

Practices in Elementary Schools to Reduce Racial Stereotypes that Impact Students' Academic Performance

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Introduction

Racial stereotypes in schools negatively influence students' academic success. Students from a young age face racism in their lives by the way they talk, interact, play, and live with other people (Kromidas, 2016). To investigate the impact of racial stereotype threats, I asked these research questions:

- (1) How do elementary school educators reduce racial stereotypes in their classrooms that can impact students' academic performance?
- (2) What are their perceptions of the different methods they have tried?



Findings

Commonly Used Methods

- **Equity vs. Equality** - Providing opportunities and using diverse resources so underrepresented student groups can "see" themselves. vs. telling students they are equal or to treat everyone with respect, "We are family."
- **Classroom Discussions as a Way to Mediate Stereotype Threats** - Start conversations about racial stereotypes or ask "What implicit biases do I have?" The Harvard Implicit Bias Assessment is a resource to recognize implicit biases.
- **Representation of Diversity** - Resources are used in classrooms everyday. Incorporating representations such as linguistic diversity and exposure of different cultures. Goes beyond representation, there needs to be mindfulness and a commitment to action.

Participants' Perceptions

- All participants agreed that it is best to address racial stereotypes in the classroom. One educator said everyone should question where racial stereotypes comes from in order to "...stop the cycle from continuing by realizing the origin of the stereotype."
- Another educator wrote about the life long effects of racial stereotypes and how it "could result in lifelong trauma."

Findings (cont.)

- Start the methods in early childhood education and teach acceptance for all students.
- Using historical figures is another way to help with those methods.
Impact on Students' Academic Performance
- Most participants said it was a negative influence while some said it was a positive influence for these reasons:
 - "work harder to overcome the things said or done to them."
 - "use racial stereotypes as a source of motivation to break barriers"
 - "challenged me to get a global perspective- and try new things...racial stereotypes can motivate"

Method

Survey Study

I used a mixed methods approach to gather and analyze data. I used a survey study that consisted of Likert scale questions and open-ended questions. From my survey study, I received 18 total responses (n=18).

Interviews

After participants completed the survey study, they had the opportunity to consent to a follow-up interview. I was able to interview three educators. I asked interviewees questions about:

- real life situations they might have faced regarding racial stereotypes
- their perceptions of addressing racial stereotypes in their classroom

Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine and report on racial stereotypes and stereotype threats that are common in elementary school classrooms. The implications of this study include:

- It is important for teachers to realize what stereotype threats are so they will address racial stereotypes in the classroom.
- With this research, I aspire to educate my peers and future teachers about reducing racial stereotypes and ways to address stereotype threats.
- Future research includes examining elementary school students' perceptions of racial stereotype threats.