

Voices: The Psychosocial Effects of Black Authorship At the FAMU DRS Freedom Schools

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Introduction

Abstract

Academic skills such as reading and writing are taught and constantly reinforced to children at an early age. Developing reading skills is a natural part of academic development. Connecting with characters in literature therefore may play a significant role in the psychosocial development of a child through adolescence and adulthood. The purpose of this study was to determine the efficacy of a six-week reading curriculum given to middle school-aged children enrolled in the FAMU DRS Florida Freedom School summer 2019 program. The objective is to explore the strengths and limitations of African American-based reading curricula through the observation of 28 African American middle school-aged children and administering culturally relevant surveys.

Aims of the Research

The aim of this study is to give participants a voice and to provide an interdisciplinary review of the Social Change Theory and how that correlates with the level of Africentricity and Racial Identity each child identified with. Expanding on current research in developmental psychology and educational psychology, this study will explore the roles of teachers, known as servant leader interns (SLIs), in socializing scholars' levels of perceived racial identity in their specific cultural, ethnic group.



Research Questions

1. What relations exist between scholars' perceived levels of racial identity and Africentricity?
2. How do scholars perceive that SLIs supported their identity development and engagement with culturally relevant texts?

Method

Research Design

For this study, the qualitative technique used was the exploratory one-to-one design. This technique allowed us to use a series of open ended questions during the interview process, which allowed scholars to evoke responses that were meaningful and culturally salient to each participant individually.

Participants

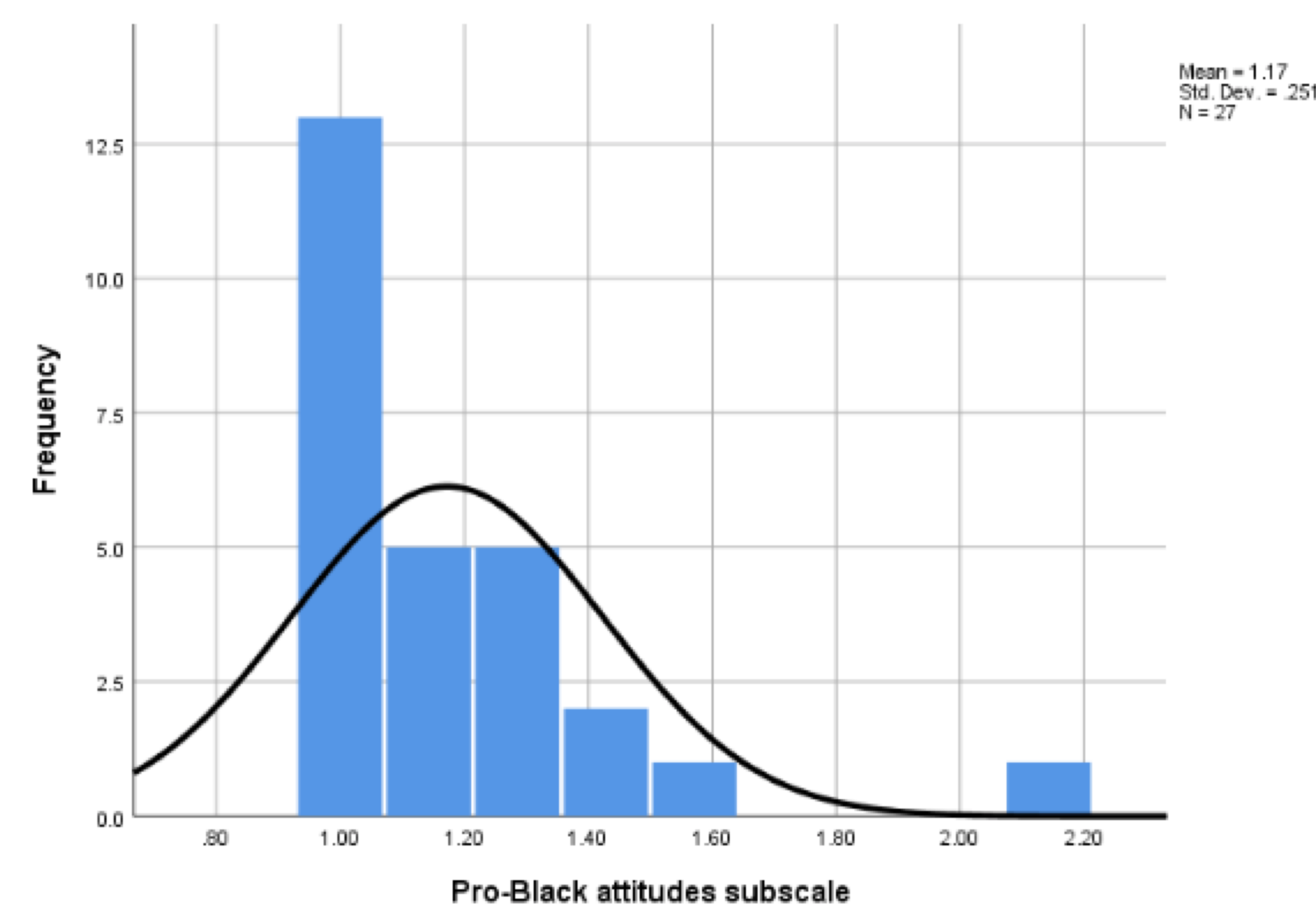
African American middle school aged scholars ($n = 27$) in the Freedom School summer program, grades 6-8.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected using the following three instruments:

1. The Children's Black Identity Scale
2. The Africentricity Scale
3. Face to face interviews

Surveys were administered during the second to fifth week of the summer program. Interview questions were administered during the final week of the program. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for word-level analysis.



Results

Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the table of descriptive statistics, the AS scale is consistent with interviews and the pro-Black attitudes from the Children's Black Identity scale. The analysis suggested that the participants' attitudes were consistent across data sources. Attitudes towards whites was primarily positive (92.6%) and scholars were aware of racism (88.9%). There was also a significantly high level of pro-Black attitudes reported. The scholars also expressed how the SLI's were able to give them a voice during the program as expressed in this excerpt from an interview with one of the scholars: "When we were going through stuff and arguing with the other classmates they would just say like toughen up, we're going to be young men and we need to like show respect for each other cuz the white people already have targets on us as being young black men and umm it was our color because we're black and we're young men and that was the two strikes that white people have against us and we need to like encourage each other and not argue with each other or put each other down." However, possibly due to a small sample size (27 scholars) the AS scale was unreliable. Future research should expand the amount of scholars interviewed and surveyed and conduct a pre and post interview as well as a pre- and post-survey analysis.

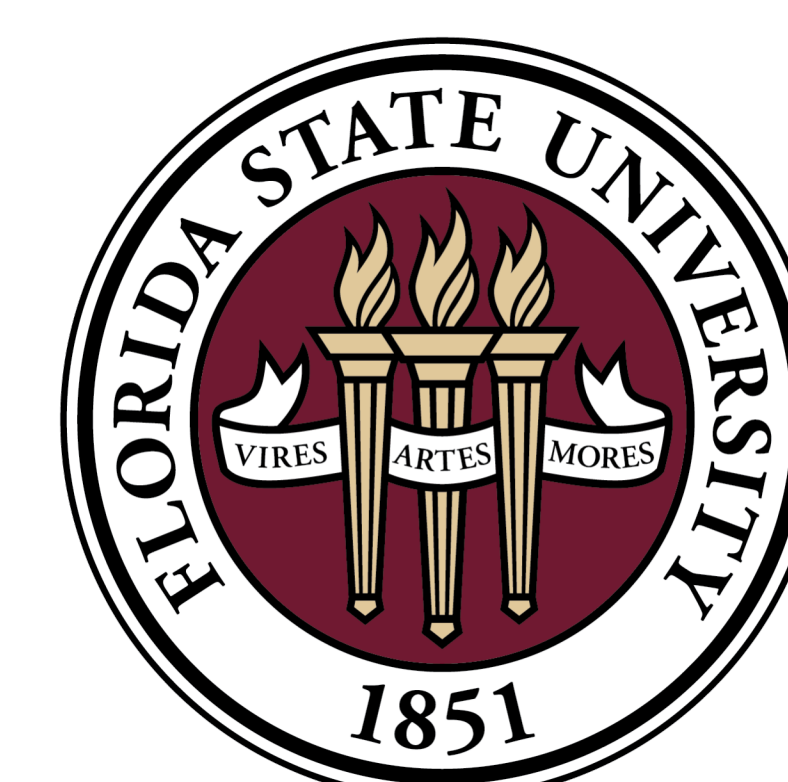
Discussion

Analysis is ongoing. Exploration of scholars' interview responses will focus on their engagement with culturally relevant texts and perceptions of SLI support for their identity development during the reading curriculum. Preliminary interview and survey analysis, however, indicated scholars reported high levels of positive self identity. Follow up surveys should be considered for future research. Scholars did express their willingness to participate in research for the 2020 Freedom School year.

Key References

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PURPOSE

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