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FACTORS IMPACTING RACIAL MINORITY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

A MASTER'S THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

Morgan McGarry

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FACTORS IMPACTING RACIAL MINORITY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Morgan McGarry

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APPROVED

Thesis Advisor: Nathan Elliott, Ed.D

Program Director: Lisa M. Silmser, Ed.D

Abstract

This paper researches factors impacting racial minority student achievement. The question “What factors impact racial minority student achievement?” was used to find published research articles. While the research does not specifically state that racial minority students are the only ones impacted, additional research was done to support these factors and explain how they are impacted to a greater degree than their white counterparts. Six factors were identified as prominent influences on racial minority student achievement: peers and friends, school culture and staff within the building, social media, family and culture, socioeconomic status, and intrinsic and other self-related factors. Research determined that these factors profoundly affected racial minority students' achievement both positively and negatively. These results demonstrate that a student's efforts, beliefs, and intentions dictate whether or not they succeed academically.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Achievement Gap

Researchers and politicians have made attempts in the field of K-12 education to eliminate the "achievement gap" between minority and nonminority students. Although the term may seem simple, its definition greatly influences public perception and policy-making. Policies may not address the most significant factors in improving academic achievement among different groups without a clear explanation.

In the past, African American students were believed to be the largest minority population, leading to the assumption that all minority groups faced the same factors contributing to the achievement gap. Ethnic and racial groups have historically struggled in the U.S. educational system and continue to do so. Research shows that African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans perform worse than their White American peers.

Despite the typical focus on the achievement gap, multiple achievement gaps exist. A singular definition of the "achievement gap" fails to take into account the nuances present in the data. It is critical to recognize the personal and societal ramifications of racial minority students' underperformance in education. The costs of underachievement are not just limited to individuals and their families but can also significantly impact the economy of the entire country. This review aims to explore the academic achievement gap and the various factors that contribute to it.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement represents the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals by focusing on activities in instructional environments. (Steinmayr et al., 2015). Research

has shown that the attributes of students are significant indicators of academic success. These attributes include cognitive and non-cognitive factors, such as family values and personal drive. In modern societies, academic achievement plays a crucial role in an individual's life. Steinmayr et al. (2015) state that academic success is evaluated through the GPA or standardized tests like the SAT. These assessments can impact a student's ability to pursue further education. The degrees one obtains can significantly influence one's career prospects.

There is a need to focus more on the differences between minority populations and White students in current literature. Neglecting to do so can result in a lack of research and support for these students. Research has shown that minority and majority students can be impacted by certain factors differently. The primary factors that affect minority students' academic achievement are peers and friends (Ben-Eliyahu et al., 2017; Butler-Barnes et al., 2015; Delgado et al., 2016; Hayes et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2021; Mihaly, 2009; Wentzel et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2011), school culture and staff within the building (Bayar & Karaduman, 2021; Butler-Barnes et al., 2015; Delgado et al., 2016; Göktaş & Kaya, 2023; Mallett et al., 2011; Meeuwisse et al., 2010; Van Der Westhuizen et al., 2005.), social media (Caratiquit & Caratiquit, 2023; Oguguo et al., 2020; Türel & Dokumaci, 2022; Umar & Idris, 2018), family and culture (Fan, 2002; Gong et al., 2015; Hayes et al., 2015; Palardy et al., 2015), socioeconomic status (Caldas & Bankston, 1997; Destin et al., 2019; Palardy et al., 2015; Sirin, 2005), and intrinsic other self-related factors (Bembenutty, 2007; Burton, 2020; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Whaley & Noel, 2013).

Racial Minority

It is important to start by defining the term 'minority' and in which context this term will be used throughout the paper. The term 'minority' in general simply means a small part of the

whole number. In the context of this paper and research I am specifically referring to ‘racial minority’ students. Racial minority populations include African American, Latino, Native American, and Asian individuals. These students make up smaller portions of the greater population and are therefore deemed the minority compared to their white student counterparts. When a dynamic is created where there is a majority and a minority, a power imbalance is created. The majority group tends to have control over societal systems and inequitable challenges arise. It’s estimated, however, by the middle of the twenty first century these populations will surpass or nearly surpass the white population as the majority population in the United States.

Overall Impact

The disparities in academic opportunities between white and minority students can have far-reaching consequences for individuals, the economy, and society. In Bryant’s (2015) article on the disparities between minority and majority schools, they found that high-minority schools may lack the necessary resources to offer college-prep courses, impeding students' ability to develop the skills required for success in higher education. Shockingly, statistics from 2011-12 reveal that only 57 percent of African American students attended schools that provided the full range of courses necessary for college readiness. Minority students tend to be underrepresented in honors or AP courses, even when they have access to them. In schools that provide AP courses, Black, Latino, and other minority students make up 38 percent of the student population, yet only 29 percent are enrolled in at least one AP course (Bryant, 2015).

The article written by Amadeo (2022) highlights the impact of race-based achievement gaps and low-income students' educational achievement on the U.S. gross domestic product

(GDP). According to Amadeo's findings, the GDP would have been \$525 billion higher in the 1998-2008 period if race was not used as a factor. Additionally, if low-income students had the same educational achievement as their wealthier peers, they could have added \$670 billion to the GDP. These results demonstrate that education is critical in boosting income and fueling economic growth. Additionally, it is worth noting that according to Amadeo (2022), Americans with college degrees earn 84% more than those with only high school degrees on average. Furthermore, Amadeo argues that a college degree predicts family income and wealth more than inherited characteristics. This is especially significant for disadvantaged families, as a college degree can significantly increase their income and wealth compared to families with similar inherited traits.

In terms of disciplinary action, there is a notable discrepancy between black and white students. According to statistics, black students are more likely to be suspended without educational services compared to their white counterparts. This trend is also reflected in the number of out-of-school suspensions received by black students, nearly four times higher than that of white students. Additionally, black students are more likely to be referred to law enforcement or arrested in a school-related incident than white students. These findings highlight the need for further investigation and action to address the underlying causes of this disparity. (United Negro College Fund, 2020).

Research Questions

The following question was used to find the information for this review: “What factors are impacting racial minority student achievement?” Using this question as a guide, I could narrow down the literature for this thesis with searches of ProQuest, American Psychological

Association, Education Journals, ERIC, and Sage Pub. This list was narrowed by focusing on published empirical studies on academic achievement, minority students, the achievement gap, and factors that influence academic achievement in overall content areas, including students of all ethnicities from 1950-2022. While most studies were not focused on minority students, the information taken from those studies is supplemented with additional information from specific research on minority students. I also included information on the achievement gap, reviewing its history and where it stands now. While this was not a significant focus of the review, it is crucial to understand the achievement gap and how minority students have been affected by it.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Search Procedures

When locating the literature for this thesis, searches of ProQuest, American Psychological Association, Education Journals, ERIC, and Sage Pub were conducted for publications from 1950-2023. This list was narrowed by only reviewing published empirical studies from peer-reviewed journals that focused on academic achievement, minority students, the achievement gap, and factors that influence academic achievement in overall content areas, including students of all ethnicities. In order to collect enough information regarding the history of minority student achievement and past efforts, the perimeters needed to be widened and generalized in most capacities. The keywords that were used in these searches included “minority and majority student achievement,” “factors influencing student achievement,” “history of minority student achievement,” “factors that influence minority student achievement,” and “definition of academic achievement.” While most studies were not focused

on minority students, the information taken from those studies is supplemented with additional information from specific research on minority students.

The structure of this chapter is to review the primary factors influencing minority student achievement in six sections in this order: Peers and friends, teachers and school culture, intrinsic motivation and self-related concepts, socioeconomic status, social media, and family or cultural beliefs.

Peers and Friends

It is crucial to consider the role of peers in adolescents' social relationships when trying to understand academic achievement. Research has demonstrated that peers are a pivotal source of social connections for adolescents. As such, adolescents often place great importance on being accepted and valued by their peers. (Kim et al., 2021). Wentzel, Jablansky, and Scalise (2020) set out to determine the relationship between peer acceptance and its influence on academic performance. It is important to note that the study conducted a systematic review of research on peer social acceptance of academic performance, emphasizing the significance of social competence in promoting academic achievement. The findings revealed that socially accepted children were more prone to exhibiting prosocial and friendly behaviors.

Regarding cognitive development and academic success, it is essential to consider the impact of peer social acceptance. Research has shown that socially rejected students may display less compliance, friendliness, and sociability compared to their more accepted peers. Furthermore, this trend can start as early as childhood and become more pronounced during adolescence. Therefore, addressing peer social acceptance when examining these outcomes is crucial to understand their effects fully. Two examples of where we see this is through

hierarchical standing, also referred to as 'popularity' (Wentzel et al., 2020; Ben-Eliyahu et al., 2017; Mihaly, 2009; Wilson et al., 2011) and peer networks (Kim et al., 2021; Delgado et al., 2016; Butler-Barnes et al., 2015; Hayes et al., 2015).

Hierarchical Standing

The popularity hierarchy can be a negative or positive indicator of academic success, as seen in a study by Wilson et al. (2011). They examined how peers can predict early academic achievement on state-level standardized exams for African American and European American students during early adolescence. The study included a diverse group of 775 female participants from different grade levels and ethnic backgrounds. The researchers developed questions about peer groups, academic achievement, individual status, and classroom context. One of the study's key findings was that hierarchical structures are negatively associated with academic achievement in mathematics and reading. Wilson et al. (2011) shows teens' academic success and popularity perceptions may not always align with reality.

Research has found that the "attitude achievement" phenomenon is particularly relevant for African American students. Even though there is a positive shift in their attitude toward education, these students still tend to underachieve. This is due to a gap between their positive abstract attitudes toward education and their low concrete attitudes toward the value of education, which reflects the disparity between their aspirations and the realities of their everyday lives. Furthermore, studies have shown that high-achieving students tend to be ranked higher within a network, and peer groups with higher achievement norms are perceived as more popular among adolescents, indicating a strong emphasis on academic achievement.

The social network theory in an educational setting proposes that individuals are influenced by the norms of their network, impacting their attitudes and behavior toward education. Mihaly (2009) researched to explore the correlation between popularity, peer networks, and academic achievement. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Youth, which included 90,000 students in grades 7-12, she discovered that popularity significantly influences academic achievement, in line with previous research.

Peer Networks

Research has shown that peer groups can serve as positive or negative models for academic motivations and attitudes (Ben-Eliyahu et al., 2017). In their study, Ben-Eliyahu et al. (2017) built upon previous research on achievement goals, explicitly exploring the social and academic domains. Their inquiry aimed to determine whether a positive correlation exists between academic mastery and performance-approach goal orientations and to uncover the correlation between academic performance-approach and academic-avoidance goal orientations. The findings suggest that the relationships between academic and social pursuits are intricate and heavily influenced by contextual factors. Academic mastery orientations were positively associated with positive engagement, scholastic self-concept, and in-class behavioral conduct.

Delgado et al. (2016) studied the relationship between friendships, feelings of belonging, and academic achievement in minority students, specifically Latino students. The study found that Latino teenagers who were frequently nominated by their peers and perceived as having a large social circle were more likely to experience a sense of belonging in school. Furthermore, this feeling of school belonging was positively correlated with academic achievement. Therefore, it is vital to recognize the social dynamics at play in academic settings and their impact on

student performance. These findings align with existing literature on the impact of adolescents' peer relationships and academic outcomes. Notably, the study highlights the particularly beneficial role of friendships for the school belonging of Latino youth.

Academic and psychosocial outcomes are commonly impacted by whom adolescents choose to engage with. A study by Butler-Barnes et al. in 2015 highlighted the impact of adolescent peers on academic and psychosocial outcomes and emphasized the importance of school attachment and belonging in adolescents' academic success. Data from the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study was used to identify the achievement attitudes towards school among an economically diverse sample of boys and girls in 7th grade. The study included 1480 adolescents and their families, out of which 61% were African American and 35% were European American. The findings of this study expanded on the myth that African American students cannot serve as an academic model or be supportive in academic endeavors.

Adolescents spend hours in school with their friends and other classroom peers. In a study by Kim et al. (2021), they explore features of Damunhwa adolescents' peer networks and how they influence academic achievement using a survey questionnaire. The study found no significant difference in peer network influence on achievement between Damunhwa adolescents and their peers. These findings suggest that the quality of relationships between teachers and peers is critical to student's school experience and academic achievement.

They found that having close peers who provide support, regardless of their type, positively impacts academic achievement. Moreover, the positive social connection with goal-oriented peers seems more crucial than the discrimination they experience. It appears that the positive social aspect can offset or mitigate the effect of negative peer experiences. However,

the study's most significant limitation is that the levels of academic achievement were based on self-reported information, which means that students can disclose true or false information at their discretion.

Hayes et al. (2015) studied middle school Latino students and discovered that students' perceptions of their peers impact their perception of school rather than their behavioral engagement. The study investigated how adolescent perception of educational value and achievement influences peer beliefs and behaviors in school. The study's findings indicate that peer influence has a powerful positive or negative impact on student engagement. According to the students, friends could be a negative barrier to doing well in school by pressuring them into trouble, such as skipping class. In contrast, other students claimed that peers were helpful when discussing the importance of going to college. This study contributes to previous studies on how a student's social circle can positively influence their academic achievement.

School Culture and Staff Within the Building

Students' success is not only impacted by their peers but also by the school itself. They spend 165 days a year in a school environment where the climate, norms, structure, and staff play a massive role in how they perform academically.

School Culture

For this research, school culture is defined as a building encompassing common values and norms, which serve as guidelines for the behavior of individuals within the organization, which can be portrayed through verbal, behavioral, and visual manifestations. In their study, Van Der Westhuizen et al. (2005) sought to delve deeper into the organizational culture in schools that predominantly cater to black students. The study conducted in the Mpumalanga Province of

South Africa encompassed all secondary schools and identified six key characteristics of successful school cultures. These traits include a shared vision, traditions, collaboration, shared decision-making, innovation, and communication. It would be beneficial to investigate how these traits are implemented in schools attended by Black learners and how they contribute to a positive school culture.

One pattern that emerged is the connection between an influential school culture and educator and learner motivation. Additionally, the quality of work-life balance is directly related to the school's organizational culture and climate. It was also found that values are integral to a school's culture. In poorly performing schools, minimal elements contributing to healthy school cultures exist. Therefore, these schools must develop strategies to establish school cultures involving all stakeholders when formulating a common understanding and expectation for core values. Shared values can connect members and create a safe and secure environment to achieve shared objectives.

In line with previous findings, a study conducted by Bayar and Karaduman (2021) found that school culture can impact the academic performance of minority students. Although the study's sample size was limited to only 12 high school students under the Ministry of National Education, the results are consistent with previous studies on the subject matter. As indicated above, an influential school culture fosters personal development and provides a framework that facilitates the academic success of all students. Schools, like individuals, develop their distinct personalities over time, which mirrors the school's culture.

Teachers

Schools are institutions where relationships are intense. The relationships that teachers have with themselves, colleagues, students, administrators, and parents all play a critical role in the success of the academic environment. The impact of teacher-student relationships on students' happiness, academic success, and overall well-being cannot be understated. To explore the correlation between teacher relationships and student academic achievement, Göktaş and Kaya (2023) conducted a study that sought to answer two key questions: "What is the relationship between teacher relationship types and student academic achievement?" and "Does the relationship between teacher relationship types and student academic achievement differ according to the moderator variables?"

The study's findings were categorized based on positive or negative teacher relationship types with achievement. Positive relationships between teachers and students were identified as having high intimacy and low conflict levels, whereas low intimacy and high conflict levels characterized negative relationships. It has been observed that teachers who exhibit social and emotional competence positively impact school communities and promote academic achievement among students. In addition, some racial minority students intentionally cultivate and rely on supportive relationships with teachers and counselors to address their concerns. They seek guidance, feedback, and resources from trusted educators. (Kim et al., 2021).

The findings of Meeuwisse et al. (2010) regarding the relationships between the learning environment, teacher and peer interactions, sense of belonging, and study success may be beneficial to incorporate. The study involved 145 ethnic minority students and 378 majority students from four universities in the Netherlands. The results indicated that the relationships

within the ethnic minority group differed from those in the majority group. Specifically, ethnic minority students experienced greater comfort in their educational program if they had good formal relationships with teachers and fellow students. Additionally, the study found that minority students had higher-quality relationships with their teachers in more activating learning environments.

To improve the educational experience for minority students, it is beneficial to establish an activating learning environment and encourage positive interactions between students and teachers. When constructive relationships are found within the school community, it benefits all stakeholders. The study's findings suggest that teachers should focus on developing their personality traits towards teaching and learning and gaining skills to foster positive relationships. These recommendations can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.

Unfortunately, many minority students encounter negative experiences due to teachers' lack of cultural sensitivity in diverse classroom settings. Studies have shown a moderate negative relationship between teachers' hostile intrapersonal relations and student achievement. Therefore, teachers must ensure they are updated on the current cultural competency curriculum to ensure consistency in treating students. As Göktaş and Kaya (2023) found, a school's principal plays a significant role in managing school personnel and fostering a positive school climate. They should lead teachers and students toward success by establishing positive learning environments and effective educational management behaviors.

Sense of Belonging and Connectedness

It is vital to foster a sense of belonging within the educational entity for students of color. Research has shown that a lack of social connectedness in school can harm achievement and retention. Mallett et al. (2011) conducted two studies to investigate the degree to which minority students feel academically connected in school. Their research was founded on whether personal experiences of discrimination activate a lack of belonging and whether this decreases feelings of potential for students of color. Their findings revealed that students of color reported significantly lower feelings of belonging than white students. However, regardless of racial or ethnic identification, students who felt a greater sense of belonging in school were expected to have completed more education by 30. Therefore, addressing and improving feelings of belonging for students of color in educational settings is crucial.

The findings of Meeuwisse et al. (2010) and Delgado et al. (2016) support the arguments made in this research. Meeuwisse et al. (2010) found that positive interactions with peers and faculty members can increase students' sense of belonging and make academic environments more supportive. However, their study had limitations due to the small number of ethnic minority participants. Delgado et al. (2016) discovered that Latino students who are socially marginalized at school are more vulnerable to academic consequences. They also found that belonging to friendship groups with low problem behavior can enhance a sense of school belonging. Mexican students with close-knit groups of friends with low or average academic achievement levels are more likely to have higher school belonging. However, for Cuban youth, friendship networks matter for school belonging but not necessarily for academic achievement.

Social Media

Nowadays, individuals devote most of their time to social media platforms or social networks. This trend is the convenience of use and these platforms' swift and sustainable nature. These platforms substantially transform the way public discourse takes place in our communities by instating trends and setting agendas on topics ranging from environmental issues, education, and politics to technological advancements.

Influence and Uses of Social Media

A recent study by Oguguo et al. (2020) explored the ways in which students use social media, the amount of time spent on social media, and which social media networks are most commonly used. They sought to determine the influence of social media use on students' academic performance in accounting. By addressing these research questions, the study sheds light on the potential impact of social media on academic outcomes and provides valuable insights for educators and policymakers.

Despite its negative implications, technology has taken over most aspects of human nature. Many people claim that social media can potentially improve learning and information sharing among learners. However, there are concerns about how much time students spend on these platforms. If used with good intent, social media can positively affect students' academic pursuits. For example, students can use these platforms to research their assignments, reach out to their classmates for group assignments, and research future academic careers. Additionally, social media has been shown to increase peer support and educational collaborative strategies.

Social media usage has been linked to several benefits; however, it also has some adverse effects on students that cannot be overlooked. Many students are found to be distracted from

their studies as they spend a considerable amount of time on social media, engaging in activities such as chatting, texting, and gaming. It has been observed that these platforms are not commonly used to communicate with teachers or professors. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by other researchers. Furthermore, this study highlights that the frequency of social media usage impacts students' academic performance. It was discovered that students who use social media for less than 4 hours daily had the highest levels of achievement. While social media is gradually gaining popularity, organizational and study skills are slowly disappearing (Oguguo et al., 2020). Recent studies illustrate that students now lack the skills to read at an age-appropriate level due to the hours spent on electronics and social media, making reading written materials obsolete for most school-aged children.

While the literature review did not specifically center on gender differences, it is worth noting that several studies mentioned such differences. For instance, some researchers have found that female students spend more time on social media than males. Conversely, males use social media more frequently than females, which may be attributed to their perceived technological competency (Oguguo et al., 2020). As individuals become increasingly drawn to the allure of social media and its prolonged use, it is natural that they may find themselves devoting less time to other activities. However, this prolonged use of media and technology has been linked to academic procrastination behaviors, which can harm academic performance.

Türel and Dokumaci's (2022) study examined the association between adolescents' social media use and academic procrastination. They also focused on the relationship between technology use, procrastination, and achievement. Their participants comprised 1278 middle and

high school students in eastern Turkey. These participants had a smartphone, desktop/laptop, tablet, or combination of devices.

The study found that a significant concern is using media and technology for non-academic purposes, with about 65% of students admitting to using their devices for non-academic activities while in class or studying for homework. Many adolescents are spending more time with their media and technological devices, which can lead to procrastination and lower academic achievement. This is a concerning trend, forcing individuals to limit their time devoted to other areas, such as academics. However, it is essential to note that the study's results can only be generalized to some students due to the convenience sampling method.

Academic Procrastination

Academic procrastination has become a significant issue, particularly in the academic setting. It refers to delaying basic academic tasks such as preparing for exams, completing homework, and performing school-related duties. (Türel & Dokumaci, 2022) Recent research by Türel and Dokumaci (2022) revealed that over 50% of students procrastinate on their academic responsibilities, and it is estimated that around 80-90% of university students exhibit academic procrastination behavior, which negatively affects their academic performance.

Academic procrastination is actively delaying or deferring work that must be performed in an academic setting (Caratiquit & Caratiquit, 2023). As we navigate remote learning in the wake of the pandemic, it is essential to consider the impact of media and technology on academic achievement. Studies have shown that using devices for non-academic purposes during class or while studying can lead to procrastination and lower grades. Furthermore, social media addiction has been linked to various adverse outcomes, including sleep problems, depression,

and academic failure. Caratiquit and Caratiquit's (2023) research suggests that social media addiction indirectly affects academic achievement in distance learning through academic procrastination.

They developed two primary hypotheses about academic procrastination: “Social media addiction is significantly related to academic procrastination” and “Academic procrastination is significantly associated with academic performance.” Their quantitative research included 223 Filipino respondents in grades K through 12 in the Division of Cagayan, located in Lal-lo, Cagayan, Philippines. They discovered that procrastination mediates between social media addiction and academic accomplishment.

Students need to avoid procrastination to reach their full potential in their academic work. Factors like low self-efficacy, disorganization, and ineffective time management can all contribute to academic procrastination. Unfortunately, it can be challenging to identify and help students who struggle with these issues, especially when participating in distance education.

Psychosocial Behavior and Addiction

Many students today rely heavily on quick access to information technology provides. However, this instant gratification can lead to a lack of focus and retention of knowledge, as long-term attention and effort are not always required. In their study to determine whether social media influences students' psychosocial behavior and academic performance, Umar and Idris (2018) found that excessive use of social media and technology can have adverse effects on a student's psychosocial behavior, leading to addiction and a lack of attention to other vital aspects of life. Their population consisted of 306 male and female students at the secondary level in Batagarawa, Nigeria.

Studies have shown that excessive internet use can negatively affect academic performance, extracurricular activities, and communication skills. It can also lead to a lack of emotional connection with others and an inauthentic expression of feelings. However, it is essential to note that these negative consequences are primarily for extreme internet users and are not necessarily applicable to all individuals.

Corroborated with this study and findings, Caratiquit and Caratiquit (2023) reiterated social media's negative impact on academic achievement. It is important to note that the internet and technology can also be used positively to enhance academic performance. When used as a tool, the internet provides a wealth of information and knowledge to aid in schoolwork and cognitive innovation for teachers and students. So, while social media addiction should be avoided, it is important to recognize the benefits technology can bring to the learning experience.

Family and Culture

Family and cultural norms can impact student achievement. Their overall attitude and value they find in education can dictate whether or not a student is thriving academically and behaviorally.

Family culture and beliefs

Minority students may approach education differently due to their life experiences. Some may have faced disparities in the benefits of schooling, but some may still understand the value of education through family and community members. (Hayes et al., 2015). In their study, Hayes et al. (2015) explored the role of Latino cultural norms as a positive resource for Latino students in their academic pursuits. It was noted that parents' direct and indirect communication about the importance of doing well in school significantly impacts their children's academic success.

Direct communication includes parents urging their children to complete homework and attend college. In contrast, indirect communication involves sharing the challenges of not having completed their own education and being limited to lower-paying jobs.

Cultural Exclusion and Biases

Palardy et al. (2015) studied the effects of socioeconomic and racial segregation on school behaviors and academic performance. Their guiding questions were “What is the extent of racial, socioeconomic, and linguistic segregation among public high schools?” and “To what degree are students’ academic performance and school behaviors due to school effects as opposed to individual differences among students?” This research included data from a survey of approximately 15,000 high school 10th graders who attended 750 public, Catholic, and other private schools.

The research has found that racial integration can lead to positive outcomes such as improved intergroup relations and social mobility. It was discovered that educators who taught in a building with more than half the student population being black reported more tardiness, absenteeism, and threatening behavior. As a result, practices have been implemented to establish classroom safety and minimize the harmful effects of disruptions. (Palardy et al., 2015)

Understanding the extent to which school-related incidents impact future educational achievements. These include social interactions and employment opportunities. Research has demonstrated that these incidents can predict college attendance, criminal behavior, and employment earnings.

Parent Involvement and Educational Aspirations

Parental involvement can be defined as a parent's aspirations, communication, and willingness to participate in their child's academic achievement. Fan (2001) examined the effect of parental involvement on a student's academic growth. He used The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 data and the guiding questions of "How is "parental involvement" defined and operationally measured?", "What are the major dimensions of parental involvement?" and "Are there any measurable differences in parental involvement among the major ethnic and racial groups in the United States?"

According to research, parental involvement can vary based on ethnicity. Previous reports indicate that parents of African American students were more inclined to visit their child's teacher. In contrast, parents of Asian American students were less inclined to be in communication with their child's teachers and tended to have higher aspirations for their academic success. It is worth noting that parents' educational aspirations for their children consistently impact their academic growth, as these aspirations translate into educationally beneficial activities and behaviors. Other dimensions of parental involvement had less consistent and less noticeable effects.

The participation of parents in their child's education is essential for achieving academic excellence, although it can become challenging when other variables come into play. For example, Gong et al. (2015) examined family-related factors and the academic performance of immigrant students. The data used for the study was collected from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study. Based on the research, it was found that their family income and parent-child conflict influenced the academic performance of Hispanic immigrant students. In

contrast, their family income and parent-education aspiration influenced the academic performance of Asian immigrant students.

The academic trajectories of voluntary immigrant groups differ significantly. Asian Americans exhibit higher levels of academic achievement than other ethnicities, including Caucasians. On the other hand, Hispanic-American students tend to struggle academically, even more so than African-American students. These academic discrepancies can be attributed to various factors, such as socioeconomic status, educational aspirations, parenting styles, and involvement. Furthermore, parents of Asian immigrant students tend to place a high value on education, which is not as prevalent in Hispanic immigrant families. This cultural value can play a significant role in the academic success of Asian students, who feel obligated to perform well in school as a responsible family member.

During adolescent development, it is common for conflicts to arise between parents and their children regarding autonomy and values. These conflicts can be particularly prevalent in immigrant families due to cultural disparities. When significant disagreements occur within families, it can lead to increased rates of depression and decreased self-esteem. In certain Asian cultures, parents may exhibit a high degree of control and demand complete obedience from their children. Meanwhile, immigrant children may strive for greater independence as they acclimate to a new dominant culture.

The academic success of children is closely linked to the level of family closeness. Immigrant students who face difficulties in school can rely on their attachment to their parents for support. The immigrant paradox reveals that immigrant students perform better academically despite their disadvantaged socioeconomic and family backgrounds. Second-generation

immigrant students have shown resilience and achieved academic success when they receive unconditional support and attention from at least one family member. In the case of Asian students, the paradox is often characterized by their parents' proactive efforts to promote exceptional educational outcomes.

Socioeconomic Status

Recent research suggests that socioeconomic achievement gaps are more prominent than racial achievement gaps (Palardy et al., 2015). A general definition of socioeconomic status incorporates parental income, education, and occupation (Sirin, 2005). Based on numerous empirical studies, it has been discovered that the components used to measure socioeconomic status are indicative of significantly distinct aspects.

Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement

As stated above, Sirin (2005) developed a generalized definition of socioeconomic status. He designed this study to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. The following criteria were used to collect data: 1) Must apply a measure of socioeconomic status and academic achievement, 2) Include in its sample students from kindergarten through 12th grade, 3) Be published in a professional journal between 1990 and 2000, and 4) Include in its sample students in the United States.

According to the findings, family socioeconomic status significantly predicts academic achievement. A parent's level of education is closely linked to their income, which is a crucial factor in the United States. At the school level, the correlations were even more pronounced. The study found that parental income and education indicated the social and economic resources available to students. The researchers highlighted the importance of various home resources,

including books, computers, a dedicated study space, and access to educational services outside of the traditional classroom environment.

Students' academic achievement is indirectly associated with their socioeconomic status, as influenced by factors such as their ethnic background, grade level, and neighborhood location. For instance, the socioeconomic status of a family can significantly impact where their child lives and the school they attend. Depending on the school, it can generate "social capital," which facilitates relationships among individuals that promote the values necessary to excel in school. According to recent National Center for Education Statistics surveys, minority students still lag behind white students in academic performance. Minority students are more likely to reside in low-income households or single-parent families and attend under-resourced schools.

Socioeconomic Status and Growth Mindset

Research demonstrates that a student's academic motivation is greatly influenced by psychological factors, particularly when limited socioeconomic support and resources are available. Field experiments have revealed that students with lower socioeconomic status exhibit increased motivation when they feel that opportunities for success are accessible. This psychological factor is called a growth mindset, characterized by the belief that intelligence can be developed and improved. Conversely, students with a fixed mindset tend to shy away from challenges and give up easily when faced with academic difficulties.

In a correlational study by Destin et al. (2019), they examined the relationships between socioeconomic status and mindset. They used a national survey of U.S. public high school students in ninth grade. The survey included measures of academic mindset, socioeconomic status, and student grades from the 2015–2016 school year. According to their research, it was

found that individuals with higher socioeconomic status tend to have a more flexible mindset, which is consistent with previous studies. Furthermore, their socioeconomic background, mindset, and grades influence students' academic outcomes.

Research has shown a strong link between mindset and academic success, with this connection remaining consistent across students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Regardless of their status, students tend to perform better academically when they report a less fixed mindset. The intricate interplay of factors such as a family's financial resources, life experiences, social networks, and daily life aspects related to socioeconomic status shapes the perspective through which people approach and interpret their position in the world.

Socioeconomic Status of Peers

Since the mid-1960s, social scientists have acknowledged the significance of a person's family socioeconomic status on children's academic performance. Recent studies on various aspects of child and adolescent conduct have revealed that the peer environment is one of the most crucial factors affecting adolescent behavior. Moreover, integrating public schools racially in America over the past few decades has been deemed necessary to expose underprivileged Black youth to more socially advantaged children.

Caldas and Bankston (1997) examined the relationship between peers' socioeconomic status and individual academic achievement. Their primary guiding question was, "To what extent does the socioeconomic status of one's peer environment in school exert an independent influence on student achievement, regardless of a student's own individual social status?" Most students in this data set were African American or White. They excluded students classified as

special education because the conditions under which they tested might not be identical to the rest of the population.

According to their study, the researchers discovered that students often attend schools with peers with similar family socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, there is a more profound connection between the poverty level of the school and the percentage of minorities enrolled. As the number of minority students attending school increases, the likelihood of poor students also increases. The study also concluded that this correlation is because schools with concentrated minority populations tend to provide poor peer environments, which adversely affect students' academic performance.

It has been observed that schools with a higher proportion of African American students tend to have a more significant number of economically disadvantaged students. This is particularly true for individual minority groups, who are more likely to attend schools with a substantial minority population. The research highlights family social status's crucial role in academic achievement, with high social status backgrounds contributing significantly to academic success. It should be noted that adolescents' educational outcomes are greatly influenced by the overall atmosphere created by their peers in school.

Intrinsic and Other Self-Related Factors

As mentioned earlier, there are internal factors that can influence the academic performance of minority students. While these internal factors may not contribute significantly as the above, they are equally important.

Self-Regulation and Delay of Gratification

Research indicates that the most effective learners engage in self-generated thoughts and behaviors, utilizing appropriate self-regulation techniques and learning strategies. In their study, Bembenuddy (2007) examined how college students use self-regulatory methods to delay gratification and how it affects academic performance. The guiding question of the research was, “Do gender and ethnic differences exist in the relationships between academic achievement, learners’ use of self-regulation of learning and motivation, and delay of gratification?” The subjects of this study were 364 college students enrolled in introductory psychology courses at a Midwestern public university.

According to the study, delayed gratification was linked to motivation and self-regulation. Critical thinking was also associated with delayed gratification, particularly for students of Caucasian ethnicity. Minority females were more inclined to delay gratification than Caucasian males, despite their lower course grades, which may be attributed to their lower confidence levels. Minority males, on the other hand, reported lower confidence in performing assigned academic tasks compared to Caucasian males. Additionally, Caucasian females displayed higher self-efficacy beliefs than minority females. These findings are particularly relevant to minority students with lower confidence levels and course grades.

Based on the study, resource management strategies were correlated with academic performance, indicating that time management played a role in the student's grades. Additionally, there were variations in regulation efforts between minority male and female students, with male students displaying significantly lower effort regulation than female students. Gender socialization may be a contributing factor to these differences, as it is possible that females feel

more pressure to exhibit organizational skills than males. In contrast, males may perceive it as socially unacceptable to acknowledge their high level of organization. It is important to note that the small sample size was a significant limitation of this study. Therefore, the results should be interpreted cautiously and in conjunction with other data.

Behavioral and Mental Health

Numerous studies have examined the mental health of students of Asian descent. However, there has been a dearth of research on behavioral health and its correlation with academic success among Black students. A study by Whaley and Noel (2013) found that poor academics was associated with higher rates of depression or suicide and dangerous behavior. The study examined the association between academic performance and behavioral health in high school students from the 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The initial hypotheses stated that “Asian students would report fewer behavioral health problems than Black students” and “The negative association between academic performance and behavioral health problems is less likely to occur for Black students than Asian students.”

The present study highlights the prevalence of stereotypical views regarding Asian and Black students, per the "model minority" and "inferior minority" theory. Irrespective of ethnic/racial groups, poor academic performance was linked with higher scores on behavioral problem measures. Interestingly, Asian students displayed similar findings of suicide and substance abuse but higher scores of dangerous behaviors than Black students. Such findings contribute to the propagation of damaging assumptions about ethnic and racial stereotypes, which in turn can undermine the mental health needs of Asian students and disregard the academic potential of Black students.

Resiliency

Resilience is the "ability to confront and resolve problems and the capacity to utilize personal or social resources to enhance limited possibilities" (Burton, 2020, p. 111). Burton's (2020) research on the Resiliency for Academic Success Framework found a weak positive correlation between resilience factors and urban high school students. He questioned, "What is the relationship between resilience and academic success of urban high school students?" and "Is there a difference in academic achievement amongst white, black, Hispanic, and multi-racial students?" The Resiliency for Academic Success indicators were found to have a limited impact on academic achievement among different student racial groups, despite initial questioning that suggested otherwise. In other words, while there is a connection between resilience and academic achievement, the relationship between the two is not particularly strong.

Academic socialization is "attitudes, values, goals, expectations, and beliefs about education as well as opportunities and activities." (Burton, 2020, p. 112) Students become motivated to develop plans to achieve their future objectives when they undergo academic socialization. Students of color acquire "cultural capital" by understanding the dominant culture prevalent in school and society. For instance, Trueba's (2002) study found that Hispanic students can assimilate into a dominant school culture by forming a new self-identity. Lastly, students who maintained a relationship with at least one person from their family and one adult from an external system tend to be more resilient. Establishing a student-teacher connection may also foster additional resiliency, promoting academic success.

Identity

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) conducted a descriptive study on the idea of "acting white" to describe the conflicting nature of the behaviors defined as 'acting white' and how they may impact the academic achievement of black students. They interviewed high and low-achieving black students at Capital High in Washington D.C. in grades 9-12. Their findings state that black male and female students have developed coping mechanisms to deal with the pressure of conforming to white norms. Males tend to openly reject academic achievement, while females may remain more reserved but still desire some form of recognition. Both genders can conceal their academic success through behavior contrasting with traditional expectations. The authors attribute this phenomenon to the emergence of the fictive kinship system within the black community and a fear of being perceived as "acting white."

One of the key strengths of the present study lies in its use of personal testimonies from students regarding their experiences as black individuals and the burden of "acting white." The study results are derived from these testimonies and prior research. According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), black students' behaviors, attitudes, and motivations should not be considered deviant but rather a mode of adaptation necessary in their particular structure or environment. As highlighted by the participants in this study, black students face a fear or internal conflict when it comes to "acting white." Examples of behaviors identified as "acting white" include speaking standard English, spending excessive time studying in the library, striving to achieve high grades in school, being perceived as a "brainiac," and being punctual.

The possibility of a black student being labeled a "brainiac" and subsequently facing social isolation and negative perceptions poses significant challenges. Such labeling can result in

social death and damage the individual's social identity. The concept of "blackness" extends beyond skin color, and fictive kinship describes the community's moral judgment of its members. This suggests that Black Americans view themselves not merely as a race but as a group with shared attitudes, behaviors, and symbols representing their collective identity. Students who excel academically may need to develop coping strategies to deal with the stigma of "acting white."

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Summary of Literature

The research indicates inconclusive evidence regarding the impact of the achievement gap on minority students. Nonetheless, the results demonstrate that definite factors affect their academic performance. These factors can apply to all students; however, this study sought to establish the influence of these factors on minority students in particular.

Peers and friends, from the data collected, showed to have the most impact on minority student achievement (Ben-Eliyahu et al., 2017; Butler-Barnes et al., 2015; Delgado et al., 2016; Hayes et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2021; Mihaly, 2009; Wentzel et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2011) along with the organizational structure and the staff within a school building (Bayar & Karaduman, 2021; Butler-Barnes et al., 2015; Delgado et al., 2016; Göktaş & Kaya, 2023; Mallett et al., 2011; Meeuwisse et al., 2010; Van Der Westhuizen et al., 2005.) Factors such as peer networks and hierarchical standing explain how students with a positive or negative relationship with their peers can influence their desire for academic success. How a school is

structured and managed by the administration helps to create a sense of belonging within the school. Minority students must ensure they have a relationship with trusted adults to help them feel a sense of connectedness, which will support academic success.

Through the research, it was discovered that family and culture (Fan, 2002; Gong et al., 2015; Hayes et al., 2015; Palardy et al., 2015) and socioeconomic status (Caldas & Bankston, 1997; Destin et al., 2019; Palardy et al., 2015; Sirin, 2005) were significantly intertwined. The educational attainment of a family member can have a notable influence on their outlook and preferences regarding higher education. Additionally, the socioeconomic status of a school's student body can significantly impact the academic performance of minority students, with those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds generally outperforming their counterparts from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Despite thought initially, social media (Caratiquit & Caratiquit, 2023; Oguguo et al., 2020; Türel & Dokumaci, 2022; Umar & Idris, 2018) and self-related factors (Bembenutty, 2007; Burton, 2020; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Whaley & Noel, 2013) did not have much of an impact on minority student achievement. Social media use has increased drastically, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies showing the correlation between technology or social media use and academic achievement were not strong. The most prominent self-related factor that impacted minority student achievement was the sense of identity. As Fordham & Ogbu (1986)

stated, Black students are conflicted by or afraid of “acting white” to not delineate from their ‘expected’ characterizations placed on them from their supposed community.

Limitations of the Research

When conducting initial research, the scope of the review was broadened to find studies to answer the research questions. During this time, it was determined that only some findings would fit into the main categories. For example, gender was initially used as a keyword when locating articles for this study; however, it did not generate enough reports that fit the criteria. Gender did play a significant role in minority student achievement. Still, there was insufficient data on the explicit differences between male and female minority student achievement.

Another example was between public, charter, and private schools. This element did not generate many significant studies, so it could not be considered a factor. Lastly, data was not limited to U.S. schools or students. It was challenging to get a complete picture of the impact of minority student achievement by simply using U.S. data, so worldwide data was included to fully understand the impact on a global scale.

The limitations of the current research include small sample sizes, no differentiation between male and female minority students, and not including all ethnicities. Small sample sizes and their results may not sufficiently detect a difference between the sample group and the general population. The lack of data on gender differences presents a barrier to accurately differentiating between female-specific behaviors and male-specific behaviors. Finally, it was

difficult to find data on all minority students. The studies primarily focused on African American, Hispanic-American, and Asian American students. Studies conducted on other ethnicities can add helpful information in solidifying the effects of these factors on a more significant number of minority students.

Implications for Future Research

Due to the lack of data collected on all minority students, there is a need for future studies on these groups. This includes Native, Pacific Islander, Middle-Eastern American students, and other demographics of ethnic students.

Increasing the number of participants will make the findings more applicable and accessible to larger populations and increase reliability and validity. There also needs to be more research on the factors influencing minority students and their academic achievement levels, including gender and type of schooling. While self-disclosed surveys or questionnaires can be helpful, these means of data collection can lead to skewed results. Using controlled methods in future research will help eliminate the risk of obtaining false data or information from participants.

Implications for Professional Application,

The academic success of our minority student population continues to grow in concern. Research has indicated that minority students are impacted differently than white students when experiencing the same situations. As a teacher who has primarily only worked in diverse schools,

I believe it is essential to know what barriers our minority students face for us to understand the potentially detrimental effects they can have on their personal and academic lives. Based on the information I found through my research, I will continue to be intentional with the methods and means I use to support my students. I discovered that most factors influencing minority students' achievement are out of my control. However, the climate of the classroom and the relationships formed are factors that I can control. We as educators must foster learning and support academic development for all students in our classrooms. That is why I will always do my best to get to know my students, learn their motivations, support them when they struggle to understand the lesson and be a trusting adult with whom they can confide when they need help.

Conclusion

With the achievement gap still apparent, it begs the question of its impact on minority students. Researchers continue to dispute evidence on whether or not there truly is an achievement gap. While some studies suggest there may be no gap, there is strong evidence to indicate there are certain factors that influence minority students' academic achievement. Current research shows six main factors influencing minority student achievement: peers and friends, organization and staff within the building, social media, family and culture, socioeconomic status, and intrinsic or other self-related factors. This study aims to determine whether or not the achievement gap impacts minority students and how these factors influence minority student achievement.

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