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Aligning Voices, Urban Teachers and Leaders

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Title

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Title

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Abstract

Societal expectations and diminished resources are two of the myriad of challenges faced by urban educators, teachers and school level administrators. Through a probabilistic functionalism model, this research sought to identify concordance and dissonance in the voices of urban educators. The educators surveyed were optimistic that changes at the building level can positively impact educational outcomes for students; along with the optimism was a sense of purpose and commitment. The synergy of teacher and leader voices in the data suggest that alignment is possible; while the lens model highlights the importance of empowering educators to improve efficacy, to compel choices that will heighten student success and drive change in societal expectations.

Keywords

Urban Education, Probabilistic Functionalism, Academic Optimism, Resilience, Leadership

Aligning Voices, Urban Teachers and Leaders

“The challenges of many high-need, urban schools and the current bleakness of the educational landscape can press cruelly against even the strongest programs” (Freedman & Appleman, 2008, p. 124).

Urban schools have been described as “serving poor children from poor neighborhoods; kids whose lives are so difficult and complicated that, for some, just getting to school represents a major feat and accomplishment” (Noguera, 2003, p. xi). In most school districts in America, the geographic area where he/she lives determines the school a student attends. This means that many children in urban centers have little choice where they attend school. Acknowledging that urban education is not easily defined or understood (Noblit & Pink, 2007), but rather “a complex and multifaceted phenomenon” (Hopson, Greene, Bledsoe, Villegas, & Brown, 2007, p. 898). Even in its complexity, urban education does have some commonly cited features.

In the urban elementary school there is a low rate of pre-school attendance, and in many cases a lack of adult supervision. In the urban secondary school there is a high rate of students leaving school before graduation, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, issues with the juvenile justice system, and absence due to social and economic factors (Kids Count, 2009). Poverty carries challenges for both students and educators. Poverty equates to limited accessibility to quality health care, which results in high rates of school absence. Limited economic resources may mean a lack of food, living in substandard housing, or not having a guaranteed place to live. Other widely studied features associated with urban education include low test scores, larger

class sizes, and outdated curricula (Miller, Brown, & Hopson, 2011). Additionally, Payzant (2011) states, that in many urban school districts, fifty percent of new teachers leave during the first five years of their employment (p. 103). Teacher turnover is not the only staffing challenge; there are also high rates of attrition for urban administrators (Miller et al., 2011).

The role of an educational leader in an urban school can bring a set of challenges that may be viewed as overwhelming. They are responsible for ensuring that every student has an opportunity to succeed regardless of socio-economic status, familial structure, ethnic/racial heritage, or academic preparation (Portin et al., 2009). The leader's day in an urban setting is a reflection of the community in which they work. If there is social upheaval in the neighborhood it will impact the school building. The leader plays many roles in shaping the school environment and controlling the impact negative events play in the learning experience of the students. School leaders have a moral, legal and social mandate, which dictates daily performance (Honig, 2009). Urban school leaders function in a context of a large school system with a complex governance system. These systems have a multitude of competing needs for limited resources. The challenge for the leader is to access needed resources and use them effectively, in an environment of high accountability (Gordan, 1992, Sirgiovanni, 1987).

Teachers as well as their students are also in a setting with elevated accountability. Maeroff (1988) found that minority students need teachers who inspire them, who have rapport with them, who have high expectations for them, and can provide structure in a supportive environment. All of these features bolster students' confidence. Students in urban settings need dedicated teachers who respect children, who believe that they can learn and who understand the types of homes and cultures from which they come (Wright, 1980). "A good urban school system may have some or even many good schools... However, the details embedded in the

aggregate data can shine a spotlight on gaps in achievement among different groups of students, which educators must understand and address to ensure all students are learning..." (Payzant, 2011, p. 4). The urban school has the potential of providing great challenges and great rewards depending on the belief systems of the teachers and leaders.

Purpose

This study was designed to explore the interactions in the way urban teachers and leaders described their experiences. "In general, teachers are not prepared for urban schools" (Vasquez, 1994, p. 302). Tobin, Elmesky and Seiler (2005) concur, that the work done in the teacher preparation programs does not directly translate to the classroom and Kretovics and Nussel (1994) continue that new teachers are often frustrated in trying to address the issue of "academic failure of poor and minority students without blaming the victims" (p. 17). This poses special challenges for school leaders in urban settings.

Theoretical Framework

This research utilized Brunswik's (1956) lens model as a framework. While Petrovich (1979) classified probabilistic functionalism as a method rather than a theory, its application in this research was as a theoretical framework. The subjects in this research, whether they were a school leader, generally the principal of a building, or a classroom teacher, were all steeped in the same urban environment. They were exposed to the same remote, distal and proximal stimuli. The difference in the two groups is at the individual level. This study seeks to blend probabilistic functionalism with Bandura's concepts of efficacy and personal agency.

Probabilistic Functionalism

Much like qualitative research as a whole, Petrinovich (1979) argues that behavioral systems need to be described in a way that allows their complexities and "dynamic interplay to

express itself” (p. 375). Every person interacts with their environment continually; they send and receive signals both consciously and subconsciously. The feedback that the person receives from the environment is judged and either accepted or dismissed. Whether the person intends to or not, they are “actively sifting stimuli, translating them in to ‘meanings,’ and acting in a constant interaction with a dynamic world” (Petrinovich, 1979, p. 378). Because the barrage of stimuli is endless, the individual has to constantly determine which stimuli are the trustworthiest.

Each judgment that the individual makes is based on limited information, on the probability that the information is useful. If information is discarded, it is no longer available to be a part of future judgments as to the value of other stimuli. So each earlier conscious or subconscious decision about the value of a stimulus impacts all the future decisions. This is the inherent probabilistic nature of the model. Brunswik’s (1956) lens model goes further in that it demonstrates that distal stimuli form a stimulus array that is focused by the more proximal stimuli. The individual that then chooses from among several possible, proximal responses, all while mindful of a distal goal then interprets these incoming messages. Brunswik’s original model has been modified to include feedback loops, and sensory mediation, but the basic tenets still hold. Based on the probability that the information that a person notices is trustworthy, they choose how to act. There are many appropriate responses, and in each model there is an expectation that the person will choose a response that moves them towards a future goal. In the current study, all of the participants are in an urban environment, which offers roughly similar distal stimuli.

Wolf (2005) concluded that both the limitations and strengths of Brunswik’s lens model are integrated in its process and the more general probabilistic functionalism theory. A person “is constantly engaged in an active process of weighing the dependability of cues, compromising

between conflicting conclusions about what they mean and judging the probable efficacy of different molecular response” (Tyler, 1981, p. 14). Since the person makes some of these judgments without even being aware of them, all the decision-making is based on less than perfect information.

In the current study, the teachers and leaders are exposed to similar stimuli in the urban environment, the stimuli are judged by the individual and the possible responses to the stimuli are then evaluated and a path of action or inaction is chosen. “There are many ways to act appropriately in the same place and in response to the same judgmental event” (Petrovich, 1979, p. 380). Bandura (1982), without directly referencing probabilistic functionalism described it in his social cognitive discussion of human agency, freedom and determinism this way, “Although people's standards and conceptions have some basis in reality, they are not just ingrafts of it” (p. 1182).

Efficacy

Bandura (1989) describes efficacy in terms of the individual, self-efficacy, or the larger group, collective or group efficacy. He asserts that collective efficacy is rooted in the self-efficacy of group members. Efficacy beliefs are based on the individual or groups experience with success in meeting perceived meaningful challenges. Beliefs about efficacy “are the product of a complex process of self-persuasion that relies on cognitive processing of diverse sources of efficacy information” (Bandura, 1982, p. 1179). Petrinovich (1979) would likely describe this processing of diverse sources of information, probabilistic functionalism because “in the self-appraisal of efficacy these different sources of efficacy information must be cognitively processed, weighed, and integrated through self-reflective thought” (p. 1179).

According to Bandura (1989), the strength of groups lies in their sense of collective efficacy. He further asserts that the perceived collective efficacy will impact how much energy

individuals devote to an activity, and even the very activities in which they choose to participate. The level of collective efficacy will also help determine how long an individual will persevere in a task. This advances a bit of circular logic: If a person feels a sense of collective efficacy they will persist longer in a task, while the “development of resilient self-efficacy requires some experience in mastering difficulties through perseverant effort” (Bandura, 1982, p. 1179).

Circular logic aside, collective efficacy requires a commitment to a shared purpose, personal, self-efficacy and the desire to impact their future environment. In urban settings, there is a continual call for all of these. Bandura (1989) describes conditions that can undermine collective efficacy, “rapidly changing conditions, which impair the quality of social life and degrade the physical environment, call for wide-reaching solutions to human problems and greater commitment to shared purposes” (p. 143), that sounds like a description of education in urban centers.

Agency

“Among the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs function as an important set of proximal determinants of human motivation, affect, and action” (Bandura, 1982, p. 1175). Beyond an individual's action within an environment, the very choice of environment within which an individual operates is a function of both their self-efficacy and personal agency. Bandura (1982) asserts that multiple individuals in the same situation will vary in their level of success based on their level of personal agency. “Persons who have developed skills for accomplishing many options and are adept at regulating their own motivation and behavior are more successful in their pursuits than those who have limited means of personal agency” (p. 1182). Some people choose to place themselves in situations in which they believe they can make a difference, they select challenges in which they

believe they will be successful, and they develop their own skills for addressing the challenges therein. This type of selection is another form of personal agency, exerting control over their life course through the selection or construction of their environment (Bandura, 1982, p. 1175).

Bandura identifies a number of possible causes for an individual's motivation to act or not act in a situation; these include self-generated influences as well as external forces. In an urban setting, some students and adults assert that the factors around them, the very environment in which they live and work prevent personal agency; that the problems are too big, and that their individual action will not make a difference. "They emphasize that external events influence judgments and actions, but neglect the portion of causation showing that the environmental events, themselves, are partly shaped by people's actions" (Bandura, 1982, p. 1182). This selectivity in the causes they perceive may be connected to preserving their own self concept, a result of low self-efficacy, or another cause, but it impacts the stimuli that are trusted and the decisions that determine the responses to those stimuli.

Method

The current research was a qualitative exploratory study. Data were collected through open-ended surveys and interviews. The data were analyzed using a sort and sift method that consisted of a detailed inventory of the data, reflective memos, developing codes, mining the reflective memos and applying the codes to uncover the bridges in the data and among the codes.

Sample

The range of years of experience, represented in the sample, spanned a traditional teaching career, from very new teacher (1-2 years), through veteran teachers (those nearing eligibility for full retirement benefits). The initial open-ended survey was sent in a snowball

method, with known urban educators asked to send it to other urban educators. Responses were mainly from the northeast (43% from New York, NY and 43% from urban centers in CT), with 14% equally split between Chicago IL and Oakland, CA.

The second open-ended survey results were nearly all from respondents who identified they worked in the state of CT (92%). There was one teacher respondent to the second survey who was outside CT, and all of the leader interviews were in CT. This lococentricity helped ensure a shared experience, at least as far as input stimuli.

Data Gathering Plan

Initial data collection was an open-ended survey to identify topics for a second more in-depth, open-ended survey (n=6). Urban teachers responded to the open-ended survey. Following this, structured interviews were conducted with urban leaders (n=6). The data from the structured interviews were used to identify prompts sent to the original survey respondents.

Data Analysis Plan

Interviews were analyzed using the “sort and sift” technique (Maietta, 2011). The sort and sift procedure balances the specifics and the general to capture the lived experiences of the respondents. Once data were collected, an inventory was conducted with each interview being assigned a numerical code. With each interview, text segments and episodes were further identified with identifiers. An episode may be part of an interview, or across multiple interviews. An episode is something compelling in the data that represents a larger idea. Episodes were treated as lenses through which the data were viewed for confirming or disconfirming initial themes and observations.

The initial read of the data for episodes helped the researchers identify and name text segments. The process of determining key text segments required the researchers to capture the

essence of the pieces of text for ease of later use. These text segment names were fitted together to summarize the content of the interview. These initial data analyses ran concurrently with detailed memoing. Memoing permits the researcher to keep a running record of any reactions and interpretations without mixing them with the interview data. Memos were tracked using the identifiers applied to the interviews, episodes, or text segments. As analysis continued, the memos were treated as a separate source of data, defining the researchers relationship with the data. The memos helped in the identification of initial codes, and additional memos were written as the codes are identified recording how the code was developed, its origin, importance and any possible challenges with the code.

The memos, codes and episodes were integrated to develop a full picture of the experiences of urban teachers and leaders to see where their perceived experiences aligned or diverged.

Results

Leaders openly discussed working with students in a society where the expectation of urban school students is lower, and how urban secondary school students quickly point that out. A principal noted, “I know there are issues and challenges in suburban school settings, but in our settings there is a preponderance of issues and challenges and they are multi-layered, complex, and somewhat debilitating.” Teachers and leaders also identify that they have a responsibility to make a positive difference for students and that to do this they will have to model some of the resilience they hope to foster in students. Within the responses of leaders and teachers there were differing views on the issue of resources, but not about the importance of optimism.

Optimism

The overlap in the voices of leaders and teachers was in their optimism and commitments. Academic optimism is defined as, “a teacher’s positive belief that he or she can make a difference in the academic performance of students by emphasizing academics and learning, by trusting parents and students to cooperate in the process, and by believing in his or her own capacity to overcome difficulties and react to failure with resilience and perseverance” (Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2008, p.822). Both the teachers and leaders appeared aware of the importance of academic optimism. One principal said,

One of our most significant challenges is inspiring and motivating the values and beliefs of the adults in the building and having adults believe in student abilities. When there is a consensus in the building and this becomes the culture of the school, urban school students will then begin to trust [more] the adults teaching them.

The school leaders know how important academic optimism is for the success of students.

Another leader expressed that one of the most important things they do as a school leader was to “Identify what’s best for students and keep it in front of you and you will not waver from the path of serving urban students.”

Beyond high expectations, the partnership between all members of the school community was an idea shared by urban school leaders and teachers. “Urban schools need caring adults; high expectations for students and adults; work to create a welcoming environment,” said an urban school leader. A teacher surveyed shared a similar thought:

The thing that students need most out of their school is a safe-haven/community where they can share their personal talents and explore, challenge and expand their understandings of the changing world around them. This requires strong leadership from teachers, administrators, parents, community members and all partners.

Teachers, more than leaders, identified things like safety and structure. When asked what students need most from their school, the school leaders used words like welcoming learning environment and culture and teachers used words like safe, calm, and structured. One teacher stated, “Urban students live in a society usually lacking structure and discipline. With clear rules (of course, enforced consequences needed) and clear expectations they can be more successful. They need the tough love education.” While an urban leader said “The core of an urban education leader’s framework must be the development of a culture where adults have learned to believe in student abilities and students have begun trusting in the adults that teach them.”

In both the interviews of the leaders and teachers the idea of commitment and caring was prominent. One teacher said that what schools needed most were “adults who care” and another shared that school needed to be a “warm community of learners that nurtures their curiosity and provides a place where they can feel safe and supported in building good relationships.” A school leader passionately stated that a big part of the job of a school leader is “to make them (underserved, maligned population) feel counted.” The role of the teacher and leader as one who is responsible for the students experiences was present in the responses from both groups, but more so from the school leaders.

The school leaders identified a social justice role in their work. One leader did this through the emphasis of the inclusivity in their response, “Knowing, understanding that ALL students regardless of background (race, socioeconomic, neighborhood, status of family) can achieve at high levels.” The unsaid here was that it is not always the case. Another leader identified that it is a conscious choice to ensure all students are served. “Be sure to attend to your beliefs; making young urban students confident, productive members of society regardless of socioeconomic status, race, etc.” The role schools play in producing citizens may be debated,

but the high expectations leaders and teachers have for themselves and students is only a part of academic optimism. Another tenet embedded within academic optimism is the idea of resilience.

Resilience

Academic resilience in students is often connected to a caring and supportive community in the school. Both the teachers and leaders identified the importance of caring, but the school leaders alone explicitly mention the idea of resilience. The idea of resiliency transcends the levels in the school. It was not only applied to the students in the school, but also the adults, one leader described resilience as the most important characteristic for an urban school leader. A school leader needs to be “Resilient, persistent; [They need to] ‘know and understand how to get things done’ – know the people to talk with to accomplish things.” Another school leader highlights the challenges of the everyday when asked to describe an ideal urban leader. An urban school leader must

Possess an “exceptional” mind – capable of understanding there are exceptions and those exceptions are present in urban settings; thinking on feet; relative comfort with ambiguity; the understanding of working with an underserved population (language, socioeconomics); concentration on personal change, and what can the leader do differently.

Similarly, when asked the same question, another urban leader cited that a “crystal clear vision around learning; comprehensive understanding of the achievement gap; how you view learning; flexibility – working with a broad range of adult personalities; working with parents; resiliency and perseverance,” were the most important qualities of an urban school leader.

These leaders identify with a greater purpose in choosing their profession. They connect to a moral purpose, and identify that they need to have “big vision for urban education” and that

they need to be “resilient, patient, communicate with everyone, optimistic, open, persistent, listen, respect, and connect” while being “thick-skinned” and maintaining “humility.” Another leader identified that they were often called upon to exercise their ‘inner strength, compassion, commitment, consistency, [and] flexibility.’” When it almost seems like these are superhuman expectations for one to have for themselves, a leader explained why they became an urban school leader. “During Civil Rights Movement (I was 12-13 years old) I wanted to do something that would impact students. I had a vision for what I wanted America to be: equality, justice, and a system that works for all students.” The challenges that the school leaders face within themselves and their ideals, paired with the honesty with which they view these challenges highlight the level of responsibility they feel.

Resources and Responsibility

Urban leaders cite the challenges of their urban centers and the challenges of resources, the teachers explained how the leaders have within them the power to overcome the challenges of limited resources. “Leaders have the ability to create a culture of learning that can overcome obstacles with resources.” Another teacher said that leadership is the “foundation of any successful organization and impacts the educational process more than the availability of school resources. The most important resources in any schools are the quality of teachers and administration that exists in any given academic environment.” The school leaders identified the challenges but were not as confident that they had the power to effect change. One leader said that they chose to be an urban leader because they “appreciate the challenges and complexities leaders face in urban districts,” but no leaders, possibly avoiding hubris, indicated that they felt they were making a difference.

One leader did not indicate that they felt efficacious, but that they knew that they “want[ed] a greater impact on the school community.” This mirrors the feelings of teachers in that school level leaders do have the ability to shape educational outcomes for students. Gregory (2010) found teachers reported that nearly half (48%) of issues in schools could be influenced at the building level. She also found that most of those issues were related to leadership. One teacher responded that,

Leadership is definitely needed more than resources. It’s like a wealthy parent giving a child all the things/toys they could possibly want but not showing or displaying the child true love and concern by spending time with the child and setting limits and disciplining the child. Teachers and students want to know the person(s) in leadership positions have a strong vision and plan to guide the school.

Another teacher agreed that leadership was important, but that alone it was not sufficient:

Leadership is one of the most critical of the resources we need. But we also need tangible support to be effective. When our schools accept children who are homeless, or victims of trauma in their neighborhoods, we need resources to cope with these challenges. To pretend that money does not matter does not serve these children well.

Leadership alone is not enough was echoed in the answer of a school leader who indicated that the greater challenges (higher % of ELL, SPED/IEP), [in conjunction with] lack of resources hinders the capacity to help the most challenging students learn.” One of the teacher respondents agrees, “Resources are needed to make sure classes are not too big, children have the expert counseling they need, libraries are available, teachers have time to collaborate, and so on. All of these are critically important.” While there was agreement between some teachers and

the school leaders, there was a dissenting view that indicated financial resources were not the issue.

In my experience, I have found that many schools are resource rich, but leadership poor. There are many schools that have the latest technology (i.e., SMARTboards™ in every classroom) and monies allotted for professional development for teachers, school programs and other resources for the school. However, without the proper leadership to ask the right questions, collect, examine and make decisions regarding how the money should be spent based on the data collected, it is nothing more than wasted money. I believe that administrators and teacher leaders can make a difference. Although resources are necessary, having strong administrators and teacher leaders can change a school.

There was agreement among several of the teacher respondents that it was not an issue of funds, “You can throw all the money you want at our schools, it won’t change the fact that not enough adults are doing what they are supposed to be doing day to day.” This teacher shared an anecdote to illustrate “It’s about the adults not the money.”

I have been working with 2 teachers; a first year teacher who is at a brand new school with the latest technology and a 6th year teacher with limited technology. The first year teacher is being pressured to lay off teaching, she’s told these kids don’t want to learn after the [State test], that she’s wasting her time. She doesn’t know what to do, go to an administrator who may think she is a complainer? Snitching on other teachers? ... The 6th year teacher has no classroom management and is incapable of teaching a lesson... but since he’s been evaluated by a different administrator every year, no one has built a case against him and now he’s tenured...

The resources that teachers called for was building level leadership, the principals asked for initiatives to be funded. One teacher, when asked what the most pressing issue in urban education said “If there was consistency between teachers and administrators, we might be able to make progress with students.”

Alignment

Throughout the data collection there were overlaps in many of the sentiments and statements of both urban teachers and urban leaders (Table 1). The difference appeared to be in

Table 1.

Alignment of Urban Teacher and Leader Results.

Leaders	Aligned	Teachers
Challenges in urban settings are unique, complex, and may be solvable.	Partially	Challenges in urban settings are unique, complex, and solvable.
Students need more challenge.	Yes	Students need more challenge.
Schools need to be caring and welcoming	Yes	Schools need to be safe and caring
The adults in schools need to be motivated.	Partially	The adults in schools need to be led.
Schools need leadership, but resources cannot be ignored.	Partially	Schools need resources, but they need leadership more.
High levels of perceived responsibility, but uncertain efficacy.	Yes	High levels of perceived responsibility, but uncertain efficacy.
Problems greater than the building level.	No	Building level solutions.

the responsibility afforded to the respondent. Like earlier research on urban teachers (Gregory, 2010), respondents believed the responsibility was partially theirs, but their efficacy was limited by something beyond their control. A sense of personal agency was missing. The results that did not align support this, where the teachers believe that the school level leader could effect change, and the school level leader cited challenges beyond the individual school level.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that urban teachers and leaders have similar visions for schools, that they are passionate and want students to be successful. This occurs despite where their own academic optimism falters is in believing in their own capacity to overcome difficulties.

Few know better than urban educators about the importance of collegial support, and the high value placed on that support calls for stronger leadership and management on the part of the building and district administrators. Urban administrators interviewed embraced this challenge. With nearly half of the issues identified by urban educators in the sphere of influence of the building administration, there is a great need for innovative and compassionate leaders. Educational leaders are needed who will provide support and opportunities for staff to help meet the special challenges of urban education.

It appears there is a lot of alignment, “If there was consistency between teachers and administrators, we might be able to make progress with students.” If teachers and leaders don’t feel the alignment, it may be more about communication than actual differences.

The influence of teachers on student success is well documented in the literature (Collier, 2005; Portin et. al., 2009; Wright, 1980; Young, 2009). In order for teachers to positively impact students it is critical that teachers are appreciated and supported by school leaders. School

leaders need to provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with colleagues (Block, 2008; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Karkanek, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Schmoker, 2001). Teachers who have well developed collegial relationships bring more optimistic, self-reflective, progressive and innovative qualities to the classroom (Young, 2009). Teachers need to be able to build meaningful relationships with students and guide students to develop a desire to be a lifelong learner. Successful teachers have high expectations for themselves and their students inspiring students to strive to their fullest potential. Caring is also critical to guiding instruction and creating a successful classroom community addressing the educational, social, emotional and behavioral needs of the students (Collier, 2005). Teachers with high levels of teacher efficacy tend to view teaching as important work, set high expectations for all students, critically self-reflect, set personal goals, exhibit confidence in their own teaching abilities and exhibit significant efforts to assist student learning (Collier, 2005).

Educational Implications

So much is written on the challenges of urban educators, and the gaps in achievement between urban students and their suburban peers. This research seeks to identify the divergences and convergences in the voices of urban teachers and leaders to identify how these educators can align themselves to meet the needs of urban students. The aligning of voices at the teacher and building leader level can drive a school culture shift, empowering teachers and leaders to weigh cues and responses differently. The changes in cues and responses, using a probabilistic functionalism model, will impact not only the individual, but also all the people with whom the individual interacts. These interactions will begin to shift the societal lowered expectations, lessening the challenges faced by urban educators.

The relationships between teachers and principals are critical to the success of each of the professionals and to the success of the students being educated in the building. Teachers and principals can have similar goals, objectives and viewpoints but be unaware unless their relationship is an open and productive relationship. Apparent in our research is a potential communication gap that occurs between the teachers and administrator creating the impression that they have different perspectives when in fact they may agree more than they disagree. A critical focus for the administration should be to establish productive and open relationship between the teachers and principal. Providing them time to share ideas and information is key to ensuring open communication and shared goals.

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