

Closing the Educational Achievement Gap Between Blacks and Whites:
Nobody Wants to be Black

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Abstract

This article is the result of an ongoing collaboration between an undergraduate student who attends a historically black college and a university professor who was his mentor in the summer of 2006 at a state university.

The article addresses the myriad factors that influence the black-white achievement gap in education. The sensitive issue of nobody wants to be black is presented. Potential solutions such as putting pressure on the Black Entertainment Network and the Federal Communications Commission are offered.

Introduction

Statistics from the U.S Census Bureau confirm that there is an economic advantage for African-Americans who hold a four-year degree. It also shows that possession of a four-year degree increases the incomes of African-Americans and almost closes the economic gap between African-Americans and Caucasians. African-Americans with a four-year college degree now earn on average twice the income of African-Americans who have no better than a high-school diploma. In 2003, African-American women with a Bachelor's degree had a median income of \$33,142, 110 percent of the \$30,082 median income for Caucasian women who held a college degree (JBHE News & Views, 2005, p. 4).

Education is the key to limitless opportunities for social, economic, and political upward mobility in contemporary society. However, a vast disparity exists between the number of African-Americans and Caucasians who are attaining four-year college degrees. Several factors within the African-American race contribute to the educational achievement gap: lack of parental involvement in their children's education because of family structure and education level, the devaluation of education through alternative methods of acquiring income, and the lack of personal responsibility of the parents for not instilling in their children the value of education and the opportunity that it produces. Factors that contribute to the educational achievement gap outside of the Black race include: BET (Black Entertainment Television), the media's belittlement of education for the African-

American race, and the partial regulatory practices of the Federal Communications Commission.

This paper describes the educational achievement gap, the causes of the achievement gap, the consequences of the achievement gap, and possible solutions to close the educational achievement gap.

Description of the Educational Achievement Gap between Blacks and Whites

A high school diploma is essential in closing the educational achievement gap on the collegiate level. If African-American students do not complete high school successfully with their diploma, the chances of them being able to enroll in a college/university are constricted, thus not having the opportunity to aid in closing the educational achievement gap. In 2003, 20 percent of Blacks dropped out of high school, compared to 11 percent of Whites, and 35 percent of Blacks completed high school compared to 33 percent of Whites. In 2004 11.8 percent of Blacks dropped out of high school, compared to 6.8 percent of Whites (U.S 2004). On the collegiate level, according to the U.S Census 2003, 36.4 million people in the United States are classified as Black, of these, 3,854,000, or less than 11 percent, hold a four-year college degree. Only 1 in 9 African-Americans possess a four-year degree (JBHE News & Views 2005 p. 4). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2003 12 percent of Blacks had attained a bachelor's degree compared to 20 percent of Whites.

*Figure 1**Figure 2*

Data from the consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (SRDE) indicate that African-American students are dropping out of post-secondary school in great numbers during their junior and senior years. The overall graduation rate for African-Americans after six years is 38 percent compared with 56 percent for Caucasian students (USA Funds Education Access 2004 pp. 1-2). In 2004, only 1,276,000 African-Americans were at college level compared to 7,138,000 of their Caucasian counterparts (U.S Census, 2006). Enrollment for African-Americans was 63 percent compared to 64 percent for Caucasians. In 2005, 18 percent of Blacks graduated with a Bachelor's degree compared to 38 percent of Whites.

The Benefits of Parental Involvement in Their Child's Education

Parental involvement in a child's education is a necessity to the child's life. It not only aids them to excel in school, but cultivates an appreciation of education, which would drive to feel confident in attending college and acquire a four-year degree. Also:

At home, children may learn the type of relationship to authority that facilitates good rapport with teachers. Ability to follow directions, have

long attention span, are success in verbal comprehension, ability to grasp relationships between things, and ability to do school work with diligence may also be influenced by home training (Ogbu, 1978, p. 20).

The Northwest Regional Educational Library defines parental involvement as “the active, ongoing participation of a child’s parent(s) or guardian(s) in their education” (NREL 1999). Moreover, a study conducted by Phi Delta Kappan in 1980 disclosed that, “[P]arental representation in the urban school served as a significant factor in procuring positive results...[O]ther researchers have also reported that children whose parents are involved in their schooling can make an appreciable increase in the child’s academic achievement.”(Trotman, 2001, p. 277) Also, according to the Journal of Higher Education, “Parental involvement is associated with a greater likelihood of aspiring to attend college and actually enrolling as well as with higher eighth grade mathematics and reading achievement, lower rates of behavioral problems, and lower likelihood of high school dropout and truancy.” (Perna & Titus, 2005, p. 486)

Contributing Factors within the Black Race

The Lack of Parental Involvement because of Family Structure

Despite the research that has proven the benefits of parental involvement; a lack of African-American parental involvement is still prevalent. This is due to the deterioration of the family structure. According to Trotman (2001, p. 279):

The nuclear family structure of father, mother, and children has seen a dramatic decrease. An increasing number of families are headed by a single-parent, especially in urban settings (Lippman, et al., 1996). This phenomenon has occurred as a result of surges in the number of divorces, separations, and unwed and/or teenage pregnancies. Fewer school-aged children come from two-parent, single-wage earner families.

There are two theories that attempt to explain the family's affect on a child's education both from Biblarz and Raftery (1999, pp. 324-325). The first theory is the *Learning theory*, which views the family as:

[A] primary site where children learn about how to get along in the society when they reach adulthood (Kohn 1969, 1983). Without a father, children lack a male model of how to successfully achieve market activity (Powell and Parcel 1997; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). In two-biological parent families, children learn about how authority relations are structured and how to successfully interact with authority figures (Nock 1988). This learning facilitates children's educational and occupational attainment. Children reared in single-parent families from birth have roughly an equal high school dropout rate as those who experienced a transition mother-father to a single-parent family following divorce.

According to the *Economic theory*, children's success depends upon:

[T]he economic resources and the equivalent services that parents provide, children who spend most of their childhoods in a two-parent family (biological or step) will have the highest attainments because two parental figures are present to provide complementary resources. Single-parent families will yield less income from the market and have less time for the provision of household services. One-parent cannot cover both market and non-market activities as successfully as two, and children from single-parent families, accordingly, do less well...Children who grow up in single-mother families will have the lowest attainments-mother-headed families average less than a third of the income of two parent families and about half of the income alternative father-headed families.

This implies that the single-mother will be too occupied with generating income to support the household to be actively engaged in her child's education. With the single-mother's income being the only income of the household, funding for additional activities such as field trips, summer camps-let alone college, are extremely limited. This also implies that mother-headed families are often living in poverty. According to the Census 2000 Special Reports, the poverty rate for children under 18 years old living in mother-only homes for African-Americans was 47.4 percent, compared to 28.1 percent of Caucasians.

Figure 3

Another reason why African-American parents are lacking participation in their child's education is because of their education level. According to the Journal of Higher Education:

Specifically descriptive analyses show that African-Americans and Hispanics not only average lower levels of family income, parental education, and math coursework, than Whites and Asian-Americans, but also are relatively concentrated in schools in the lowest quartiles of average family income and parental education. For example, 37% of African-Americans and 49% of Hispanics attend schools in the lowest quartile of parental education, compared with 17% Caucasians and 16% Asian Americans (Perna & Titus, 2005, p. 509).

Because of this disparity in parental education, parents may be discouraged from active participation in the schools by teachers, administration, and their own inferiority complex.

Alternative Methods of Acquiring Income

Sports

The second factor that contributes to the educational achievement gap within the African-American race is the existence of alternative methods of acquiring income through professional sports (Basketball and Baseball) and drug trafficking. The average salary of an NBA player is 4.17 million, which surpasses an average \$72,741 an African-American with a Ph.D. earns (NBA Players Association). For instance, in 2005 more high-school seniors were taken into the National Basketball Association lottery (draft) than college graduates (Chalfin 2006). A small sample of these individuals that are currently in the NBA include: Kobe Bryant, LeBron James, and Josh Smith. Concerning baseball, the average salary of a baseball player is \$2.6 million. There were 90 African-Americans in the major leagues and only 34 of them possess a college degree (Verducci 2003).

Drugs

Drug-dealing (cocaine and marijuana) offers an alternative method of acquiring income to a college degree. According to the Journal of Qualitative Sociology, “Drug-dealing offers the promise of lavish lifestyles otherwise unattainable to most ghetto youth and other impoverished groups. Dealing also provides an alternative to low-paying dead-end jobs typically available to those

with little education and few skills.” (Murphy, Waldorf, and Reinerman 1990, p. 336)

For the African-American drug dealer seeking to reach cartel status, the aspiration is to make between \$250-\$300 million every year-like Carl Ledher (Moushey 1996). On the low-end is the drug dealer who is trying to make enough profit simply to sustain his/her habit or status. In either case, because he/she is not in college pursuing a degree, they are contributing to the educational achievement gap. According to the Drug Control Strategy Update 2003, 25 percent of African-American state prisoners or approximately 122,000 inmates were serving time for drug-possession, trafficking, or other unspecified drug offenses. By comparison, among Caucasian inmates this proportion was 11.8 percent or approximately 40,900.

Figure 4

The Lack of Personal Responsibility on Behalf of Parents and Children

The lack of personal responsibility is a factor contributing to the educational achievement gap within the African-American race because it curtails dedication to education. It is responsible for causing students to drop out of school and live lives of limited opportunity. According to the National Center for Education Statistics 2003, 20 percent of African-Americans dropped out of high

*I was unable to secure statistical information on the athletes in the other major professional sports because their organizations either did not possess the information, or were not willing to relinquish it.

school compared to 11 percent of Caucasians. In 2004 11.8 percent of African-Americans dropped out of high school compared to 6.8 percent of Caucasians (U.S Census, 2006). If African-American students are not attaining their high school diplomas, they have a very limited chance to compete on the college level. They cannot compete because of the majority of college/universities in the public sector will not admit a student without their high school diploma or GED (General Education Development). Without the opportunity to attend a public college/university and the funds to pay for an education at a private institution, the opportunities for quality selection of housing and jobs are constricted. Once these opportunities are closed, the only life that remains is the life of drugs, crime, prostitution, eventual incarceration, or residence in the slums, as the following case studies from Dunlap, Golub, Johnson (2006, pp. 127-133) of Ricochet, Island, and her two children Sonya and Ross show:

At age 18 Ricochet [from Brooklyn, NY] dropped out of school. She started dating a man she met while he was installing new door bells in her apartment building. They had a daughter together, Tushay, but the relationship did not last long. He said that he was in his twenties. However, he was actually almost 40 and already married. Ricochet would leave care of the child to her mother. At 19, she was in the prime of life. She had a large circle of friends. She knew what was happening, she attended parties, drank alcohol, smoked marijuana and started to smoke cocaine free-base. It was

1980, and her life was fun and care free...At 21 Ricochet became romantically involved with John, who had just returned from jail to live with his mother in the apartment above Joyce's [Ricochet's mother]. Ricochet and John had a daughter together, Fruit Loops. John was a heroin addict and mostly hustled to support his habit. He was also very violent. To protect herself, Ricochet would call the police, "I kept him locked up [To keep him] from beating me all the time...Families often waited for months and even years for a run-down apartment, most often in housing projects. Given their lack of income and lack of discipline in paying rent and bills, many families did not remain in their units long. Once Ricochet set up her own household, there was a steady parade of boyfriends and other short-term relationships. Ricochet was spending even less time with her children and more time with her crack-habit. Ricochet reported, "I used to smoke up all my money. I was getting like \$311 cash in the projects..." Tushay recalled, "I call the BCW [Bureau of Child Welfare] on my mother when she didn't buy me no school clothes...She didn't even feed me for like two days." Indeed Ricochet's mother, Joyce, as well as her two children Tushay and Fruitloops all called BCW at different times to complain about Ricochet's inattentive parenting. After a few years, Ricochet lost the apartment for not paying the rent...

Island Bersini chose her pseudonym because she was born in the Islands. Island's story of lacking personal responsibility is divergent from Ricochet's in that the case study does not indicate that she went to high school. Nevertheless, because she did not have an education, she could not value it enough to pass it on to her two children, Sonya and Ross, and this was the result:

Sonya reached age 17 in 1970, during the peak years of the Heroin Era. After her initial introduction to the drug, Sonya quickly became addicted. She left high school and married a heroin addict and dealer. She and her husband lived in shooting galleries. Sonya raised additional money as a prostitute. After a few years, they separated and he moved to Florida. Soon afterward, Sonya was arrested and sent to prison for participating in the robbery of a jewelry store with a friend. After release, Sonya returned to live with Island. While imprisoned, she had gotten clean from heroin. In the 1980's, Sonya started using crack and again quickly became dependent. Her life revolved around her habit. Whenever she had any money, she would smoke crack. Her main income came from prostitution. As soon as she would turn a trick and make a few dollars, she would find a dealer, buy some crack, and smoke, sometimes she would directly exchange sex-for-crack, avoiding dealing with the money and having to find a dealer. Island's second-child, Ross, also became part of the street scene.

As a child, he always hated being poor and felt stigmatized by public assistance. At age 16, he dropped out of school to try to support the family by selling PCP. Ross married at age 18. Soon afterwards, he was arrested for dealing and sent to prison for two years. Upon release, he returned to Island's household, rather than to his wife, and returned to selling marijuana and PCP. In 1975, he started selling heroin but hated the drug because of what happened to his sister. Heroin had become known as one of the worst, if not the worst drug on the street. When the police increased their pressure on dealers, Ross was arrested and sent to prison for another two years. After release, he was shot during a robbery. As a result, he was paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. His condition, however, did not stop him from dealing drugs. Even though he was still legally married, Ross began living with another woman, Gladys, who bore three children by him. Eventually, however, Ross moved back in with Island.

Contributing Factors Outside of the Black Race

The Media and how they Belittle Education for the African-American Race

The media also is a contributor outside of the African-American race to the educational achievement gap because it predominantly depicts African-

Americans as a race of uneducated, drug-dealing thugs; not as scholarly, degree-seeking people. For example, Boost mobile is the self-proclaimed cell-phone company for today's youth, and the individuals they use to sponsor and promote their "Anthem" campaign (a music-video commercial) included Hip-Hop "artists" such as "Ludacris", "Kanye West", and "The Game"- rappers who promote money, sex, and drugs in their music. Also, their slogan is "Where You At?," a grammatically unsound question (Boost, 2006).

Black Entertainment Television

BET contributes to the educational achievement gap because they give these Hip-Hop "artists" who promote money, sex, drugs, and violence, an outlet through which their voice can be heard. According to BET's executive communications department, approximately 80 million people watch BET's programs daily (BET's Executive Communications Department, personal correspondence, July, 2006). *In fact, BET airs 18 hours of explicit music videos per six days out of the

* How hours of music videos televised were calculated:

106 & Park is aired Monday-Friday 6:00-7:30 pm and on Saturday 11:00-12:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m. *Rap City* is aired Monday-Friday 5:00-6:00 p.m.

College Hill is aired Thursdays at 9:00-9:30 p.m.

1hr 30 min x 5 days (Monday-Friday) = 9hrs; 3hrs x 1 day (Saturday) = 3hrs

Total number of hours for *106 & Park* =12 hrs

1 hr x 5 days (Monday-Friday) = 6 hours

Total number of hours for *Rap City* = 6 hours

Total hrs of *106 & Park* (12) + Total hrs of *Rap City* (6) = 18 hours

Total hours of music videos aired = 18 hours

week compared to 30 minutes of the reality series “College Hill”, which is geared towards exposing the lives of eight college co-eds (BET and TV, 2006).

Therefore if BET is sponsoring rappers such as “TI”, who raps about the benefits of selling crack in his song “What you know” on his latest platinum (1 million units sold) album entitled “King”; and also of whom BET awarded the best male hip-hop artist [of the year 2006] trophy, then approximately 80 million people are being influenced to engage in that behavior-all of which is contrary to acquiring a high school diploma and a bachelor’s degree (Boston, 2006; Billboard 2006). BET’s function as a microphone for Hip-Hop “artists” to be heard not only demotes education, but also violates two United Nations resolutions. The first is a resolution condemning genocide, which states:

Having considered the declaration made by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 96(I) dated 11 December 1946 that genocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world.

Article 2

...genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a natural, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of

the group

- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

Article 4

Persons committing genocide or any other acts enumerated in article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials, or private individuals.

(Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide)

The second United Nations resolution that BET violates is the *Declaration on the Promotion and Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples*, which states:

Reaffirming the principles embodied in the General Assembly resolution 110 (II) of 3 November 1947 condemning all forms of propaganda designed or likely to provoke or encourage any threat to peace. Convinced furthermore that the education of the young and exchanges of young people and of ideas in a spirit of peace, mutual respect and understanding between peoples can help to improve international relations and to strengthen peace and security:

Principle I

Young people shall be brought up in the spirit of peace, justice, freedom, mutual respect, and understanding in order to promote equal rights for all human beings and all nations, economic progress, disarmament of international peace and security.

Principle VI

A major aim in educating the young shall be to develop all their faculties and to train them to acquire higher moral qualities, to be deeply attached to the noble ideas of peace, liberty, the dignity and quality of all men, and imbued with respect and love for humanity and its creative achievements. To this end the family has an important role to play (General Assembly).

If BET can continue their operation unscathed by these resolutions and unregulated by the Federal Communications Commission (as the following section shows), and the rappers they promote can continue to make millions off of their music that glorifies everything contrary to education, then what is the incentive for African-Americans to complete high school with a diploma and graduate from college with a degree?

The Federal Communications Commission and Their Partial Regulatory Practices

The Federal Communications Commission is a contributor outside of the African-American race to the educational achievement gap because of its partiality in the regulation of television programs. The “Shock Jock” Howard Stern has been fined approximately \$700,000 (1992 and 2004) by the FCC because of his graphic dialogue and sexual exploitation of Caucasian women on his television show (CNN, 2004; NY Times, 1992). The FCC has also fined CBS television \$3.6 million (a record) for a sexually graphic portrayal of teenage boys and girls engaging in a sexual orgy on the television show “Without a Trace.” Though they fine these stations for their offenses-Howard Stern and CBS, the FCC has done absolutely nothing to curtail the sexually explicit acts and graphic images of African-Americans on BET. Since the FCC is allowing BET to continue their operation, they are allowing the demotion of education by the rappers promotion of money, sex, drugs, and violence to continue the cycle of genocide. If society is relaying to the African-American community that education is not the way, then what incentive is there for African-Americans to aid in closing the educational achievement gap between themselves and Caucasians by pursuing and attaining a bachelor’s degree?

Consequences of the Educational Achievement Gap for Blacks

Incarceration Rates of African-Americans

As previously stated, a lack of education (high school diploma and bachelor's degree) is associated with crime and imprisonment. In 2005, an estimated 12 percent of Black males in their late twenties were in prison or in jail compared to 1.7 percent of their White counterparts. At midyear 2005 Blacks were nearly five times more likely than Whites to have been in jail. Among the nearly 2.2 million offenders incarcerated on June 30, 2005, an estimated 548,300 were Black males between the ages of 20-39. Of Black non-Hispanic males ages 25 to 29, 11.9 percent were in prison or jail compared to approximately 1.7 percent of White males in the same age group. The incarceration rates for Blacks of all ages were 5 to 7 times greater than those for White males in the same age-groups. The incarceration rate for Black non-Hispanic females was 347 per 100,000, 4 times higher than the rate for White females which is 88 per 100,000. These differences among White and Black females are consistent across all age groups (U.S Dept. of Justice, 2005, pp.1-13). Black male juveniles 16-24 totaled 2,757,448 from 1990-2004, compared to 12,017,952 of their White counterparts (Office of Juvenile Justice, 2004).

Figure 5

Figure 6

African-American Poverty

According to the aforesaid, a powerful economic advantage accrues to African-Americans who hold a four-year degree. African-Americans who earn bachelor's degrees earn twice the income of those with merely a high-school diploma (JBHE News & Views, 2005, p. 4). However, not possessing a college degree has direct correlation with poverty. According to the U.S Census Bureau 2005, there are 36,423,000 African-Americans in the U.S. Of that 36,423,000, 32,515,000 do not have college degrees; of that 32,515,000, 8,723,000 are living in poverty. There are 36, 423, 000 African-Americans in the U.S; of that number,

*There was no way for the Bureau of Justice Statistics to furnish me with statistics on the exact percentage of Black and White inmates with college degrees.

17,473,000 African-Americans ages 25 and over do not have college degrees, and of that number 3,845,000 are living in poverty. According to Dunlap, Golub, and Johnson (2006, p.118):

Poverty and long-term joblessness have been associated with a constellation of detrimental consequences: over-crowded housing, poor physical and mental wellness, despair, post-traumatic, stress disorder, family dissolution, teen pregnancy, school dropout, crime, violence, interpersonal violence, and drug and alcohol abuse, among others.

Figure 7

The educational achievement gap and all its contributors have also caused dissension between the descendants of Africa-African Americans and the peoples of the Caribbean. It has caused the peoples of the Caribbean to not affiliate themselves with American Blacks. There are several reasons for this, according to Benjamin Bailey (2001, p. 689):

*Method of finding those in poverty without degrees:

1. Subtract: all educational levels, all incomes – 4 year degree or more, all income levels = number of African-Americans without a college degree
2. Subtract: all educational levels, below 100% of poverty – 4 year degree or more, below 100% poverty=number without degree in poverty. (U.S Census Bureau: Joe Dalaker, Poverty and Health Statistics Branch)

Most studies on the identities of post 1965 Afro-Caribbean immigrants have focused on the first generation. The first generation overwhelmingly rejects the folk-racial categorization of “black American” that is imposed on them, instead emphasizing their ethnicity as Haitians, Jamaicans, Trinidadians, etc. Many in the first generation actively disassociate themselves from African-Americans:

If race unites Jamaicans with American blacks, ethnicity divides them. Jamaicans...feel they are different then, indeed superior to, indigenous blacks and they conduct their social life mainly with other Jamaicans.

Ethnicity...while it draws them together with their fellow Jamaicans (and often other West Indians), it drives a deep wedge between them and American blacks

(Foner, 1987: 213-214)

...[There also exists a subdivision of the second generation who hold to their parents’ belief that Afro-Caribbean immigrants are [divergent] from African-Americans and superior in many respects and that, with perseverance, they can succeed socioeconomically regardless of racism. They have enough contact with white Americans and middle-class Americans to know that many whites

and socially mobile Americans share this view that African descent immigrants are more industrious, disciplined and education oriented than other African descent Americans. They attribute their hard work in school and opportunities for mobility to the discipline and culture of their immigrant ethnicity.

Those from the Caribbean are also seen as superior because of the economic advantage that they are perceived to possess. According to the *Cultural* and *Demand* side arguments:

Caribbean Blacks are said to be higher achievers who have a greater work ethic compared to American Blacks. These immigrants have had greater opportunity to pursue individual economic endeavors in the past, both during and after slavery. Their socialization is a more favorable climate in the Caribbean, where they have always been a racial majority, also facilitated the development of a psyche that manifests itself in higher achievement relative to African-Americans (Glazer & Moynihan 1963; Lewis 1983; Sowell 1978)...Caribbean blacks are also said to benefit from favorable perceptions that white Americans and employers have about them, relative to African Americans (Foner 1985; Hossfeld 1994; Waters 1999a). (Dodoo, 1997, pp. 529-530)

There is also evidence that suggests the existence of a type of chain recruitment among Caribbean Blacks, where Caribbean workers recruited others into an

organization; and that “Black immigrants emphasize their foreign origins because they perceive that it conveys an advantage (Dodoo, 1997, p. 531).

The media, in exploiting the educational achievement gap between Blacks and Whites, has also made an appreciable impact on how those from the Caribbean view African-Americans. In Benjamin Bailey’s interview with Eva (Dominican-American, U.S born) states the anti-Black attitude by her mother:

...most African-Americans don’t really do good, most of them if you see them selling drugs or something, that’s what she thinks, that most African-Americans don’t do good.

(Bailey, 2001, p. 699)

The anti-Black sentiments of the Dominican first generation stem from immigrants who bring with them negative stereotypes of African-Americans, based on media depictions and what they hear from friends and relatives in the United States. Teenagers that Benjamin Bailey interviewed in the Dominican Republic, who never had personal contact with African-Americans, associated them with gangs, crime, success in sports, and poverty (Bailey, 2001, p. 700).

Also according to Benjamin Bailey (2001, p. 700), “Newly immigrated Dominicans, hoping to make a better life for themselves have little incentive to have dealings with a group that is viewed to be among the least socially and economically mobile in America.

The anti-black sentiment is portrayed even in the policy of categorizing races in that country. Benjamin Bailey (2001, pp. 677, 696) states:

The majority of Dominicans have sub-Saharan African ancestry, which would make them “black” by historical United States ‘one drop’ rules... [Yet] Dominicans on the Island do not think of themselves as being black, but rather more or less European/Whites. In the Dominican Republic, perceived or imagined European ancestry makes an individual not Black. By this measure, a small percentage of Dominicans are counted as black.

On July 31, 2006, one author (A.S.) journeyed to San Juan, Puerto-Rico to see my sister “Rachel” who I never met before in person-she is African-American and Puerto-Rican. I stayed there for ten days and experienced first-hand how “nappy” hair (bad hair) and being an African-American were viewed as undesirable by Puerto Rican society, as compared to straight hair (good hair) and light skin of the majority of the Puerto-Ricans. I can recall when “Angel”(my hostess), “Rachel” and myself traveled to Sam’s Mart to purchase food supplies for the coming month, and before I could enter the store I was stopped and questioned by a Puerto-Rican check-out clerk. However, I did not understand what she was saying and “Angel” had to intervene on my behalf so I could enter the store.

The second incident I can recall is when “Angel”, “Rachel” and I were walking down the street to the post-office. While we were walking, various Puerto-Ricans would stare at my sister and I because we have “nappy” hair. And

while in the post-office, one child looked at my sister with disdain because of her hair texture. I was quite disturbed at how the children were being indoctrinated in the racist sentiments of Puerto-Rican culture.

I can also recall questioning “Angel” as to where the aversion of Puerto-Ricans towards African-Americans originated. In essence she relayed to me that the racism of that culture towards African-Americans is learned from the preceding generations. She told me that her grandmother taught her to not have dealings with African-Americans because she considered them thugs. She also confessed to me that earlier in her life when she was dating African-American men, she was looked down upon by some of her family members.

With the educational achievement gap and all its contributing factors creating a stigma for the Black race-associating them with drug-dealing, crime, and poverty what is the incentive for the descendants of Africa in the Caribbean to have any affiliation with the African-American race? **NOBODY WANTS TO BE BLACK!**

Solutions to the Educational Achievement Gap

Parental Involvement

Though the educational achievement gap between Blacks and Whites is a detriment for the Black race, the wound is not incurable. The first solution is an accretion in parental involvement and school understanding. Johnetta B. Cole,

president of Bennett College for Women asserts:

Parental engagement is the No.1 reason why children demonstrate superior academic performance, then they learn to appreciate what education has to offer. Parental involvement must not stop there, however. Parents must volunteer to become active participants within their educational institutions. For instance, running for a seat on the local school board would be a good start. As an elected member, the opportunities, to influence everything from curriculum development to budgets abound. Parents could advocate for a national policy to encourage the Bush administration to enact new initiatives, but the most productive means of making a difference is on the school level, one school district at a time (Meeks, 2005, p. 148).

Many parents are inhibited from participation in their child's education because of social, economic, or physical needs. Teachers and administration must be willing to go the extra-mile for parents, even if that entails sending out a van to pick-up parents to attend the Parent-Teacher Association meetings, and Parent-Teacher conferences. Also, "It is important that educators recognize that both the child and the school benefit when the parents participate in either school-based or home-based activities. The child benefits by having both the school and home place emphasis on education, while the school benefits by being in partnership

with parents who are supportive of their educational program.” (Trotman, 2001, p. 276)

By the child witnessing the collaboration between school and their parents, they will value education and be more apt to graduate from high-school with a diploma and enroll in college, and graduate with a four-year bachelor’s degree, thus aiding in closing the educational achievement gap between African-Americans and Caucasians. Teachers can also aid the parents in closing the achievement gap “...by asking parents for their assistance, views, and suggestions, as a means to better prepare their child and ensure academic success.” (Trotman, 2001, p.278)

After-School Programs and Pre-Collegiate Programs

The second solution is enrolling more African-American high-school students in after-school programs and pre-collegiate programs. The Extended Service Schools federal initiative is geared toward meeting the needs of the youth by providing developmental opportunities for children and adolescents.

According to the ESS:

School-based, after-school programs are increasingly becoming the solution to policy-makers suggest for all sorts of youth problems—poor-academic achievement, gang participation, violence, and drug-use. Federal spending alone for school-based, after-school

programs has gone from \$40 million in 1997 to a proposed \$850 million in 2001. According to ESS, school-based programs, after-school programs are promising strategies for engaging youth in a variety of positive social, recreational and academic activities. The programs hold the potential of providing young people with opportunities to develop skills, roles, and relationships essential to their ultimate success while also sheltering them during a time of vulnerability...[they] observed that the programs did actively attract and engage thousands of children and youth who have few other positive options for filling their after-school time. [However,] they found it to be significantly easier to recruit elementary school children than middle and high school students. Among the early enrollees, 30 percent were in grade three or lower, 45 percent were in grades four to six, 25 percent were in grades seven or eight, and only 2 percent were in grades nine or higher [between 1998-1999]. [Some ESS programs] found that teens enjoyed organizing and participating in special events such as community service, neighborhood cleanups, running their own clubs, and working with younger youth as tutors, mentors, or ESS staff. Offering teen programs with flexible open-door policies, [coupled] with opportunities for leadership and loosely guided autonomy seemed

most effective. Older youth were also attracted to programs that aided them with job readiness and placement (Grossman, Walker, & Raley, pp. 3, 9-10, 15-16).

College preparation programs are also a way to aid in closing the educational achievement gap because they prepare African-Americans for the rigor of college life. According to Perna & Titus (2005, 485-486):

College preparation programs (also known as early intervention programs and pre-collegiate programs) are an increasingly common approach to raising the college enrollment rates of African-Americans, Hispanics, and other groups of students who are underrepresented in higher education. [Such programs like TRIO-a federally funded collection of programs] are designed to promote educational attainment by developing the skills, knowledge, confidence, aspirations, and preparation that are needed to enroll in and graduate from college.

Consensus on the Importance of Education

The third solution for the African-American race is to come to the consensus that education (gaining a high school diploma and a bachelor's degree) is essential to the social and economic mobility of the race. Once this agreement has been reached, label all who demote, devalue, and oppose education, by

promoting, valuing, and glorifying the corrupt use of money, sex, and drugs, as enemies of the African-American race. This also implies lobbying the Federal Communications Commission to place stricter regulations on Black Entertainment Television, and develop more television programs that promote African-American education and scholarship.

SUMMARY

If the educational achievement gap between blacks and whites on the collegiate level does not minimize, the rate of black poverty, crime, and incarceration will continue to escalate; the perception of African-Americans as inferior by the general populous of the Caribbean will remain, and the opportunity for African upward mobility will remain constricted. In order for the educational achievement gap to minimize, the internal influences that negatively impact African-American education-mother only homes, sports, and drug-dealing-must be rectified.

Also the external factors that negatively impact education-the partial regulatory practices of the Federal Communications Commission, and promotion of genocide by BET-must be addressed. There must be a general consensus by the African-American race, that education is essential for upward mobility and all who are opposed to African-Americans acquiring an education are enemies of the race.

IMPLICATIONS

There are many factors that contribute to the educational achievement gap between blacks and whites on the collegiate level from within and outside of the black race. However, the influences outside of the African-American race will be the concentration of this section. In conjecture, the influences outside of the African-American race (BET and the Federal Communications) appear to serve as a two-edged sword to keep the African-American race suppressed. BET serves as the blindfold over the eyes of the African-American race to education, while the Federal Communications Commission serves as the hands that tied the knot.

To those who are in power who do not care about the proliferation of the African-American race through education, this “two-edged sword” is the perfect tool for the stultification of the minds of the African-American race because it gives the people a reason to hate each other, and credence to the acts of genocide, and credence for not having high regard for education. What is particularly peculiar about this entire ordeal is it’s almost non-existence for any other race in the world. There is no other race in the world that has an establishment that airs music promoting genocide against their own, degrades their women and men, and rewards those who can promote the most genocide, and who disguises its true nature by purporting to be an organization dedicated to uplifting that race’s community.

What is also an anomaly is the obliviousness to the permission the music

that promotes genocide against African-Americans gives to the other races. By the Federal Communications Commission allowing African-American “Hip-Hop artists” to write lyrics to music about the benefits of selling drugs, the willingness to kill other African-Americans, the demoralizing of African-Americans by calling them “niggers”, “bitches”, and “hoes”, the rebellion against the law, and the production of children out of wedlock, instead of having them promote education, it gives permission for people of other races to exploit the African-American race in the same manner.

In order for this study to become an authority in the field of education, a more exhaustive research should be conducted. There also should be more research methods employed in order to achieve triangulation in the study, and there will be further research conducted on this topic by the authors of this document.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this research were time and lack of statistical data pertaining to college degree possession of athletes and inmates. There was only a six-week window with which to construct this research paper. Also, the National Football League, the Arena Football League, Major League Soccer, and Major League Baseball professional sports organizations did not furnish me with the statistical data pertaining to the percentage of professional players without college degrees. The Federal Bureau of Prisons (an agency of the U.S Department of Justice) did not furnish the statistical data pertaining to the percentage of inmates that possess college degrees. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department did not provide the average salary of *lower and higher level drug-dealers.

*Lower level drug-dealer=street drug-dealer; Higher level drug-dealer=Cartel status (has businesses and corporations involved in drug-trafficking)

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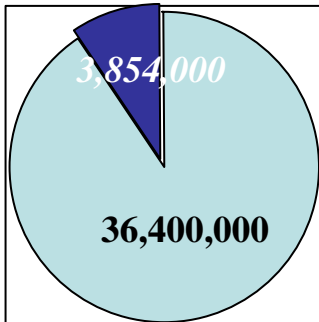


Figure 1: African Americans in the U.S./African-Americans without a college degree (2003)

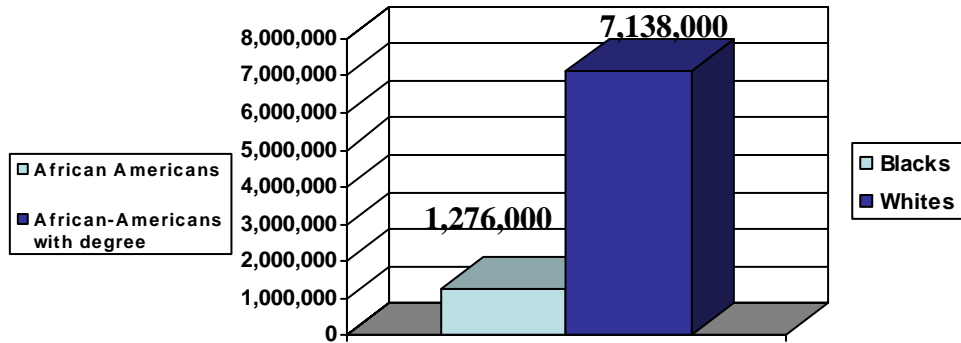


Figure 2: Comparison of Black and White students at College level (2004)

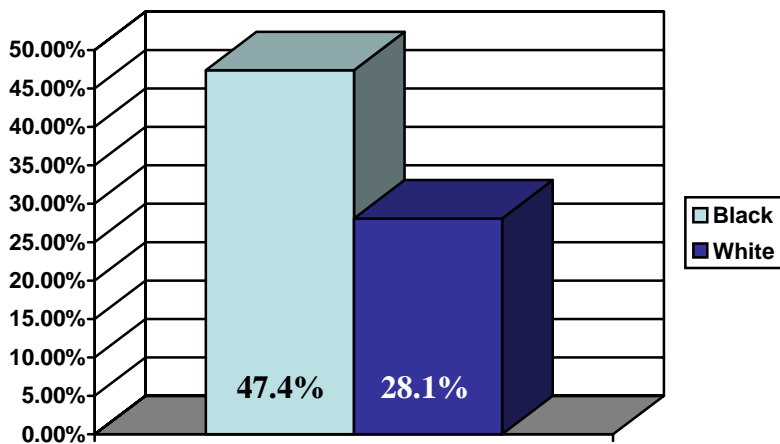


Figure 3: Poverty Rate for Children under 18 Living in Mother-Only Homes (2000)
Appendix: Graph 1B

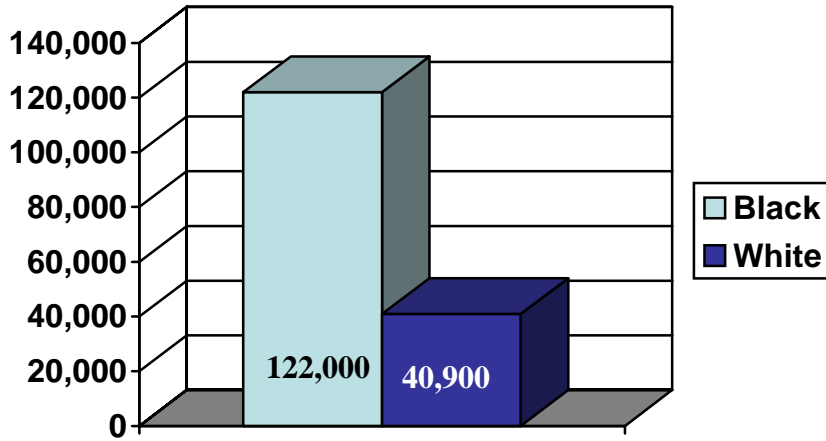


Figure 4: Incarceration Rates for Drugs Offenses 2003
Appendix: Graph 2C

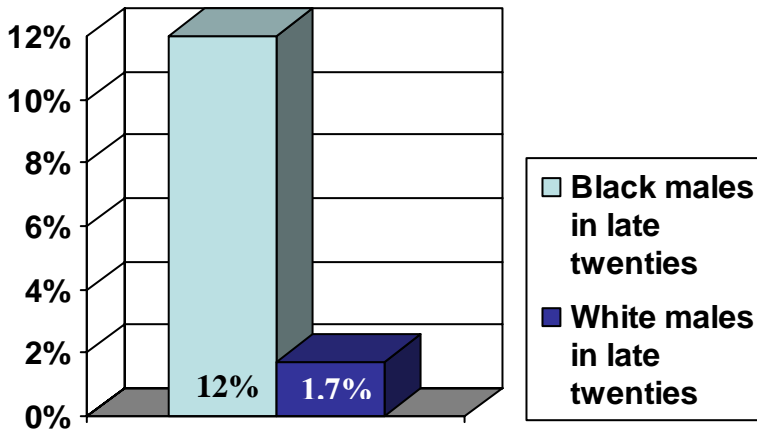


Figure 5: Prison or Jail Inmates (2005)
Appendix Graph: 1D

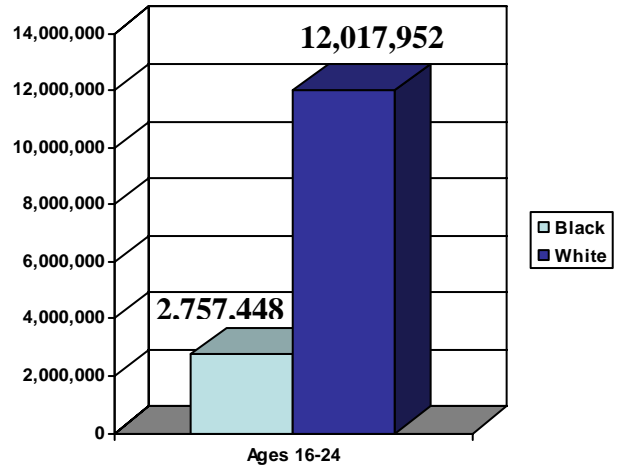


Figure 6: Male Juveniles 1990-2004
Appendix: Graph 3D

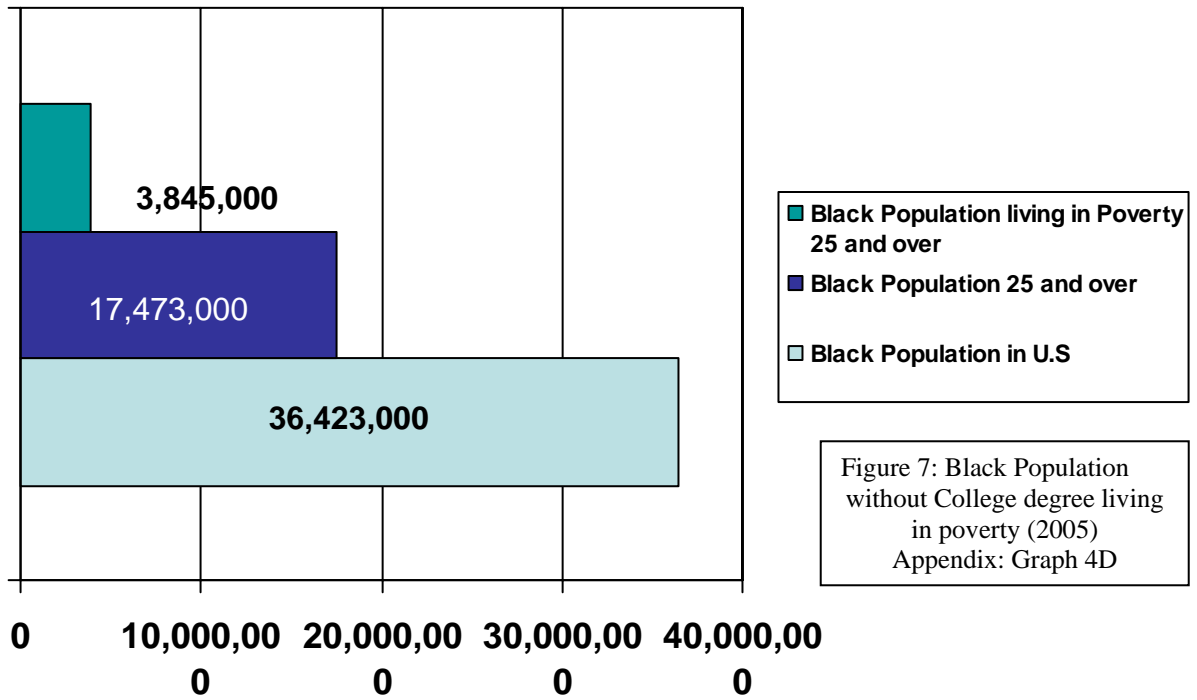


Figure 7: Black Population without College degree living in poverty (2005)
Appendix: Graph 4D