

Bridging the School-Community Gap

by

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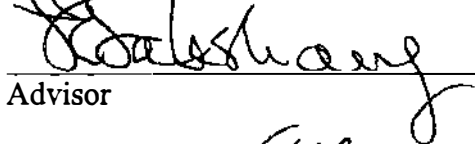
Master of Science in Education

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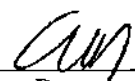
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CHAPTER 1- Introduction

Fred walked into the classroom one morning with a somber look on his face. I began teaching with a watchful eye on Fred's facial expressions and overall mood. Then, during the middle of my sentence Fred shouted out, "Ms. I am going to have a bad day today!" Surprised, I asked Fred if there was anything that he needed to talk about. He replied "Later Miss". I allowed Fred to sit quietly at his table until I had a chance to speak with him one-on-one. Fred started off the conversation with this: "Someone broke into my house this weekend and stole all of my things." As Fred continued talking about the fear and anxiety he experienced I began to think about what I wished could have happened. Since this happened over the weekend when school was not in session there was not a chance for me to help Fred over the weekend. It is in a case such as this that I begin to wonder, "Where is the community?"

Everyone knows the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." It is from this concept that I began my research on how community organizations can aid in the education of our children. It is my belief as an educator, that I alone cannot provide my students with enough during the seven hours that I see them to support their development as good citizens. There are numerous external factors which affect my students' performance in school. These external factors include but are not limited to: home life, socio-economic status (SES), culture, gang-relationships, and exposure to positive community role models.

Primarily my goal was to explore the question, How can educators help bridge the gap between school and community? This question, it turned out was too broad to

research in the small amount of time available. Instead, I asked the question, What community services do the students need and how do I make them aware of the services? My theory is that students need to be engulfed in positive interactions both in school and out of school. It is not enough for students to have positive interactions at school and then go home to an environment where these interactions do not continue.

Last school year I was given the opportunity to work with students with emotional disabilities. At first I thought that this was more of a curse than a blessing. Then I began to realize that this was an opportunity to change lives. These students needed to have a supportive community and also teachers who had the opinion that these students were assets not villains. "When youth are seen as threats, as they often are in urban areas, this belief will drive a community to allocate resources toward programs that deal with youth as a problem rather than assets." (Deschenes, 2003, P.2) This quote is the focal point of my desire to do this research. I want to learn how we can change the perception of students in order to make them into future citizens instead of future inmates.

A review of the literature suggests that there are numerous issues facing the youth in Rochester. These youth are also the students that teachers are assigned to teach in the city schools. Teachers are expected to reach these students in traditional ways, but these students are not traditional students. Inner city youth face violence, drugs, death, poverty, crime, teenage pregnancy, and homelessness. All too often the parents are overwhelmed by the prospect of having to raise a child in such a hostile environment. Teachers and parents are not being given assistance by the community and the children are suffering. The research shows that there is a definite need for programs to exist in the

urban setting. Programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, recreation centers, and mentor programs are few and far between and this, the research shows, needs to change.

Definition of Terms

Gang- a group of young people, especially young men, who spend time together, often fighting with other groups and behaving badly

Delinquency- behavior, especially of a young person, that is illegal or unacceptable to most people

Community- the people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, background or nationality

Anti-Social Behavior- harmful to society

CHAPTER 2- Literature Review

*Family and Community Dynamics*

Family Transitions

In a study by Thornberry, Smith, Rivera, Huizinga, & Stothamer (1999) the researchers looked at three cities in the United States. The cities they researched were Rochester, Denver, and Pittsburgh. For a decade, they researched the impact of family transitions on the children in the family. Thornberry, et al. (1999) found many different ways that a family transition could take place. For example, a divorce would be the most common form of family transition, but there are many others that could have an impact. When a child had formerly lived with just one parent and that parent had a partner move in there would also be a transition that takes place, especially if that partner had children moving in with him or her. In order to prevent delinquency in youth, the causes would need to be uncovered. Delinquency in the case of this study is defined as involvement in a variety of delinquent behaviors such as petty theft, and aggravated assault. The definition also included the use of illegal drugs such as marijuana and heroine. The data on delinquency was measured by the self-reporting of the subjects involved. The researchers sought to prove that an increased number of family transitions led to youth delinquency.

In order to determine if there was a correlation, the researchers studied the same children over a four year time frame and obtained data on the number of family transitions that youth experienced. To collect their data, the researchers used an



interview format in which they interviewed 4,000 youth and their caretakers. In the Rochester research study, the youth were boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 17.

The results of the study indicated that there is a definite link between family transitions and youth delinquency. When the research was analyzed for the Rochester study, almost 65% of the youth had experienced at least one family transition over a four year period. On top of the 65% there was also 45% of the youth that had experienced two or more transitions during the same time period. In the research it was found that the number of family transitions had a clear impact on the delinquency of the testing sample. As the number of family transitions went up, so did the rate of delinquency. For example, if a child had experienced five or more transitions in the four year time frame, their likelihood of delinquency was 60%.

Research done by Tolan, Gorman-Smith, and Henry (2004) addressed the issues surrounding early intervention programs in urban settings. In the present study, the focus was primarily on the efficacy of early prevention efforts known as SAFEChildren. This was designed as an effort to aid families in inner cities in the transition that occurs when children enter first grade. This transition is especially difficult because the family must engage with a large and demanding social institution; children have less time under parental supervision, and are influenced by people other than family figures.

Tolan, et al. asserted that early interventions were an important part of academic success. It was concluded that the role of the inner city in youth development was to heighten the risk for anti-social behavior in children. In order to combat this effect the researchers created an intervention that sought to encourage both the child's academic abilities and the parent's role in their child's education.

The SAFEChildren program was formed combining two components. The first component was a multiple-family group approach that focused on parenting skills, family relationships, understanding developmental and situational challenges for the family, increasing support among the parents in the group, and managing neighborhood issues. The second component of the research was a phonics-based reading tutoring program.

The intervention began at the outset of the first grade and involved 22 weeks of intervention. Multiple family groups met weekly, and the groups combined information provision, skill practice, group problem solving, and at home exercises. Included in the study were a control group and an intervention group that were randomly separated. Out of 507 families that were eligible to take part in this intervention, 424 families consented to participate. Of the 424 families that participated, 42.5% of them reported being African American and 57.5% were Latino.

The success of the intervention was based on four major components; a child's school functioning, child's behavior, child's social competence, and parenting and family relationships. Overall, the results of the intervention were promising, with benefits to both the parents and children in the group. The purpose of the intervention was to support healthy development, parenting skills, and provide a buffer between the harsh inner cities that these children were a part of. At the end, this intervention seemed to work, but the authors explained that it will take some time to determine the long term effects.

Research has been done on one long running program known as the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP). Jennifer Selfridge (2004) explored what made the program work and what made other programs fail. The program was characterized by a

multiple year approach aimed at preventing violence and creating caring and peaceable communities in which the students and teachers can achieve success. It is one of the largest and longest-running school programs that focus on conflict resolution and intergroup relations. It was created to address issues faced by students in the inner-city and urban areas. Primarily the goal of the program was to ensure that young people developed the social and emotional skills needed to reduce violence and prejudice, form caring relationships, and build healthy lives.

As of this writing, the RCCP program is now in more than 400 schools in 16 urban, suburban, and rural school districts across the United States. There is no doubt that the program works, as there is data from a number of locations that show it makes a difference in the way that students feel about themselves and others. It is, however, difficult to get a baseline for how the program is helping because each school uses the data differently to suit their own needs.

After RCCP was in place in a school, many districts began a peer mediation program to empower students to contribute to their school community. Teachers also began using lesson plans, and integrating the community into their classrooms. RCCP also encouraged communication between parents, caregivers, and the school. In order for the program to work the staff had to be enthusiastic and well trained. Parents were invited into the school to attend Peace in the Family workshops where they underwent training in the same conflict resolution skills that their children were learning in the classroom. In this way the school connected with the home environment in a positive manner. Overall, when young people became a part of making their home and school environment better, the RCCP program truly reached success.

In an article by Phelan Wyrick (2000), the question of what the police's role is in youth crime prevention should be addressed. Seasoned law enforcement officers all across the United States are becoming aware of the early warning signs for later delinquency in children. Officers see youth who have been exposed to crime and violence on the streets, in their schools, and among peers. Officers frequently recognize that such exposure to crime can lead to later offending in children. These risk factors that lead to delinquency can be defined as "conditions in the environment that predict an increased likelihood of developing delinquent behavior (Brewer et al., 1995; Hawkins et al., 1998)." School related risk factors include early and persistent antisocial behavior and academic failure. Another important key to risk factors is that as the number of risk factors increases so does the probability that the delinquency will also increase.

To combat this problem, officers in California came up with a program named SHIELD. The SHIELD program has two main goals: First, it used the contacts that police officers make in the course of their normal duties to identify youth who they think are likely to become involved in violent behavior, substance abuse, and gang activities. Second, the SHIELD program provided youth with services that are tailored to meet their individual needs by using a multidisciplinary team of representatives from the community, schools, and service agencies. This multidisciplinary team could include officials from the local school district, such as the pupil's personnel administrator, the district nurse, a specialist in drug abuse prevention, and school principals. The SHIELD program also has a youth referral process that gives officers a procedure for providing assistance to youth who are exposed to family risk factors.

In order to measure program success, the SHIELD program randomly selected 43 youth for the experimental group. Sixty percent of the randomly selected group received services of some kind and 14% were still in the community but were not receiving help because of parental refusal. The outcome of this program is largely dependent on the quality of services and programs for which youth are referred. The formative evaluation included a qualitative assessment of participant satisfaction and the results were promising.

In order to understand what the students in urban areas were being exposed to, it was important to look at the negative influences that they saw every day. One of these negative influences was gangs. Lockwood examined the work of Martin Sanchez Jankowski's, who lived with gangs for over ten years. During this time he lived with 37 different gangs of varying ethnicities in three major U.S. cities. He explained that the focus of his research was low income areas.

The only way that Jankowski felt he could truly understand gangs, was to live with them and conduct participant observations of their members. Since most researchers had studied a single city, Jankowski felt that he needed to discover what was unique about each ethnic group and city. After randomly selecting a gang name, he would visit the area to pay a call at a church or social service agency. Jankowski would tell the gang members that he was a professor and that he wanted to write a book about gangs. He also told them that he wanted to live with them 100 percent of the time.

After living with the gang Jankowski was able to define what a gang was. He stated that "Any kind of grouping could be considered a gang, and I don't think that's very accurate sociologically." (Pg. 4) Jankowski professes admiration for public school

educators, and understands that the job is not easy. Jankowski then gave advice about what educators could do in order to curb gang activities in school. School officials may actually have been inadvertently encouraging recruitment in gangs because if they could not provide protection in schools, then students would join gangs for this protection. There was no sense in trying to eradicate gangs because it is impossible, warns Jankowski, gangs are an organizational response to inequality and poverty.

Jankowski believed that a cutting edge vocational program coupled with school based placement services would be effective in winning many intelligent gang members back into mainstream society. He also criticized schools for training students in career options that they would not be able to use in the future. As he points out "It doesn't help if you get trained and you can't be placed."

Other than gangs, children are also exposed to many other negative influences that they cannot escape. Community violence is one such negative influence. Recent literature, as stated by Mazza and Overstreet, describes community violence and exposure to this violence as being of epidemic proportions. Homicide is the second leading cause of death in young adults, ages 15-24, in the United States. Reports state that in African American males ages 15-19, gun related homicide is the leading cause of death. The vast majority of junior and senior high school students have either witnessed or been victims of violence, ranging from 75% to 93%. The purpose of the article is to review the recent research on exposure to chronic community violence.

There are many mental health concerns that these victims or witnesses experience. One such concern for these children is posttraumatic stress disorder. In research done by Fletcher (1996) the incidence of PTSD in preschool children is 33%, elementary school

students 39%, and adolescents at a rate of 27%. Aggression, suicidal behavior, anxiety, aggressive and antisocial behaviors, and academic difficulties are just some of the other issues these students face.

Intervention strategies for assisting youth who are exposed to community violence have frequently included environmental modifications. Although numerous programs such as this exist, research examining the effectiveness of these programs has not been conducted. There has been discussion on the effectiveness of a 12 week curriculum designed for working with high-risk youth that have been exposed to chronic community violence. The preliminary results of this program from a small study of 36 inner city youth, fourth through sixth graders, showed that teachers reported fewer learning problems and better task orientation after the curriculum compared to pretest levels.

Overall, the relationship between exposure to community violence and mental health in children and adolescents is complex. Further information and research needs to be collected in order to effectively determine what needs to be done by the school, community, and family in order to help these children in coping with their mental health concerns.

One way that has been looked at for helping children with their community violence issues is mentoring. According to a research paper done by Rhodes, Grossman, and Resch, approximately 5 million youth are involved in school-and-community-based volunteer mentoring programs nationwide. Very little, however, is known about the underlying processes by which mentor relationships affect academic outcomes.

To discover how the academic outcomes are affected, the researchers used 1,138 youth that applied to the Big Brothers Big Sisters programs in 1992 and 1993.

Applicants were randomly assigned to either the treatment or control group and asked questions at baseline and 18 months later. Over half of the sample group was boys and another half of the group was from minority groups. Participants ranged from 10-16 years old with 69% of this group being between the ages of 11 and 13. Ninety percent of the youth lived with one parent only. More than 40% of the youth lived in households that were receiving food stamps or public assistance or both.

In order to ensure that all youths' needs were met, the participants that were placed in the control group on a waiting list for a post study match. At the conclusion of the study, 378 of the treatment youth had been matched. The authors hypothesized that mentoring would directly impact the adolescents' perceptions of self worth, perceived scholastic competence, and indices of academic performance. To test this hypothesis the researchers compared pre-mentoring and post-mentoring perceptions. Based on the research it was found that mentoring led to improvements in five of the six mediation and outcome variables. It directly affected scholastic competence and school attendance, which suggests that through role modeling, tutoring, and encouragement, mentors can influence both the cognitive and behavioral dimensions of adolescents' approach to school.

Deschenes and MacDonald (2003) wrote that, "When youth are seen as threats, as they often are in urban areas, this belief will drive a community to allocate resources toward programs that deal with youth as a problem rather than assets." (P.2) According to Deschenes and MacDonalds research family, community and schools are the three "pillars" of public education. Until recently however, the educational system in the United States did little to recognize how community institutions could contribute to the



process of learning. Deschenes also promoted the community organizations as being an equal to instead of a secondary partner to the school system. Contrary to popular beliefs, youth organizations play a primary educational role for millions of children in urban areas.

In order to understand the complex world that youth organizations in the researchers' area, they analyzed the multiple levels of their environment. Research was done for two years, in thirty-two youth organizations-from small leadership academies, neighborhood after-school programs, and grassroots technology organizations to libraries, large boys and girls clubs, and community centers. The researchers interviewed the directors or staff of all of these organizations and did extensive observations in several.

The four youth organizations that were included in the study were: HOME, the East Oakland Youth Development Center (EOYDC), the Jamestown Community Center, and the Columbia Park Boys and Girls Club-Tenderloin Unit. These organizations represent a range of grassroots organizations to local affiliates. What all four groups have in common is the desire and the ability to implement learning environments in ways that are working for the youth that they serve.

The HOME program began in 1996 with the support of a non-profit organization. Youth working closely with adult coaches constructed the infrastructure and vision for HOME. The mission statement is: We are a gateway for the future. We discover ourselves, our commitment to each other, our organization, and the world outside searching to find ways to improve, reflect, and adjust. The HOME program provides resources and opportunities to over 100 youth as they generate, design, implement, and

assess project ideas and participate in constructing the governance and operating structure of HOME.

The East Oakland Youth Development Center was formed in 1971, in order to target the needs of the youth in the area. The neighborhood surrounding EOYDC was one of Oakland's poorest and one in which the unemployment is particularly acute. One third of the adults in East Oakland did not have a high school diploma or GED. The dropout rate was over 50 percent while the GPA was around 1.28. The EOYDC provides an effective learning environment in which youth explore their interests, develop their talents, and achieve their goals both as individuals and as members of a community.

The next program, the Jamestown Community Center has neighborhood ties that run deep. Many of the neighbors that organized the efforts are still on the Jamestown Board today and see their efforts as part of "a neighborhood raising its children. The town board was committed to serving youth in the Mission and in Mission schools and addressing issues of concern to the neighborhood.

As one of five units in the Columbia Park Boys and Girls Club (CPBGC), this unit tried to act as a liaison between parents and schools because parents in the neighborhood have a difficult time getting to their children's school. The Tenderloin Unit has been instrumental in community change efforts in its neighborhood, participating in several community networks focused on youth and a variety of issues from safety to after-school programs.

What the four organizations profiled had done was make decisions about how to implement these programs in order to create learning environments for youth in the non-school hours that are appropriate to the urban youth they are serving. Although there are

many difficult decisions to make about how to work with urban youth, when youth are made the focus, the choices become clearer.

### Teen Parenting

In order to find out what worked and what did not work in the inner-city research had to be done. One area that needed to be researched was how to assist young parents. Many of the programs that existed focused solely on young mothers. In research done by Mazza (2002), programs for young fathers were explored. There had been a focus in the child welfare field on the needs of adolescent parents. As Mazza pointed out, this term was often used to only describe young mothers. While teen mothers were given programs, aide, and mentoring, the young fathers were only given information regarding pregnancy prevention.

Another problem with adolescent fathers that Mazza addressed was the father's own unmet emotional needs. Mazza's theory was that if the subjects could have their needs addressed at the same time as addressing the needs of the child, the outcome for the child would be more positive. Many of the adolescents in this situation fell into the category of in-betweens. This means that these young men knew what society expected of them but they did not have the confidence to live up to those expectations. These young men wanted to better themselves, but they were not sure if they could succeed. This fear kept them from becoming better people and also better fathers.

Mazza's research subjects were given a pre-intervention interview and a post-intervention interview in order to gauge the success of the intervention. All of the subjects in Mazza's research were urban African American males. In order to choose the subjects, the mothers of the children were asked if the father of the child would be

interested. All of the subjects in the research were from low income neighborhoods and were between the ages of 16-18. In setting up the research Mazza chose to have a control group and an experimental group. The control group would only receive weekly parenting classes that focused only on meeting the infant's needs. In the experimental group however, the young fathers would receive bi-weekly parenting classes, and each member of this group would be assigned a social worker. It was also decided that the social workers should be male in order to establish the most effective therapeutic relationship. Also, the male social workers could provide positive role models for male parenting.

In the six months between the pre and post-intervention interviews, "...the experimental group received weekly individual counseling, biweekly group counseling, educational/vocational referrals and placements, medical care and referrals, housing and legal advocacy, cultural and recreational activities, and parenting skills training" (Mazza, 2002, p.685). While the experimental group received a myriad of services, the control group was only given the traditional parenting skills training. When administering the pre-intervention interview, the young fathers were asked questions pertaining to their current perceptions of themselves, their children, the mother of their children, their ideas of fatherhood, and their goals for the future. When the post-intervention interview was given, the results were compared for both the control and experimental groups.

The results of the Mazza study supported the hypothesis that adolescent fathers can be successful in school and parenting if given the proper support and programs. The employability of the experimental grouping was almost non-existent at the beginning of the program. By the end of the program, however, the 29 of the 30 subjects were

employed, whereas only eight of the 30 control group participants were employed. When asked about their relationship with their child during the post-intervention interview, 77% of the experimental group reported that it was excellent or good. When asked the same question, the control group only reported 50% satisfaction with their relationship. One of the major pitfalls that Mazza reported was that young fathers face is that they do not have a plan for the future. When asked about having a ten year plan, the experimental group had a much higher rate of planning.

The connection between being good fathers and also being good students was addressed in this research. When young fathers were made to feel as though they could have a part in their child's life and also in their own life, many things would change for them. Since the program stressed education, many of the young fathers went back to high school. Some of the subjects became enrolled in small alternative schools in which they could receive a great amount of individualized attention. For young men to become the fathers that they wanted to be they would need a program in which they would be nourished along with their children. Through social work, schooling, and parenting instruction this could be accomplished.

In an article done by Wendy Schwartz (1999), the issues surrounding teen fatherhood were discussed. In order for young men to become positive role models for their children they would need to understand what their role was in parenting. There are actually laws that are involved in paternity issues. When the government, community, and schools work together the best possible outcome would be achieved. Young fathers do not always have the means or education to obtain employment. In this case schools, and communities need to work together to provide employment opportunities. A shift

also needs to take place in which young fathers are asked to do more than just provide monetary services to their child. Schwartz indicated that establishing trust was one of the most important parts in mentoring young fathers. In order to get fathers to trust, they should be recruited by other young fathers or older men that have gone through similar experiences. If young fathers receive assistance obtaining employment, learning about fatherhood, career development, and counseling they will be well on the way to being a successful person and father.

### *Teacher Bias*

One obstacle that stands in the way of bridging the school-community gap is the perception of the student by the teacher. To further investigate this issue Hudley, Daoud, Polanco, Wright-Castro, and Hershberg (2003) looked at the differences in perceptions of teacher support and cultural sensitivity. Teacher support, for those who study classroom climate, is defined as “a nurturing, respectful attitude toward students that conveys a personal interest and expectations for success.(Blumenfeld, 1992).” Teachers in urban settings must interact with diverse groups of students. Research has found that teachers throughout the grade levels may perceive African-American and Latino students as having more behavioral problems. There is also a feeling that the same group of students does not care about their education. Biased attitudes by educators broadcast the same opinions onto their students who, in turn, start believing that they are not able to perform well in school.

The forms of engagement were broken down into two different categories; behavioral engagement and affective engagement. Behavioral engagement involves what students do in order to continue learning. This form of engagement involves proper

behavior inside and outside the classroom environment. If students are not engaged behaviorally, this will be evident in their school work. The other form of engagement is affective engagement which is represented by how the student feels about pursuing an education.

For their study, Hudley et al. formed hypotheses about what the research would prove. The researchers had hypothesized that if the school had a perceived supportive climate then there would have been a positive relation to school engagement. The second hypothesis was that the school climate would be related to their expectations for post-secondary education. The last hypothesis that the researchers used was based on the idea that if they could separate the demographics they would be able to see the true perceptions of the students.

The subjects were chosen in a small, coastal community in Southern California at a public high school. The sample was divided approximately 50/50 by ethnicity and gender. The community itself was comprised of 38% Latino residents, 59% Anglo residents, and 3% other. The per capita income of the community at the time was \$22,000.

In order for the researchers to collect the data they gave students paper and pencil surveys during their English classes. As the students were taking the survey the classroom teachers were also rating the behavior and attitudes of the students. The researchers also conducted interviews with homogeneous groups of 3-4 students.

The results of the study show that student engagement and teacher perception are related. A warm relationship with teachers was found to be particularly important in sustaining classroom engagement for students. On the other hand, they found that if

teachers do not provide a positive interpersonal relationship, some students would increase their negative behavior. In this study it was shown that teachers did play an important part in keeping the children engaged in schooling. If a teacher was not involved with his or her students they would not be able to connect them to other community resources.

Teacher bias is not just limited to one particular gender or race. Very little research has been done on African American females in particular. In the study done by Kusimo, Carter, and Keyes (1999), this topic is explored using math and science interventions. African American females are struggling to find where they fit in the landscape of today's ever changing world. For more than 200 years, black females were thought of as no different than black males. The conventional definition of womanhood was not available to them because they had to struggle in order to build a place for themselves in the world. Black females essentially needed to learn how to live among white people while still becoming a full black person. The basic theory that the authors explored was that one of the primary factors in the underachievement of black students is that they are resisting the attempts by "the other" to take apart their race. In order to do well in school they would need to become "the others" and that is not something many students feel comfortable doing.

The authors also explored the concept of Black fictive kinship, which made it necessary to keep the personal self and the cultural self one in the same. It was not proper in this mindset for people to separate themselves from their achievements. One person's achievements were thought of as the whole groups. Therefore if one student succeeded it was not seen as a success because the whole group did not succeed.



One problem with school was that they did not empower young black women. Black girls were often thought of as those loud black girls. Instead of embracing their enthusiasm, teachers often squashed it by resisting their attempts to learn in their own ways. Often, teachers were resistant to connecting to the young black women in their classes because of their differences. Students were viewed as incapable of success because of the way that they lived. Young black women were often seen as having attitude problems that interfered with their schooling.

In order to research the problems facing young African American women the researchers used students in West Virginia. The program was designed to include 73 urban and rural students in the sixth grade. Out of the 73 students, 33 of them were African American. All 33 of these students went to school where 90% of the population received free and reduced lunches. There was not a large population of African Americans in West Virginia; therefore it was important to choose areas in which there were critical masses of African American girls. During the project's first year, 12 of the 36 rural participants were African American. Of the 37 urban participants, 21 were African American. Teacher recommendations, grades, and interest in science and mathematics were not used to select participants.

In year one, project participants met once a month during the school year for workshops in their counties. The project changed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years by the addition of workshops and mentors who had experience working in the mathematics and science fields. The third year, the project changed even more with the addition of school sponsors and the fact that students were involved in service learning projects.

In order to collect their data, a female research associate was chosen to interview each girl in the project for approximately 30 minutes during each year of the project. The intervention chosen was a curriculum called *Voices* and involved interviews, videotaping, standardized test scores, grades, and other achievement data.

In order for this project to work, the schools needed to have teachers in the schools monitor the girls. One problem with this is that the perception of the students chosen was so bad that not one teacher would agree to be the leader. When one teacher finally did agree to be the supervisor, she was white and scared to go into the students neighborhoods alone. The students were outgoing, outspoken, and curious, and seen as behavior problems. The administrators were also not very open to having the *Voices* program in their schools. There was a certain amount of indifference to the program and its ability to change anything. Researchers found out that even though the girls' standardized test scores could be high, their grades in class were typically lower because of behavior problems.

Bridges were used in the implementation of the intervention. The first bridge used involved field trips. One problem experienced during the intervention was getting the students to the workshops that were required of them. Many of the students cited an early start time as being one issue keeping them from going to the workshops. Even though transportation was provided there was a certain amount of resistance in going to the workshops. This intervention was not seen as highly successful due to the lack of teacher cooperation and the next year more interventions were put into place.

The next intervention implemented was used to raise the students standardized testing scores. Power learning was put into place in order to tutor the students within

their math and science classes. Female teachers were employed in order to assist the girls. This intervention thrived in both the rural and urban setting and existed for the remainder of the program. Students that were receiving Ds started to receive Bs and were also gaining confidence in their ability to learn. This intervention was successful based on the grades and the students' improved self worth.

The third and final bridge used was the involvement of mentors from math and science fields. The researchers ran into the problem of recruiting professionals to work in the urban setting although there were many manufacturing plants, colleges, and medical facilities. Although the mentors that they finally recruited were not in the fields that they at first wanted them to be in, the mentors did connect with the students and formed powerful bonds.

The conclusion of this study provides us with a glimpse of the problems facing today's black female youth. This problem not only affects urban youth, but it also affects rural African American females. In order for a project like this to work in the long term, teachers cannot be allowed to neglect their students. In addition, the community needs to step up and advocate for these children.

In research done by Julia Bryan (2005), she examined why certain students thrived and why other students did not. Racial and ethnic minority students in many urban areas felt powerless in a majority-dominated school culture. These same students were often overrepresented in special education programs and underrepresented in gifted and talented programs. Another issue that made schooling difficult was that the parents thought of school officials as opponents rather than allies.

According to Bryan, in order to foster resiliency in children, the children needed to feel safe. This did not mean that they only needed to feel safe in school; they also needed to feel safe in their own homes and communities. The school could help to encourage these connections by coordinating school, parent and community groups. When schools, families, and communities fostered protective factors, they were putting risk-reducing mechanisms into place. These mechanisms worked in four ways: children were less impacted by the effects of risks with which they have come in direct contact, the danger of exposure was reduced, children's self esteem was enhanced, and children were provided with opportunities for meaningful involvement in their environments.

In a study of 160 urban families over a three-year period, the researchers concluded that efforts to involve parents, neighborhood members, teachers, and school administrators in programs had positive impacts on family-school relationships and on children's school performance. Positive relationships between schools and families in many urban schools were infrequent because parents often did not trust the schools and the school professionals in turn did not trust minority and low-income families and communities. Overall, partnerships among the school, home, and community increased students' chances of success by removing some of the stressors and systematic barriers to academic and personal success, especially for poor and minority students.

Culturally relevant education was one way to begin combating problems that students faced in their schooling. In research done on this topic, Maddahian (2004) uncovered several domains that impacted student learning and performance. These domains were: knowledge and experience, social and emotional, attention to student's diversity, quality instruction and curriculum, instructional strategies, diagnostic and

assessment, and parent and community involvement. The Culturally Relevant and Responsive Educational Program or CRRE was designed to address these domains. The main purpose of this study was to gather evidence on the CRRE program in schools and communities.

To examine the prevalence of this program the researchers took a random sample of 40 schools, 10 in each district, and selected them for data collection and analysis. The sample included 16 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, and three high schools. Along with the schools, two fifth grade teachers were also randomly selected in each elementary school for direct observation, as were three teachers in secondary schools who taught language arts, math, and social science. All classrooms were observed for two consecutive days, with each observation covering half a day, or four periods. A team of fifteen trained data collectors observed the classrooms, documenting culturally relevant and responsive instruction through detailed field notes and observation forms.

Data was examined in each domain using the observations of the researchers. The first domain that was examined was the Knowledge and Experience Domain. This domain basically refers to teachers using the prior knowledge of their students in order to guide their teaching. In most cases, during the observations, less than half of the teachers engaged in components associated with CRRE. In other words, only half of the teachers observed used prior knowledge to construct lessons for their students.

The next domain that was taken into consideration was the Social and Emotional Domain. While doing the observations, the researchers find that there is little evidence of mutual respect and acceptance, respect for cultural diversity, high expectations for student achievement, or appropriate classroom management. One important section of

this domain is the use of materials and décor reflecting diversity. The researchers found that in only 18% of the secondary English classroom observations, materials and décor reflected the diversity of the students. This was echoed throughout the other observations as well.

In the Instructional Quality and Curriculum Domain the observations yielded similar poor results. Teaching with clear standards is an integral part of high quality instruction. Although, in elementary schools only 16% of the observations reported the use of clear standards in lesson planning and delivery. High school studies, however, had the highest percent, 43%, of observed instances of teachers including ethnic and cultural literacy aspects of the curriculum.

Teachers scored highly in the observations of the Instructional Strategies Domain. There was clear evidence that teachers across the grades and subjects were attempting to use these instructional strategies. The teachers named the attempts, cooperative learning, active learning and apprenticeship, instructional conversation, constructivist learning, and other similarly innovative names. More than 40% of the observations demonstrated that teachers had evidence of each of the following strategies in their classrooms: cooperative learning, active learning, instructional conversations, and scaffolding. In terms of this domain, teachers using the CRRE program seem to be on the right track.

One of the most important domains was the Parent and Community Involvement domain. At the elementary level, there was no parental presence in the classroom except when teachers called home to report behavior problems. Community presence was equally as rare, with few instances of community presentations and involvement. Even as the children got older, the parental influence did not grow. In observations of the high

school classrooms, researchers found that similar phone calls were made about behavior issues.

Overall, the finding of this study indicate that while the CRRE program is helping to bring some educational and community issues to light. The school districts using this program do not seem to have a firm grasp on pulling in student interest. Much work needs to be done in order to have a true school-family-community partnership.

In research done by Dr. Jana Noel (2004), the concept of teachers becoming members of the urban education community is examined. Teachers do learn to teach in college, but they are not being prepared to become members of the urban areas they are teaching in. Noel defined the term urban as being areas that serve highly diverse levels of student poverty. Another part of the definition is a bureaucratic system, which emphasizes a highly standardized curriculum and testing. The final part of this definition is schools that have community involvement agencies in the schools. The goal of this study was to gather data from principals, teachers, and student teachers about how to create a sense of community in an urban educational setting.

In order to collect data, the researcher conducted interviews and focus groups with three principals and six teachers within the Sacramento City School District. The interview questions focused on how to create a sense of community in the classroom, the school's neighborhood community, and the larger urban community.

The results of the research indicated that none of the participants felt a sense of community outside their own school or in the school's neighborhood. The majority of respondents simply thought of community as in their classroom alone. When asked about the school community and what they do to encourage participation, the principals all

responded in the same way. The principals gave examples of their activities: in-services, science and math family nights, after school programs working with students, and arranging to have teachers and student teachers take a bus sponsored by the school to visit neighborhood agencies.

In terms of the teacher's responses, each of the six focused on the classroom community and the school-wide community. These teachers were very eager to discuss their own class communities, but they did not have an idea of the neighborhood sense of community at large. The student teacher's responses were very similar and only discussed the classroom community.

The findings of this research indicated that school officials were able to identify how they were part of the schools community but they were unable to articulate how they were part of the community at large. Teachers, principals, and student teachers felt disconnected from the urban community in which they worked. This research, combined with focus groups and surveys of the members of Sacramento's urban school districts has led to the creation of a program called the Urban Teacher Education Center or UTEC. This is a program designed to connect the community and the school by training teachers and other staff to become members of the urban society.

Overall, there has not been a solution found that solved all of the problems that urban youth have faced. These children have experienced community issues along with familial issues that did not allow them to reach their potential. Teachers have also played an important role in helping students to become leaders. All members of the urban community have not come together to solve these problems. Further research needs to be done in order to solve these issues.



CHAPTER 3- Research Design

When deciding what to do my research on, I looked around at the environment in which I currently teach. The school that I have worked in for the last five years is an urban school in the city of Rochester, NY. There are many issues facing the students in this urban high school. Some of these issues include but are not limited to violence, gangs, drugs, poverty, and substance abuse. One of the biggest issues facing the youth in the inner city is life outside of school. This led me to ask the question “What can we do, as educators, to help bridge the gap between school and the community?”

In order to find the answer to this question, research was done in the high school and in the community surrounding it. The goal of the research was to uncover which factors are preventing students from using the community resources that are available to them. It is known that there are many community resources, but it is theorized that very few children use these resources. Too many children are on the streets and in harms-way everyday.

The community at the high school is diverse. In the high school there is an academy of Hospitality & Tourism and an academy of Sports Medicine & Management. The school itself offers extended day academic support, a wellness center that offers counseling, social services, and after-school activities in partnership with community agencies to better serve the needs of all students. The school currently serves grades seven through twelve. The ethnic breakdown of this school is 57% black, non-Hispanic, 22% Hispanic, 19% Asian/ Pacific Islander, and less than 1 % Native American. The attendance rate at this school is 86%, although the state average is 93%. The percentage

of students that are eligible for free or reduced lunch is 73. The number of IEP students in this school is 27%. In terms of test scores, the high school has only a 23% passing rate in the grade seven ELA exams and only a 10% passing rate for the math exam. The school scored a rating of two out of 10 when ranked against other schools in New York State.

The purpose of this study was to uncover what was stopping students from using the community resources available to them. Data to answer the questions came from student surveys and interview responses. Overall, the purpose of this study is to help my students and other students in the school survive in their lives outside of school. This is especially important in the urban setting and is a topic that not a lot of people see as important. My aim was to find answers to help solve the problems facing the students I work with. It is my belief that we as educators have a responsibility to help the students thrive in and out of school and to try to understand them as much as possible.

### *Pilot*

Before embarking on the actual research project, I did a research pilot designed to investigate ways in which to get students to open up to me as an interviewer. At first, I made many assumptions about what the students felt and what they wanted. The questions that I chose turned out not to be the ones they wanted to talk about. In the process of using the survey with the students, I found that they had a lot more to talk about than I expected them to have. Students wanted to talk about what they had learned on the streets, what they grew up with, what kinds of violence they had seen, and many other topics that simply were not included on the survey.

It was surprising to me how open the students were in talking freely with me. When I observed the students in the hallway it seemed as though they were extremely closeted and did not have any interest in talking about their lives. When I began speaking to them however, I experienced a whole new world of life. These subjects had seen things that in many people's opinion, they should not have to see, especially at such a young age. The students were being exposed to drugs, violence, sex, and other factors that changed their outlook on life. One subject even began telling me a story about how he was a lookout for drug dealers on his street. In return for being their lookout, the drug dealers offered him protection and safety. In order for this student to feel safe in his area he felt as though this was what he needed to do.

One major assumption that I made was that if the students had the opportunity to move away from the violence and danger they face everyday, they would do so without a second thought about their current home. This assumption was completely incorrect and in fact when discussing this question with many of the students, they felt the opposite way. When asking one student about his feelings he actually told me that he would not know how to at if he had to move away from his current home. It was then that I realized the students felt as though they have some control over their environment even if that environment was dangerous.

Another idea that came out of this pilot project was the idea of looking at the students perceptions of their living situation. I also wanted to take a look at how the parents of the same students felt about their living situation. In this way the actual research design differed from the pilot project. Another change that was made involves the use of community members as test subjects. This change was made in order to gain a

perspective of individuals that were not directly connected to the high school but were part of the students' lives.

### *Thesis Study*

The target group for this study was high school students attending an urban high school. Since this was a random sampling, there was no specific student that I was looking for. The reason for performing a random sampling was to ensure that the research was not only looking at one subsection of students. The surveys were given to students that represented all grade levels, gender, age, race, sexual orientation, and backgrounds. If the surveys and interviews had only been given to one group of students there was the possibility that the information would not be as representative.

Aside from the students' surveys, a survey was also given to the parents of these students. In order to obtain a cross section of information it was important to ask the parents similar questions to those asked of their children. The survey was sent home to the parents at the same time as the consent form was also sent home. The parents were allowed to do the surveys in their own residence and have the students bring the surveys back with them when they brought back the consent form. There was a random number assigned to the top of the surveys and consent forms and these were used to track the results.

Student surveys were given to students in a classroom during the last period of class of the day. The process of the project was introduced to the students and they were informed that in order to be included in the study they would need to bring back their parent's consent form. Each child was given the survey and then interviewed separately. It was important to allow the students an opportunity to speak privately so that the

students would not be influenced by their peers. The students were then given a packet of information to have their parents sign and also a survey for the parents to fill out.

The student survey questions were chosen based on interviews that were conducted with students in the pilot study. In order to ease the students into the survey, the students were first asked about how long they had lived in Rochester. Most students, based on the pilot, felt comfortable talking about where they live and how long they had lived in the area. One goal of the surveys was to make them similar enough to be able to draw comparisons among all three groupings. For example, all three surveys had a question based on the accessibility of guns to students.

The surveys were designed for three different categories of people. The first category was high school aged students in the urban setting. The survey was intended to be given to 10-15 students. The parent survey was intended to be given to the parents of the same students that completed the student survey. Finally, the community member survey was intended to be given to 10-15 community members, whom worked with the students that had received the surveys.

## CHAPTER 4- Results and Findings

When compiling and analyzing the data that I had collected from the surveys, many things jumped out at me. When I created the surveys for my research I made sure to formulate the questions for the students, parents, and community members similarly in order to have results that could be compared across all three survey areas. This method worked very well and the results were easier to examine because of this. The survey questions were based on questions that came out of the pilot study. These questions were meant to get to the heart of the issues that the students in urban settings faced. Similar to what was found in the review of literature, teen parenting, teacher bias, and family/community influences were all present in the research.

One issue that I encountered was that the parents did not hand back the surveys. The parent surveys were handed out through the students that had also received the survey. Of the 15 surveys that were handed out, only two were returned filled out. To me, this was very alarming considering the nature of the survey. These questions were not difficult to answer and in no way would it be known who answered the questions. I learned from this that parents need to be specifically targeted and asked for answers in order for them to reply. The parents may have also felt more comfortable answering the questions had they have had a more personal connection with me. Due to the fact that I did not receive all of the parent surveys back I was forced to use the two that I did get back to draw conclusions from. Drawing conclusions from two surveys required that I did not rely on the parent survey as much as I had originally planned.

The students that were randomly given the surveys were pleased to answer them and took delight in the fact that someone cared enough to ask them about their experiences. For example, one student that I surveyed responded, “No one has ever asked me about my neighborhood. It’s kind of nice to talk to someone about it.” The students wanted to discuss the questions in more depth than was asked of them and they had a lot of questions about how the data was going to be used. The lesson that I took away from this was that students are just waiting for people to ask about them as people. This is especially important to understand in a school in which there are over 1,000 students. These students are just a small glimpse of the entire population, but they were given the opportunity to become members of the school community.

The largest groups of surveys to be returned were those given to community members. These community members included teachers, secretaries, mental health workers, custodians, service providers, and administrators. This grouping seemed to be open to the discussion about students’ lives. Many of the community members responded within two hours of receiving the surveys. The community members were not given any motivation other than their own interest in the students. Many of the community members answered the questions in ways that were not surprising. Some evidence of bias was recorded.

The following table shows the answers to all of the questions asked on the survey by students and by community members. Students' responses are listed above community members' responses. In the following analysis not all of the questions were used, but all of the survey questions were examined and analyzed for their relevance to the topic.

Table 4.1 shows all of the survey questions that were answered. In the left hand column

the survey question is listed, followed by the number of students and community members that responded to each question, and what their response was. Student responses are listed above community member responses.

In the next section, I'll look specifically at the responses that most address the questions I'm exploring in this study. They're highlighted by question, with the responses by students and by community members looked at more closely than as reported in Table 4.1.



Table 4.1 Student/Community Member Survey Responses

Question	Responses Number of respondents																
1S.) How long have you lived in the city of Rochester? 1C.) Would you live in the city?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>&gt;1 yr.</u></td> <td><u>&gt; 5 yrs.</u></td> <td><u>&gt; 10 yrs.</u></td> <td><u>Whole life</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> <td colspan="2"><u>I already do</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>5</td> <td colspan="2">3</td> </tr> </table>	<u>&gt;1 yr.</u>	<u>&gt; 5 yrs.</u>	<u>&gt; 10 yrs.</u>	<u>Whole life</u>	0	2	0	8	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>I already do</u>		9	5	3	
<u>&gt;1 yr.</u>	<u>&gt; 5 yrs.</u>	<u>&gt; 10 yrs.</u>	<u>Whole life</u>														
0	2	0	8														
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>I already do</u>															
9	5	3															
2S.) Have you ever seen violence in your neighborhood? 2C.) How often do you think that the children you work with see violence in their neighborhoods?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><u>Rarely(1) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Daily(10)</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">1 3 9 2 2</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	8	2	<u>Rarely(1) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Daily(10)</u>		1 3 9 2 2									
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8	2																
<u>Rarely(1) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Daily(10)</u>																	
1 3 9 2 2																	
3S.) How easy would it be for you to get a gun? 3C.) How easy do you think it would be for one of your students to get a gun?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Very Easy</u></td> <td><u>Easy</u></td> <td><u>Hard</u></td> <td><u>Very Hard</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Very Easy</u></td> <td><u>Easy</u></td> <td><u>Hard</u></td> <td><u>Very Hard</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>14</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Very Easy</u>	<u>Easy</u>	<u>Hard</u>	<u>Very Hard</u>	2	2	1	5	<u>Very Easy</u>	<u>Easy</u>	<u>Hard</u>	<u>Very Hard</u>	2	14	1	0
<u>Very Easy</u>	<u>Easy</u>	<u>Hard</u>	<u>Very Hard</u>														
2	2	1	5														
<u>Very Easy</u>	<u>Easy</u>	<u>Hard</u>	<u>Very Hard</u>														
2	14	1	0														
4S.) Do your caregivers require you to tell them where you are going and when you will be home? 4C.) Do you and the caregivers of your students have clear lines of communication?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>13</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	8	2	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	13	4								
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>																
8	2																
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>																
13	4																
5S.) Do you know of anyone your age that has children? 5C.) Do you know of any of your students that have children of their own?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>14</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	5	5	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	14	3								
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>																
5	5																
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>																
14	3																
6S.) After school where do you typically go? 6C.) After School where do you think your students typically go?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Home</u></td> <td><u>Rec. Ctr</u></td> <td><u>Friend</u></td> <td><u>Street</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Home</u></td> <td><u>Rec. Ctr</u></td> <td><u>Friend</u></td> <td><u>Street</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>1</td> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Home</u>	<u>Rec. Ctr</u>	<u>Friend</u>	<u>Street</u>	7	1	1	1	<u>Home</u>	<u>Rec. Ctr</u>	<u>Friend</u>	<u>Street</u>	5	1	6	5
<u>Home</u>	<u>Rec. Ctr</u>	<u>Friend</u>	<u>Street</u>														
7	1	1	1														
<u>Home</u>	<u>Rec. Ctr</u>	<u>Friend</u>	<u>Street</u>														
5	1	6	5														
7S.) If you could move to a safer area would you? 7C.) If your students could move to a "safer" area do you think that they would want to?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	7	3	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	11	6								
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>																
7	3																
<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>																
11	6																
8S.) Which of the following services have you used? 8C.) Which of the following services have you heard your students talk about using?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Rec.Ctr</u></td> <td><u>BB/BS</u></td> <td><u>Counselor</u></td> <td><u>Summer Rec.</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Rec.Ctr</u></td> <td><u>BB/BS</u></td> <td><u>Counselor</u></td> <td><u>Summer Rec.</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>15</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Rec.Ctr</u>	<u>BB/BS</u>	<u>Counselor</u>	<u>Summer Rec.</u>	3	0	3	4	<u>Rec.Ctr</u>	<u>BB/BS</u>	<u>Counselor</u>	<u>Summer Rec.</u>	15	1	0	1
<u>Rec.Ctr</u>	<u>BB/BS</u>	<u>Counselor</u>	<u>Summer Rec.</u>														
3	0	3	4														
<u>Rec.Ctr</u>	<u>BB/BS</u>	<u>Counselor</u>	<u>Summer Rec.</u>														
15	1	0	1														
9S.) Do you know anyone that has been shot? 9C.) Do you know of any students affected by the gun violence in the city?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>17</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	8	2	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	17	0								
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10S.) Have you ever been attacked in school? 10C.) Have you ever been attacked in school?	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Yes</u></td> <td><u>No</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>14</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	2	8	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	3	14								
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<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>																
3	14																

*Responses to Question 1*

Students and Community Members

There is an interesting connection between the answers for question number one between the community members and the students. The student question was, “How long have you lived in the city of Rochester?” and the question to the community members was, “Would you live in the city of Rochester?” Eight out of ten students surveyed had lived in Rochester their entire life. These students have experienced living in the city for many years and do not necessarily know another way of life. When community members were asked if they would live in the city five out of seventeen respondents replied that they would not want to live in the city. To me this indicated a certain amount of negativity or bias. The community members work with the students but would not be willing to live in the same community that the children live in. It doesn't mean that the community members dislike the students or their families. Instead, it suggests an uncomfortable association with their neighborhoods.

*Responses to Question 7*

Students and Community Members

Another question that connects with this subject is the question of being able to move out of the area that these students live in. Students were asked the question, “If you could move to a ‘safer’ area would you want to?” and community members were asked, “If your students could move to a safer area do you think that they would want to?”

The students that said that they would like to move to a safer area had some insightful explanations on why they would like to move. One student responded that they would like to move, “Because it would be safe to go outside.” This is something that

many children in urban areas face. They are not allowed to go outside due to fear of violence or abuse. Other student responses included: “Stay away from villains.” “I probably would feel better.” “Nice people.” These responses indicated that students were showing discomfort or even fear related to where they live.

Out of seventeen community members surveyed, eleven felt as though students would move to safer areas if they could. It appears that the community members thought that students would want to get away from the crime and violence that is part of their daily lives. Some of the community members that responded also added extra information to better explain their answers. One community member explained: “Yes for some students, but for other students they do not know another way of living-generational poverty:”

Another community member, who lives in the city, pointed out that, “No matter how tough the neighborhood is, it is home. It is familiar; it’s comfortable; they know every inch of their neighborhood. To pick up and go somewhere away from that familiarity is scary. They have friends in the city to look out for them, to watch their backs. They wouldn’t have that trust in completely new surroundings. Fear of the unknown.” This community member addresses the question of, “What is home?” In this quote the community member stated that the concept of home is the same for all people. Now matter how young or old you are, home is where you live, and home is where your family is. The students do not wish to leave their families or their homes behind. Instead they wish for their families and homes to be safer.

Students that did not want to move out of their neighborhoods gave the explanations of: “Because it is kind of quiet over there.” “I’m used to living in this area.”

“Because I like where I live.” These explanations help to illustrate the point that there are some areas of the city that are safe to live in or that some children do feel safe. These students feel comfortable where they are willing to deal with the violence in order to be in a familiar place.

### *Responses to Question 2*

#### Student and Community Members

When asked about violence in their communities half of the students, 5 out of 10, said that they have seen violence in their neighborhoods. This ranged from stabbings, to gang fights, to shootings. When the community members were asked about the same subject, they were asked on a one to ten scale how often they thought that their students witnessed violence. Two out of 17 community members felt as though the students were exposed to violence daily. The highest number of community members felt as though the students witnessed violence 80% of the time in their neighborhoods.

Community members that chose to further explain their answers described not knowing what the actual definition of violence would be for them. “With no qualifier as to what qualifies as violence I would rate a ten, it is a five days out of five for the school week in my opinion of ‘violent acts’ but to generalize the entire student population is tough. For many it is a daily occurrence, for others it may be extremely rare.” This quote highlights the fact that there are extremes that occur even in the same environment. Some students do not seem as involved in the violence and urban lifestyle as others. The students may also not be identifying with things being violent that community members may see as violence. In many ways the students have been desensitized to the environment.

In terms of the parents' surveys, both parents had lived in Rochester for their entire life. One of the parents stated that they would like to move to a safer area if they could, but that they did not see that happening in the near future. The parents' surveys were similar in all of the responses.

## CHAPTER 5- Conclusions

There are many conclusions that can be drawn from this data. I'll share my conclusions to individual questions that were highlighted in Chapter 4, then follow with my overall conclusions.

### *Conclusions about Responses to Question 1*

The question that was asked to the students was, "How long have you lived in the city of Rochester?" While the question that was asked to the community members was, "Would you live in the city?"

The conclusions that I drew from the responses are that the majority of the students that I work with have lived in the city for their entire life. This means that most students that I work with have not had many living experiences outside of the inner-city. Due to the fact that they have not experienced other ways of life they may not know that they have other alternatives in life. When the community members were asked if they would live in the same area as the students, 5 out of the seventeen responded that they would not want to live in the city. There are many reasons why they may have answered in this way. The main reason that I would assume this is that there is a certain amount of fear of living in the city. The city is an unknown territory for some people and this may lead to misunderstandings. When the students come in to school the teachers have an opportunity to "control" the students in their own territory but they would not be able to do this at home. These conclusions are based on observations of the school that I currently work in and the community in which I live. I have also had numerous conversations with staff and students in my school which have led me to the conclusions.

*Conclusions about Responses to Question 7*

The survey question that was asked to the students was, “If you could move to a safer area would you?” While the community members were asked, “If your students could move to a ‘safer’ area do you think that they would want to?”

The conclusions that I drew from the responses are that the community members and the students had different opinions on whether or not the students would move to a safer area if possible. The students that said that they would not move were motivated by the fact that they lived in nice areas in which it is quiet. This has been found to be more the exception than the rule in the City in which they live. Students that said that they would want to move were motivated by the fact that they would be away from villains and that they would probably feel better. Community members listed similar reasons as to why they thought that the students would want to move. Based on the results of the community member and students surveys it can be concluded that community members and students alike are conflicted as to whether or not they would want to move out of the city.

*Conclusions about Responses to Question 2*

The survey question that was asked to the students was, “Have you ever seen violence in your neighborhood?” While the community members were asked, “How often do you think that the children you work with see violence in their neighborhoods?”

The conclusions that I drew from the responses are that the community members and the students have different opinions on how to define “violence”. To community members violence can be something as little as pushing whereas students tend to think of violence as a more serious infraction. The term “violence” to students often means

shooting, stabbing, and domestic abuse. Based on the survey questions and conversations with the students it is easy to see how they can interpret violence differently after living in the city for their entire life.

When looking at student perceptions of violence it is alarming that many of the students do not see bullying and fighting as violence. Instead, when asked about violence, the students reported things such as stabbings, gang fights, and shootings. The perception of the community members was different in the range of their definition of violence. Community members included violence as being bullying, fighting, and violent acts. The community member definition of violence seems to be far different than that of the students.

Based on what we see as teachers, many students are living in a world of crime and fear. These students have not necessarily been given the tools and skills necessary for them to become successful in the future. Students, community members, and parents all need to work together in order for these students to make it out of generational poverty. The problems facing urban youth today cannot be solved by simply one or two attempts. It is in everyone's best interest to take responsibility for the problems facing the youth of today.

It is important for teachers to make sure that they are paying attention to their students as whole people, and not just as learners of a particular subject. There is much more to a young person than just grades and sometimes teachers forget this simple fact. Some students are coming to school simply to get a warm meal and a safe haven from their own lives. On the other hand there are students that feel as though school is a way out and a way to a better life. Both groups of students are equally as important to work



with. If youth truly are the future leaders of tomorrow, educators need to help nurture these leaders.

The community also needs to play a part in making things better. Without the efforts of outside programs such as recreation centers, summer recreation, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and other similar programs these students would be on their own. When the students use the community resources they are taking an interest in their neighborhoods. The important part of this is for the neighborhood resources to be a safe haven for the youth that they are serving. In my pilot, I found that many of the community resources tend to bring student together, but do little to guide them in the right direction. In order for these community resources to be beneficial they need to be policed by caring community members. Students are only in school for approximately 7 hours a day. They then go home to their communities. Since the students spend the majority of their lives within these communities, it is key to their success to have the community more involved.

Overall, my opinions stayed the same about the subject of connecting students to community resources. I believe that in order for these students to be successful we need to ensure that we as educators are looking at these students as whole people. If I were to continue this work, I would create a program within my own school in order to help bridge this gap. It is one thing to talk about the problems facing the youth but it is something else entirely to change the problems.

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Appendix A

Student Survey

1.) How long have you lived in the city of Rochester?

Less than one year    Less than 5 years    Less than 10 years    Your whole life

2.) Have you ever seen violence in you neighborhood?

Yes    No

3.) How easy would it be for you to get a gun?

Very Easy    Easy    Hard    Very Hard

4.) Do your caregivers (i.e. Mom, Dad, Guardian) require you to tell them where you are going and when you will be home?

Yes    No

5.) Do you know of anyone your age that has children?

Yes    No

6.) After school where do you typically go?

Home    Recreation Center    Friend's House    Street

7.) If you could move to a "safer" area would you?

Yes    No

8.) Which of the following services have you used?

Recreation Center    Big Brothers/Big Sisters    Counselor    Summer Recreation

9.) Do you know anyone that has been shot?

Yes    No

10.) Have you ever been attacked in school?

Yes    No

Appendix B

Parent Survey

1.) How long have you lived in the city of Rochester?

Less than one year    Less than 5 years    Less than 10 years    Your whole life

2.) Have you ever seen violence in you neighborhood?

Yes    No

3.) How hard do you think it would be for your child to get a gun?

Very Easy    Easy    Hard    Very Hard

4.) Does your child tell you where he/she is going and when he/she will be home?

Yes    No

5.) Do you know of anyone your child's age that has children?

Yes    No

6.) After school where does your child typically go?

Home    Recreation Center    Friend's House    Street

7.) If you could move to a "safer" area would you?

Yes    No

8.) Which of the following services has your child used?

Recreation Center    Big Brothers/Big Sisters    Counselor    Summer Recreation

9.) Do you know anyone that has been shot?

Yes    No

10.) Has your child ever been attacked in school?

Yes    No

Appendix C

Community Member Survey

1.) Would you or do you live in the city of Rochester?

Yes, I would live in Rochester    No, I would not want to live in the city of Rochester

Yes, I already live in the city of Rochester

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

2.) How often do you think the children you work with see violence in their neighborhoods? (1- Rarely 10-Daily)

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

3.) How easy do you think it would be for one of your students to get a gun?

Very Easy    Easy      Hard    Very Hard

4.) Do you and the caregivers (i.e. Mom, Dad, Guardian) of your students have open lines of communication?

Yes    No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

5.) Do you know of any of your students that have children of their own?

Yes    No

6.) After school where do you think your students typically go?

Home    Recreation Center    Friend's House    Street

7.) If your students could move to a "safer" area do you think that they would want to?

Yes    No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

8.) Which of the following services have you heard your students talk about using?

Recreation Center      Big Brothers/Big Sisters Counselor      Summer Recreation

9.) Do you know of any students affected by the gun violence in the city?

Yes    No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

10.) Have you ever been attacked in school?

Yes    No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_