachers

strongly disagreed. Staff encourage students to be inclusive and respectful of peers from

other cultures and backgrounds. The results indicated 16.67% and 11 teachers strongly

agreed, 78.79% and 52 teachers agreed, 3.03% and 2 teachers disagreed and 1.52% and 1

teacher strongly disagreed. Staff relate well to students from different cultures or

backgrounds. The results indicated 10.61% and 7 teachers strongly agreed, 77.27% and

51 teachers agreed, 12.12% and 8 teachers disagreed and 0.00% and 0 teachers strongly disagreed. Staff are supported to learn effective ways of working with students from different cultural groups. The results indicated 7.69% and 5 teachers strongly agreed, 78.46% and 51 teachers agreed, 9.23% and 6 teachers disagreed and 4.62% and 3 teachers strongly disagreed Staff have an awareness of the concepts and practices of tāngata whenua. The results indicated 3.08% and 2 teachers strongly agreed, 63.08% and 41 teachers agreed, 23.08% and 15 teachers disagreed and 10.77% and 7 teachers strongly disagreed. The cultural practices of our students are reflected in school life (e.g., new students are welcomed with a powhiri, fono are held for parents). The results indicated 7.69% and 5 teachers strongly agreed, 73.85% and 48 teachers agreed, 9.23% and 6 teachers disagreed and 9.23% and 6 teachers strongly disagreed. We make connections to local community events and festivals (e.g., Matariki, White Sunday). The results indicated 7.69% and 5 teachers strongly agreed, 67.69% and 44 teachers agreed, 13.85% and 9 teachers disagreed and 10.77% and 7 teachers strongly disagreed. The buildings, equipment, and grounds are well looked after. The results indicated 23.08% and 15 teachers strongly agreed, 72.31% and 47 teachers agreed, 3.08% and 2 teachers disagreed and 1.54% and 1 teacher strongly disagreed. There are lots of examples of student work in school corridors and classrooms. The results indicated 12.31% and 8 teachers strongly agreed, 80% and 52 teachers agreed, 7.69% and 5 teachers disagreed and 0.00% and 0 teachers strongly disagreed.

The following results below will display 66 participant data survey responses which consists of: the number and percentage of respondents that chose strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree that contributed to private school students'

academic achievement gaps. The researcher posed the following Wellbeing at School

Teacher Survey (2018), 21 questions.

Wellbeing @ School Teacher Survey

Table

	Respondents	SA	A	D	SD
Question 1	66	34.38	51.56	14.06	0
Question 2	66	31.82	57.58	7.58	3.03
Question 3	66	29.23	53.85	15.38	1.54
Question 4	66	30.3	59.09	9.09	1.52
Question 5	66	34.38	51.56	14.06	0
Question 6	66	16.92	58.46	21.54	3.08
Question 7	66	20	72.31	7.69	0
Question 8	66	23.08	64.62	10.77	1.54
Question 9	66	13.85	66.15	18.46	1.54
Question 10	66	21.21	60.61	15.15	3.03
Question 11	66	23.08	72.31	3.08	1.54
Question 12	66	15.38	81.54	3.08	0
Question 13	66	10.61	77.27	12.12	0
Question 14	66	16.67	78.79	3.03	1.52
Question 15	66	10.61	77.27	12.06	0
Question 16	66	7.69	78.46	9.23	4.62
Question 17	66	3.08	63.08	23.08	10.77
Question 18	66	7.69	73.85	9.23	9.23
Question 19	66	7.69	67.69	13.85	10.77
Question 20	66	23.08	72.31	3.08	1.54
Question 21	66	12.31	80	7.69	0

Notes. For SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D= Disagree SD= Strongly Disagree

Analysis of Teacher Perception

The table chart below shows Figure 1: Attitudes, practices and outcomes model of

the current study. Table 1 below is from the Journal of Psychology and Psychotherapy,

Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms: The Link between Teachers' Attitudes Practices and
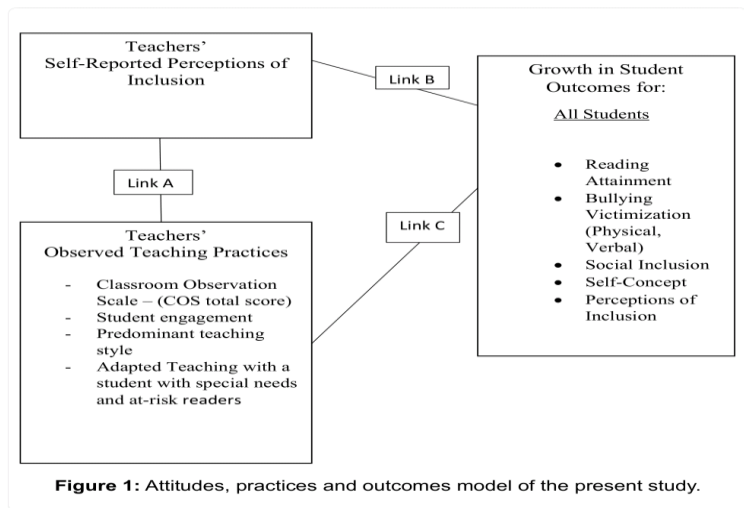
Student Outcomes (Savage & Erten, 2015).

Figure 1: Attitudes, practices and outcomes model of the present study.

Figure- The link between teachers' attitudes practices and student outcomes

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This study used a quantitative approach with a descriptive-correlational design to identify teachers' perceptions and attitudes about teaching and academic achievement gaps of students using the instrument Wellbeing at School Teacher Survey (Wellbeing at School Teacher Survey, 2018). The research participants of this study included 64 teacher data survey responses which consists of: the number and percentage of respondents that chose strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree that contributed to private school students' academic achievement gaps.

Interpretation of Results

The results of the study of teachers' perceptions and attitudes on teaching and academic achievement gaps of students revealed that the participants were highly motivated to teach lower performing students and wanted give the students the opportunity to increase their academic performance. The National Assessment Governing Board and National Center for Education Statistics released results from the 2017 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) (Hansen et al., 2018). Often referred to as "the Nation's Report Card," these results provide a bi-annual barometer on how states and the country as a whole were performing in the classroom. This year's results were particularly noteworthy because they were from the final NAEP administered before implementation of the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In this sense, these results reflected a boundary in the timeline of education policy, demarcating the end of the NCLB era and the beginning of the ESSA era.

Though the early NCLB era saw some improvements in student achievement, it appeared that the progress was largely stalled during the latter half of the period (Hansen et al., 2018). Moreover, a dip in performance in the 2015 assessment has persisted in the current results, suggesting it was no statistical anomaly. Nonetheless, though the failure to make overall progress in recent years was disappointing, there were some positive trends with respect to achievement gaps. Racial and ethnic achievement gaps have been on a gradual, and at times bumpy, decline since the 1970s.

In contrast to the improvement in racial and ethnic achievement gaps, however, achievement gaps based on students' eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch our best proxy for poverty in the NAEP data does not show much progress (Hansen et al., 2018). The free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL) gaps have dropped by just 0.03 and 0.02 standard deviations in fourth and eighth grade, respectively, since 2003. Part of the slow progress on this measure was likely attributable to the Great Recession, which coincided with small increases in the FRPL gap for several rounds of NAEP assessments across both grades.

Further, income-based gaps were a complex issue. The FRPL gaps reported here masked important variation that can occurred within groups of FRPL eligible and FRPL ineligible students (Hansen et al., 2018). Students in deeply impoverished households had little in common with other students who come from lower-middle-class households that could also be eligible for the program. Similarly, students just above the income eligibility threshold differ in many ways from wealthy students.

In fact, trends in income gaps can differ based on how groups of students are defined. Sean Reardon has found steadily increasing income-based achievement gaps

over the last five decades when comparing achievement from students in the nineteenth

versus tenth percentile of household income (a truer wealthy-poor comparison) (Hansen

et al., 2018). Reardon's findings helped to explain the growing gap between the highest

and lowest performers (regardless of income) on the two most recent rounds of the

NAEP, during a period of growing wealth and income inequality in the U.S. Thus, even

though the FRPL gaps appeared generally static over this period, other distributional

shifts related to household income and corresponding achievement gaps existed outside

of NAEP's view.

Interestingly, patterns in achievement gaps across states generally eluded regional

classification (Hansen et al., 2018). Achievement gaps does not appear that specific

regions of the country were doing particularly well while other regions lag behind, a

pattern often seen when looking at overall achievement levels on the NAEP. In spite of

the positive trends on race-based gaps that have continued in the 2017 NAEP assessment,

there were still far too much daylight between different groups of students.

Implications

The research results indicated that to teach lower performing students, students

must be motivated and given the students the opportunity to increase their academic

performance. The most significant influences of the study were closing achievement

gaps, having prior teaching experiences, and making consistent learning gains.

Research focused predominantly on how teachers affect students' achievement on

standardized tests despite evidence that a broad range of attitudes and behaviors were

equally important to their long-term success (Blazar, 2017). Teachers had large effects on

self-reported measures of students' self-efficacy in math, and happiness and behavior in

class. Students' attitudes and behaviors were predicted by teaching practices most proximal to those measures, including teachers' emotional support and classroom organization. However, teachers who were effective at improving test scores often were not equally effective at improving students' attitudes and behaviors. These findings lend empirical evidence to well-established theory on the multidimensional nature of teaching and the need to identify strategies for improving the full range of teachers' skills.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), states were required to select a nonacademic indicator with which to assess students' success in school. Including measures of students' attitudes and behaviors in accountability or evaluation systems, even with very small associated weights, could serve as a strong signal that schools and educators should value and attend to developing these skills in the classroom.

At the same time, like other researchers (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015), caution against a rush to incorporate these measures into high-stakes decisions. The science of measuring students' attitudes and behaviors were relatively new compared with the long history of developing valid and reliable assessments of cognitive aptitude and content knowledge. Most existing measures, including those used in this study, were developed for research purposes rather than large-scale testing with repeated administrations. Open questions remain about whether reference bias substantially distorts comparisons across schools. Similar to previous studies, included school fixed effects in all of our models, which helped reduce this and other potential sources of bias. However, as a result, our estimates were restricted to within-school comparisons of teachers and cannot be applied to inform the type of across-school comparisons that districts typically seek to make. There were outstanding questions regarding the susceptibility of these measures to survey

coaching when high-stakes incentives were attached. Such incentives likely would render teachers or self-assessments of students' attitudes and behaviors inappropriate. Some researchers have started to explore other ways to capture students' attitudes and behaviors, including objective performance-based tasks and administrative proxies such as attendance, suspensions, and participation in extracurricular activities (Hitt, Trivitt, & Cheng, 2016; Jackson, 2012; Whitehurst, 2016). This line of research shows promise but not in its early phases. Furthermore, although the modeling strategy aims to reduce bias due to nonrandom sorting of students to teachers, additional evidence is needed to assess the validity of this approach. Without first addressing concerns, the researchers believed that adding untested measures into accountability systems could lead to superficial and, ultimately, counterproductive efforts to support the positive development of students' attitudes and behaviors.

An alternative approach to incorporating teacher effects on students' attitudes and behaviors into teacher evaluation may be through observations of teaching practice. Our findings suggest that specific domains captured on classroom observation instruments (i.e., Emotional Support and Classroom Organization from the CLASS and Mathematical Errors from the MQI) may serve as indirect measures of the degree to which teachers affect students' attitudes and behaviors. One benefit of this approach was districts commonly collect related measures as part of teacher evaluation systems (Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, 2013), and such measures were not restricted to teachers who work in tested grades and subjects.

Similar to Whitehurst (2016), alternative uses of teacher effects on students' attitudes and behaviors that fall within and would enhance existing school practices. In

particular, measures of teachers' effectiveness at improving students' attitudes and behaviors could be used to identify areas for professional growth and connect teachers with targeted professional development. However, this goal likely required substantial changes to teacher preparation programs and curriculum materials, as well as new policies around teacher recruitment, evaluation, and development (Rand Education, 2018). In middle and high schools, content-area specialization or departmentalization often were used to ensure that students have access to teachers with skills in distinct content areas. Similar approaches were taken to expose students to a collection of teachers who together can develop a range of academic skills, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, when configuring grade-level teams, principals may pair a math teacher who excelled in the ability to improve students' behavior with an ELA or reading teacher who excelled in the ability to improve students' happiness and engagement.

Achievement gaps were one of education's most important policy metrics (Soland, 2017). Gaps between boys and girls, as well as white and racial minority students, were often used to measure the effectiveness and fairness of the education system at a given point in time, over the course of decades, and as children progress through school. Major policy initiatives related to accountability, assessment, and funding were partially motivated by a desire to close gaps.

Estimates of achievement gaps were not straightforward as practitioners and policymakers might like. Gaps resulted from the sum total of students' schooling, after-school activities, home life, and neighborhood experiences. Further, gaps were not measures of intelligence or ability, but of performance. Therefore, observed scores were

impacted by factors that adults control (like what students are taught), and by factors that may be unrelated to achievement (like motivation to perform).

Many people emphasized the importance of good teachers, and many local, state, and federal policies are designed to promoting teacher quality (Rand Education, 2018). Research used student scores on standardized tests confirms the common perception that some teachers were more effective than others and also revealed that being taught by an effective teacher has important consequences for student achievement. Teachers matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of schooling.

Many factors contributed to student's academic performance, including individual characteristics and family and neighborhood experiences (Rand Education, 2018). But research suggests that, among school-related factors, teachers matter most. When it comes to student performance on reading and math tests, a teacher were estimated to have two to three times the impact of any other school factor, including services, facilities, and even leadership. Non-school factors do influence student achievement, but they were largely outside a school's control. Some research suggests that, compared with teachers, individual and family characteristics may have four to eight times the impact on student achievement. But policy discussions focused on teachers because it is arguably easier for public policy to improve teaching than to change students' personal characteristics or family circumstances. Effective teaching has the potential to help level the playing field.

Despite common perceptions, effective teachers cannot reliably be identified based on where they went to school, whether they're licensed, or (after the first few years) how long they've taught (Rand Education, 2018). The best way to assess teachers'

effectiveness were to look at their on-the-job performance, including what they do in the classroom and how much progress their students make on achievement tests. This has led to more policies that require evaluating teachers' on-the-job performance, based in part on evidence about their students' learning. Recent evidence suggested that a teacher's impact on student achievement remains reasonably consistent even if the teacher changed schools and regardless of whether the new school was more or less advantaged.

The aim of the present study was to contribute to the body of knowledge on the relationship between teacher expectations and teacher perceptions of student attributes such as working habits, popularity, self-confidence, student-teacher relationships, and classroom behavior and to investigate to what extent teacher perceptions of student attributes may explain why for some groups of students the expectations of their teachers concerning the future academic performance do not correspond to their current academic performance (Timmermans, 2016). The previous studies focused on one particular aspect of teacher perceptions instead of a simultaneous analysis of teacher perceptions on multiple aspects of student behavior. In the present study, the researcher focused on a wider range of teacher-perception variables of student attributes, including the perceived student teacher relationship, self-confidence, work habits, popularity, and social behavior. Furthermore, previous studies focused on the unique predictions of teacher perceptions of student attributes on their expectations of the student's future academic potential, but in the context of teacher expectations far less attention was given to interactions between teacher perceptions of student attributes and student performance or background characteristics.

Limitations

There were some limitations during the study. One limitation was finding a suitable survey that educators would be willing to take. There were 66 participants in this study, which gave a generalization of the results of teacher's attitudes and perceptions toward low performing students. Another limitation was that the study focused on teachers' perceptions and there were no observations of teacher performance and engagement with students within the classroom. Moreover, this study did not include face-to-face interviews of teachers, which would have led to more concrete questions to teacher responses.

Recommendations for Future Research

As school districts around the country consider investments in technology in an effort to improve student outcomes, a new report from the Alliance for Excellent Education and the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE) finds that technology when implemented properly can produce significant gains in student achievement and boost engagement, particularly among students most at risk (Stanford Graduate School of Education, 2014).

"This report makes clear that districts must have a plan in place for how they will use technology before they make a purchase," said Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia (Stanford Graduate School of Education, 2014). "It also underscores that replacing teachers with technology is not a successful formula. Instead, strong gains in achievement occur by pairing technology with classroom teachers who provide real-time support and encouragement to underserved students."

The report, *Using Technology to Support At-Risk Students' Learning*, also identifies significant disparities in technology access and implementation between affluent and low-income schools (Stanford Graduate School of Education, 2014). First, low-income teens and students of color are noticeably less likely to own computers and use the internet than their peers. Because of their students' lack of access, teachers in high-poverty schools were more than twice likely (56 percent versus 21 percent) to say that their students' lack of access to technology was a challenge in their classrooms. More dramatically, only 3 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools said that their students have the digital tools necessary to complete homework assignments, compared to 52 percent of teachers in more affluent schools.

Secondly, applications of technology in low-income schools involved a "drill and kill" approach in which computers take over for teachers and students were presented with information they are expected to memorize and are then tested on with multiple-choice questions (Stanford Graduate School of Education, 2014). In more affluent schools, however, students tend to be immersed in more interactive environments in which material is customized based on students' learning needs and teachers supplement instruction with technology to explain concepts, coordinate student discussion, and stimulate high-level thinking.

"When given access to appropriate technology used in thoughtful ways, all students regardless of their respective backgrounds can make substantial gains in learning and technological readiness," said Darling-Hammond, the faculty director of SCOPE (Stanford Graduate School of Education, 2014). "Unfortunately, applications of technology in schools serving the most disadvantaged students were frequently

compromised by the same disparities in dollars, teachers, and instructional services that typically plague these schools. These disparities are compounded by the lack of access to technology in these students' homes."

The report includes several recommendations that could expand the use and impact of technology among at-risk high school youth: technology access policies should aim for one-to-one computer access; technology access policies should ensure that speedy internet connections were available; states, districts, and schools should favor technology designed to promote high levels of interactivity and engagement and make data available in multiple forms; curriculum and instruction plans should enable students to use technology to create content as well as learn material; and policymakers and educators should plan for "blended" learning environments, characterized by significant levels of teacher support and opportunities for interactions among students, as companions to technology use (Stanford Graduate School of Education, 2014). In addition, the report cautions that its recommendations must be accompanied by adequate professional learning opportunities for teachers on how to use the technology and pedagogies that were recommended, including technical assistance to help educators manage the hardware, software and connections to the Internet.

Conclusions

The current study discovered that the research participants' motivation to teach were influenced by altruistic and intrinsic factors (Haier, 2017). In lieu of this, the strongest predictor of academic achievement by far is a student's intelligence. Compelling empirical evidence shows that this is true even after the effects of family wealth and school quality were removed. Nonetheless, the word "intelligence" is absent

in virtually every discussion of our decades-long failure to improve test scores and close academic achievement gaps among poor and minority students.

The author Dr. Joseph Murphy, of Vanderbilt University, provides a helpful guiding perspective as districts and their schools contemplate narrowing disparities in student performance (Murphy, 2014). Dr. Murphy comments that, "by and large, schools do not cause achievement gaps" and thus "schools cannot close achievement gaps alone." Effective progress in closing achievement gaps must be nuanced and address both academic and environmental factors: "Ultimately, programs that rely entirely on increasing academic standards without parallel attention to social-emotional factors associated with achievement motivation and performance will be less likely to improve student achievement outcomes." Ultimately, however, Murphy does suggest that, "since low-income and minority students were more school-dependent than their more advantaged peers, there is potential for schools to help solve the problem."

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